

TITLE: 25/00303/FUM

Committee: Planning Committee

Date: 1 April 2026

Author: Major Projects Officer

Report No: AA183

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Site Address: Land to the North of Church Road Wicken Cambridgeshire

Proposal: Installation of up to 400MW of Battery Energy Storage Systems and associated infrastructure for a temporary period of 35 years

Applicant: GSC Church Road Wicken Limited

Parish: Soham

Ward: Soham South

Ward Councillors: Ian Bovingdon
Lucius Vellacott

Date Received: 25 March 2025

Expiry Date: 6 April 2026

1.0 RECOMMENDATION

1.1 Members are recommended to APPROVE the application subject to the conditions set out in Appendix 1.

1.2 The application is being heard by committee because it was called in by Councillor Vellacott for the following reasons;

Given intense public interest, to provide opportunity for the views of all interested parties to be heard before members and officers in public session before a determination affecting local residents is made in line with material planning considerations, citing concerns over; impacts on the landscape and character of the area; ecology; loss of agricultural employment; access; loss of best and most versatile land; fire risks; noise impacts, and impacts on Wicken Fen.

2.0 SUMMARY OF APPLICATION

- 2.1 The application seeks full planning permission for the installation of up to 400MW of a Battery Energy Storage Systems ('BESS'), comprising battery containers, power conversion systems, transformer enclosures, and a substation building. The BESS is proposed to be operational for a temporary 35-year period and as such a temporary permission is being sought.
- 2.2 The development is proposed to be accessed via an existing access track from Church Road to the south. The track extends approximately 500m where it meets the main development area at an area of hardstanding before continuing right for approximately 150m, to serve the BESS compound. The BESS compound is served by 2 points of access; at the south-west (main access) and at the north-east. The BESS compound would occupy approximately 2.1ha of land, running parallel with existing adjacent field margins and watercourses.
- 2.3 The underground cable route for connection purposes will be installed via the existing access road and will connect to the grid at Church Road. This will include excavation trenching / drilling to allow for the installation of underground cables between BESS units, the substation, and the grid connection point.
- 2.4 The key components of the proposal will include:
- up to 170 no. Batteries with integrated power conversion system units (Power Control Systems which includes both an inverter and transformer grouped into blocks of 4).
 - up to 85 no. 5140kVA field transformers (2 per block of 4 no. batteries).
 - 2 no. 200MVA grid transformers (situated within the on-site substation).
 - Welfare facilities.
 - Cabling and connection to the compound and cabling connecting to Church Road.
 - Foundation platforms to support the energy storage systems along with the reinforcement of existing and new access roads equating to an overall development footprint of around 2.17ha of land.
 - Cut and fill earthworks to enable landscaping and drainage mitigation.
 - Fencing erected around the site boundary to restrict access to the site, with CCTV at regular intervals.
- 2.5 The development is proposed to incorporate soft landscaping around its perimeter to assist with screening and net gains in biodiversity. A pond is proposed to be formed at the north of the application site. This is intended purely to assist with further biodiversity net gains and would not be directly connected to the BESS infrastructure e.g., for drainage purposes. In this regard, the development would rely on underground surface water attenuation, prior to controlled discharge to the IDB drain to the west.
- 2.6 Amendments have been sought through the assessment of the application in respect of; biodiversity, access, fire safety, rights of way impacts, boundary treatments and landscaping.
- 2.7 The application is supported by the following key plans and documents.
- Site Location Plan 1076-RPC004-PL02-FG01 REV V1.0

- Site Layout Plans 1076-RPC004-PL02-FG03 V2
- Switchroom Elevation 1076-RPC004-TE01-FG01
- 32kV Substation Elevation 1076-RPC004-TE01-FG02
- DNO Control Room Elevation 1076-RPC004-TE01-FG03
- BESS Container Elevation 1076-RPC004-TE01-FG06
- BESS Transformer 1076-RPC004-TE01-FG07
- Site Access Fencing and CCTV Column 1076-RPC004-TE01-FG04
- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy 316414 V4.0
- Transport Statement Rev B
- Highways Technical Note - P24073
- Footpath Strategy 1076-RPC004-LA014 V2.1
- Planning Statement V0.3
- Noise Impact Assessment NP-011562 Revision 7
- Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) RPC004-EC02 v6.0
- Landscape Ecological Management Plan RPC004-EC03 V6.0
- Landscape Strategy Plan 1076-RPC004-LA03 V3
- Planting Plan 1076-RPC004-LA07 V3.1
- BNG METRIC V4.0
- Tree Constraints Plan 241119-1.1-CF-TCP-SH
- Water Storage Tank 1076-RPC004-TE01-FG08 V1
- Detailed Safety and Emergency Management Strategy (Rev C)

2.8 The full planning application, plans and documents submitted by the Applicant can be viewed online via East Cambridgeshire District Council's Public Access online service, via the following link <https://pa.eastcambs.gov.uk/online-applications/>

3.0 PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 24/00883/SCREEN

Screening Opinion - Battery Energy Storage Scheme
Concluded by officers not to be EIA development. 11 October 2024

4.0 THE SITE AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

4.1 The site is located approximately 2km south-west of Soham and 600 to the east of Wicken. The site straddles the parish boundaries of Wicken and Soham – however the main physical development is located within Soham parish.

4.2 Whilst the site location captures around 18ha of land, the majority is intended for landscaping or access, with the main BESS infrastructure comprising around 2.1Ha, with a further 1.1Ha for the wetland area to the north.

4.3 Existing solar farms are located approximately 250m east of the main BESS infrastructure, and approximately 350m north. Cumulatively these solar farms occupy an area approximately 121 Ha in area.

- 4.4 Wicken Fen SSSI, SAC and Ramsar site lies approximately 1.3km south-east of the site.
- 4.5 The access from Church Road meets at a right angle with a public right of way (footpath 258/27) approximately 355m along the track. The right of way continues along the track where it meets with a bridleway (258/38) at the area of hardstanding. A further bridleway (205/26) runs along the north-west and northern boundary of the application site. Byway (205/113) abuts the north-eastern extent of the application site, extending eastwards through the solar farms. National Cycle Network (NCN) route 11 extends north-west from Chapel Lane towards Barway to approximately 950m west of the application site (at its closest point at Chapel Lane).
- 4.6 The site lies in high risk (Flood Zone 3) and medium risk (Flood Zone 2) of flooding and in an area benefiting from flood defences.

5.0 RESPONSES FROM CONSULTEES

- 5.1 Responses were received from the following consultees and these are summarised below. The full responses are available on the Council's web site.

Soham Town Council - 25 February 2026

Soham Town Council agree and support Wicken Parish Council comments regarding proposal. Fire risk - although the risk of a fire is low, the application does not demonstrate the processes with which a fire would be dealt with, neither does it give any assurance that the infrastructure is in place to deal with a large-scale thermal runaway fire if it occurs. Concerns are raised over the potential toxicity of a fire and its effect on the local community and its residents. Soham Town Council is not against solar or battery storage perse, but the applicant in this case must demonstrate that they have fully assessed the risks associated with battery storage and that proper processes have been put in place to mitigate these.

Wicken Parish Council – 17 April 2025

Objects

Would like to point out that although we are the neighbouring Parish Council we have not been included in the neighbours list.

Concerns are:

Noise

The model used to calculate noise pollution is incomprehensible and it is impossible to replicate the calculation and, therefore understand the noise impact and spread. The noise pollution will affect a large number of residents in our village, especially along Church Road and Drury Lane but will be more widespread. References problems at Weirs Drove.

Biodiversity

The site is an important foraging ground for barn owls who have foraged within the field for many years, and the loss of suitable foraging ground for them, together with the disturbance created by noise and lights, would be significant. It is further noted that the habitat creation plan replaces suitable foraging ground with unsuitable (arable field replaced by wetland). Hares are not included in the ecological survey although they are frequently seen within the development site.

Fire Risk and Health and Safety

Local fire stations are at least 20 minutes away from the site and are not currently geared up to tackle any potential BESS fire which can present toxic exposure risks. Need to also understand how the batteries will be disposed of safely after use and how the land will be used after the 'temporary' 35 years. Clear safety regulations are needed.

Infrastructure and Location

Government guidance advises that BESS should be located as close to the Grid as possible. We suggest an area near to the Burwell substation would be a more beneficial location.

Concerns over adequacy and safety of the access.

Conflicts with Soham Neighbourhood Plan policy SBNP19-Renewable Energy;

- i. Safeguarding the best and most versatile agricultural land
- ii. Safeguarding agricultural land used for food production.

Conflicts with ECDC Local Plan

EMP1: Retention of existing employment sites and allocations

EMP2: Extension to existing businesses in the countryside

EMP3: New employment development in the countryside

EMP4: Landscape and settlement character

ENV2: Design

Renewable Energy Development

The views across to Ely Cathedral and the surrounding landscape will be severely impacted by this development.

If the development is approved requests a condition applied that any development money (CIL) is provided to Wicken Parish Council due to the disruption to the residents of Wicken.

Ward Councillor (Cllr Vellacott) - 21 April 2025

Objects for the following reasons;

- Does not accord with Policies ENV1 and ENV2 due to landscape harm
- Adverse impact on the character of the rural area, contrary to ENV6
- Insufficient ecological surveys contrary to ENV7
- Does not retain existing employment on the site for arable farming purposes, contrary to EMP 1
- Unsuitable access roads for construction contrary to COM7
- Does not accord with Policy SBNP19 of the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan 2024, as the site does not safeguard the 'best and most versatile agricultural land'.
- Significant fire and safety risk - the response time from fire services is not sufficient.
- Significant and constant noise issues for residents in Wicken
- Adverse effect on Wicken Fen protected wildlife area

There is no acceptable mitigation against the proposal to make the application acceptable to the residents of Wicken.

ECDC Environmental Health (contaminated land) – 7 April 2025

Accepts the findings of the Phase I Geo-Environmental Desk Study report dated 4th October 2022 prepared by EPS - that no plausible contamination risks have been identified and no further site investigation work is required. Advises that a condition requiring site investigation, etc. is not required.

ECDC Environmental Health – 2 April 2025

Has reviewed read the Outline CEMP dated November 2024.

Agrees with the construction hours in the CEMP as they are more restrictive than what we usually attach.

Requests the CEMP include prohibiting the burning of waste on site.

Notes there is no intention to utilise artificial lighting during the construction phase.

Requests a planning condition in respect of potential piling (if required).

Requests a planning condition in respect of a lighting strategy.

Has reviewed the NIA dated November 2024 which finds that noise impacts at nearest sensitive receptors will be at a No Observed Adverse Effect Level (NOAEL). No concerns to raise with regard to the methodology or findings of the report and welcome the consideration of NANR45 which considers low frequency noise.

Makes the following observations and recommendations;

1. Data is not available on two of the grid transformers and so noise limits have been defined. Recommends a Condition which stipulates that - "The BS4142 rating level noise limits and NANR45 limits seen in Section 3.4 should be adhered to".

2. If there is a change of proposed plant between this application and any future application, would request that a revised NIA is submitted to account for this.

The applicants are advised that planning permission does not confer immunity from action under statutory nuisance. Either by local authority or a private individual.

ECDC Conservation Officer - 28 March 2025

The application is supported by a heritage assessment by RPC Ltd which complies with Historic England's guidance 'Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets.' Its conclusions on the scheme's likely impact on the setting of above ground designated heritage assets are accepted. Recommendation: no objection

East Cambs Ecologist - 23 January 2026

Supports the proposal on the basis of the information provided for protected species and habitats.

On the basis of the proposals, and taking account of Natural England advice dated 17/4/25, it is agreed that a likely significant effect on Wicken Fen SSSI, SAC and Ramsar site can be ruled out. No further appropriate assessment is needed

From the information provided the Senior Ecologist has reviewed this application and, as of 23/01/26 agrees with the BNG baseline conditions. On the basis of BNG/ecology matters, the application can therefore proceed to consent. Some aspects of the scheme, particularly the post-intervention habitats to be created, are not presently agreed, but agreement on such can be secured via S106 and via the BNG condition.

ECDC Trees Team - 14 January 2026

The revised soft landscaping scheme is an improvement and although it's disappointing that only one species of Willow has been included, the scheme is acceptable and its compliance should be conditioned.

Natural England - 22 April 2025

No objection

Re: Wicken Fen SSSI, SAC and Ramsar site

Based on the plans submitted, Natural England considers that the proposed development will not have likely significant effects on statutorily protected sites and has no objection to the proposed development.

To meet the requirements of the Habitats Regulations, we advise you to record your decision that a likely significant effect can be ruled out.

Natural England's generic advice on other natural environment issues is set out at Annex A.

Cambridgeshire Archaeology - 7 April 2025

The development lies in an area of archaeological potential to the north of the historic core of Wicken on the edge of a low lying area of Fenland known as Soham Mere. Due to the archaeological potential of the site a further programme of investigation and recording is required in order to provide more information regarding the presence or absence, and condition, of surviving archaeological remains within the development area, and to establish the need for archaeological mitigation of the development as necessary. A pre-commencement condition is recommended.

CCC Local Highway Authority (Development Management) – 18 March 2026

Has reviewed the Transport Technical Note, which addresses most of the previous concerns (regarding access widths and visibility, and passing places). No objections subject to conditions securing the following;

- Prior to the first use, visibility splays to be provided and maintained.
- Demolition or construction vehicles with a gross weight in excess of 3.5 tonnes shall service the site only via the A1123 east (via Soham/A142)) and only between the hours of 9:00hrs -15.30hrs, seven days a week.
- No development shall take place until details of the junction widening works have been delivered as per plan reference: P24073-001B Revision B.

Further comments;

Whilst the section of the access track between the A1123 and Public Footpath No. 27 where it heads west is not recorded as public highway, it does appear to be well used by members of the public and therefore, irrespective of its legal status the applicant will need to appropriately consider how they manage either the safe

interaction of construction vehicles and non-motorised users or the total closure of this route to non-motorised users.

CCC Local Highway Authority (Transport team) - 22 April 2025

The Transport Assessment team raise no objections to this application. With regards to issues surrounding access and visibility, the applicant is referred to the response by the Highways Development Management (HDM) team.

CCC Definitive Mapping Team - 11 April 2025

The application proposes to use Public Footpath 27, and Public Bridleways 37 and 38, to access the development.

The Definitive Map Team objects to the above application proposals, on the basis that the development will detrimentally impact the above Public Rights of Way (PROWS).

1. Whilst the Planning Statement states that any impact on the Public Right of Way will be "localised", Public Bridleway 37, Wicken is part of the Soham Wicken NMU route which is being created and advertised, potentially drawing increased use to the network in this area.
2. The document 1076-RPC004-LA03_V1.21 LANDSCAPE STRATEGY PLAN references the Public Right of Way but does not provide further details on proposed widths or surfacing of the PROW affected by the application.

Should planning permission be granted, The Definitive Map Team request that as a condition, prior to commencement of development, a meeting shall take place between the developer, The Definitive Map Officer and the Public Rights of Way (PROW) Officer to agree the final PROW mitigation strategy.

The final PROW mitigation strategy shall include provision for signage, managed crossings, managed safe access coincident with PROWs and any proposals for temporary stopping up and diversions. A record of the meeting held and the agreed final PROW mitigation strategy shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details

We welcome any contact from the developer with any additional information or proposals regarding the access to the application site,

CCC Lead Local Flood Authority – 29 September 2025

Have reviewed the following documents:

- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy, Arthian, ref: 316414, 16th September 2025

Based on these, no objection in principle to the proposed development. Requests the following conditions are imposed:

- A detailed design of the surface water drainage of the site to be agreed, based upon the principles within the agreed Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy: Church Road Farm BESS prepared by Mabbett (ref: 316414) dated 19th February 2025.

- Details of measures indicating how additional surface water run-off from the site will be avoided during the construction works to be agreed.

N.B The requested for storage and management of surface water on each parcel was subsequently confirmed to be an error and is not required.

Advisory comments and informatives also provided.

Environment Agency - 2 February 2026

No objection to the proposed development.

Flood Map for Planning shows the site lies within fluvial Flood Zone 3a, defined by the 'Planning Practice Guidance: Flood Risk and Coastal Change' as having a high probability of flooding. The proposal is for 'Installation of up to 400MW of Battery Energy Storage Systems and associated infrastructure for a temporary period of 35 years', which is classified as an 'essential infrastructure' development, as defined in Annex 3:Flood Vulnerability classification of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Considers the FRA to be acceptable for the scale and nature of the proposed development. We have no objection, provided that the development is carried out in line with the submitted FRA, '316414' (Arthian, dated 16/09/2025, issue 04), unless otherwise approved. We recommend that any electrical equipment is raised as high as practicable to reduce the risk of damage during an extreme flood event. Flood

Provides advice in respect of;
Sequential and Exception Test for flood risk
Consideration of any other sources of flooding

Advises that the site is located within the operational area of the Middle Fen and Mere Internal Drainage Board (IDB) and the IDB should be consulted with regard to flood risk associated with their watercourses and surface water drainage proposals.

The Ely Group of Internal Drainage Board (IDB) - 14 January 2026

The site is within the Middle Fen and Mere Internal Drainage District.
The applicant is aware of the Board's requirements for obtaining bylaw consent, for planting within the bylaw distance. Consent needs to be obtained before any works commences on site.

Historic England - 15 April 2025

Historic England provides advice when our engagement can add most value. In this case we are not offering advice. This should not be interpreted as comment on the merits of the application.

We suggest that you seek the views of your specialist conservation and archaeological advisers. You may also find it helpful to refer to our published advice at <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/find/>

It is not necessary to consult us on this application again, unless there are material changes to the proposals. However, if you would like advice from us, please contact us to explain your request.

UK Power Networks - 19 February 2026

There is no equipment on the land and so we have no objection

National Grid - Electricity - No Comments Received

Cambridge Ramblers Association - 14 April 2025

Objects.

Primary concern is with the impact of the development on the public rights of way adjacent to the site. In particular, the construction phase, estimated by the applicants to take 12 months, involves very heavy traffic on a public footpath and a public bridleway. 12 times two trips a day of HGV traffic for a year will require the construction of a roadway.

Access via a 'private track' from the main road soon becomes Wicken Public Footpath 27 and then joins Wicken Public Bridleway 38. Both these paths are well used and will be subjected to extremely heavy use by HGVs. Close to the village and linking to a network of public rights of way. A totally separate route is required for the construction traffic.

No environmental mitigation measures appear to have been included as a 'pay back' to the local population for the disruption caused and loss of amenity. The site sits within the Wicken Fen Vision area where environmental issues are of great significance.

Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service - 22 April 2025

Provides generic advice on BESS schemes and fire safety in respect of

- Effective identification and management of hazards and risks specific to the siting, infrastructure, layout, and operations at the facility.
- Site Access and maneuverability
- Provision of adequate water supply and firefighting infrastructure
- Vegetation sited and managed to avoid increased bushfire and grassfire risk
- Provision of accurate and current information for emergency responders during emergencies.
- Effective emergency planning and management, specific to the site, infrastructure and operations.
- Areas for Fire and Rescue Consideration - Consultation with Local Fire and Rescue Services.

HSE (Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects) - 28 March 2025

Confirms that the application does not fall within any HSE consultation zones. There is therefore no need to consult the HSE Land Use Planning (LUP) team on this planning application and the HSE LUP team has no comment to make.

British Horse Society - 10 April 2025

Objects on the grounds that equestrian access on the public rights of way is not safeguarded during and post construction and that no attempt has been made to improve equestrian access despite both national and local policy requirements to do so.

Cambs Police - Designing Out Crime - 7 April 2025

Supportive of changes to the fencing (further to comments dated 28th August 2024 provided as part of the screening opinion consultation 24/00883/SCREEN).

Comments under 24/00883/SCREEN included advice in respect of the following;

- Considers this to be an area of low/medium risk to the vulnerability to crime
- Fencing (initially deer-fencing was proposed and deemed unsecure)
- Requirements for CCTV
- Lighting design
- Security alarm systems
- Battery Storage Container security
- Signage informing any dangers

Anglian Water Services Ltd - 27 March 2025

Notes there is no connection to the Anglian Water sewers, therefore has no comments to make.

S.Green c/o/ National Trust – 10 April 2025

Does not object or support.

Supportive of renewable energy but has concerns regarding;

- 1) the impact of noise on breeding birds.
- 2) cumulative landscape impacts and baseline creep

CCC Minerals and Waste Development Control Team - No Comments Received

Network Rail - No Comments Received

5.2 The most recent site notice was displayed near the site on 2 February 2026 and a press advert was published in the Cambridge Evening News on 3 April 2025.

5.3 Neighbours – over 200 neighbouring properties were notified and the responses received are summarised below. A full copy of the responses are available on the Council's website.

- Impact on visual amenity and landscape
- Overbearing
- Risk to amenity from fire event
- Noise
- Contrary to policy
- Impact on amenity of properties (noise impact)
- Loss of agricultural land
- Impact on residential amenity
- Impact on views
- Impact on highway safety
- Impact on wildlife, ecology and trees
- Loss of agricultural land
- Loss of employment land
- Flood risk
- Impact on rights of way
- Pollution

- Impact on Wicken Fen
- Lack of consultation/ engagement

6.0 THE PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 6.1 *East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023)*
 GROWTH 2 Locational Strategy
 GROWTH 3 Infrastructure requirements
 GROWTH 5 Presumption in favour of sustainable development
 ENV 1 Landscape and settlement character
 ENV 2 Design
 ENV 4 Energy efficiency and renewable energy in construction
 ENV 6 Renewable Energy Development
 ENV 7 Biodiversity and geology
 ENV 8 Flood risk
 ENV 9 Pollution
 ENV 14 Sites of archaeological interest
 COM 7 Transport impact
 COM 8 Parking provision
- 6.2 *Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan 2024*
 Policy SBNP1 - Spatial Strategy
 Policy SBNP11 - Soham's Commons (South Horse Fen)
 Policy SBNP12 - Biodiversity and Wildlife Habitats
 Policy SBNP13 - Landscape Character
 Policy SBNP17 - High Quality Design
 Policy SBNP19 - Renewable Energy
 Policy SBNP21 - Flood Risk
 Policy SBNP22 – Road Safety and Parking
 Policy SBNP23 – Pedestrian, Cycle and Bridleway Priority Routes
 Policy SBNP24 - Millennium Walks, Green Lanes and Public Rights of Way
- 6.3 *Supplementary Planning Documents*
- Developer Contributions
 - Design Guide
 - Flood and Water
 - Natural Environment
 - Renewable Energy
 - Climate Change
- 6.4 *National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)*
 4 Decision-making
 8 Promoting healthy and safe communities
 9 Promoting sustainable transport
 11 Making effective use of land
 12 Achieving well designed places
 14 Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
 15 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

6.5 On 16 December 2025, the Government published a consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Whilst broad changes to the structure of the Framework are proposed as part of this consultation, these proposals could be subject to further change and can only be given very limited weight at this stage. Regard has therefore been had to the NPPF published in December 2024 in assessing the current application

6.6 *Planning Practice Guidance*

7.0 **PLANNING MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS AND COMMENTS**

The main planning considerations relevant to the determination of this application are considered to relate to:

- Principle of Development
- Loss of agricultural land
- Landscape/ Visual impacts
- Residential Amenity
- Fire Safety
- Highways, Access and Movement
- Historic Environment
- Biodiversity and Trees
- Flood Risk and Drainage
- Other material matters

Principle of Development

7.1 The proposed development would allow electricity from the Grid to be stored in batteries at times of low demand and then exported back to the Grid at time of high demand. The proposed development would provide a 'balancing service' essentially assisting in balancing grid capacity at times of stress. The proposed development would support an increasing reliance on renewable energy forms by providing a quick and flexible back-up energy source to the grid at times of high energy demand, contributing to ensuring a reliable energy supply across the Grid. The application proposal is considered to comprise renewable energy; notably where in August 2023 the PPG was updated to include reference to BESS systems within the renewable and low carbon energy sections and the National Policy Statement for energy discusses the need for storage as part of the energy infrastructure.

7.2 Neighbourhood Plan Policy SBNP1 sets out that land outside the Development Envelopes of Soham and Barway is defined as countryside where development will be strictly controlled. Development may be permitted as an exception in accordance with Local Plan Policy Growth 2 of the Local Plan and National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 80 (isolated homes in the countryside – now para. 84)

7.3 The principle of the development is established through development plan policies GROWTH 2 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023) which allows for renewable energy developments, in line with policy Local Plan policy ENV 6 and Neighbourhood Plan policy SBNP19, which accepts such developments unless their wider environmental, social and economic benefits would be outweighed by

significant adverse effects that cannot be remediated and made acceptable in relation to:

- The local environment and visual landscape impact
- Impact on the character and appearance of the streetscape/buildings
- Key views, in particular those of Ely Cathedral
- Protected species
- Residential amenity
- Safeguarding areas for nearby airfields; and
- Heritage Assets

7.4 As such, only where significant adverse effects result from the development, is there a policy requirement to weigh the environmental, social and economic benefits of the proposal against these effects, taking into account mitigation.

7.5 Furthermore, policy GROWTH3 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 states that key infrastructure requirements relevant to growth within the district includes upgrading electricity infrastructure.

7.6 The latest government agendas set out clear support for energy infrastructure schemes such as BESS, with an ambition to deliver 23-27 GW of battery storage, needed by 2030 to support its Clean Power 2030 Action Plan targets, up from 4.5 GW it said was installed in December 2024 (House of Commons research briefing: Battery Energy Storage Systems, 23 June 2025). In respect of national planning policy, in August 2023 the PPG was updated to include reference to BESS systems within the renewable and low carbon energy sections and the National Policy Statement for Energy discusses the need for storage as part of the energy infrastructure. In this regard therefore, there is clear local and strong national planning support for the principle of BESS schemes.

7.7 It is considered there is strong support for the principle of development of this nature both through both local and national policy.

Loss of agricultural land

7.8 The development would accommodate around 5.3Ha of Best and Most Versatile Land (BMVL), with around 2.1Ha comprising the perimeter access road, substation and battery plant and equipment and 1.1Ha for the wetland area. Whilst paragraph 168 of the NPPF indicates applicants should not be required to demonstrate need for renewable energy developments, the footnote to paragraph 188 requires that where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality.

7.9 There is no locally or nationally derived figure for what amounts to 'significant development' or significant loss of BMVL, but recent appeal decisions have concluded that 20 hectares is a sensible assumption of what constitutes 'significant', given that Natural England, the government's statutory advisor, does not need to be consulted for proposals on lesser areas of agricultural land. (see appeals 3365001, 3347424 and 3278065).

7.10 The main rationale for avoiding BMVL is to ensure that the nation's food security is not compromised. It is considered that, in view of the approach and explanation set out in the planning appeal examples and lack of evidence indicating food production would be adversely affected, it is not necessary in this instance to justify loss of BMVL, notwithstanding that the loss would only be generational, for 35 years until such time that the planning conditions would require reinstatement of the land back to agricultural use.

Landscape/ Visual impacts

7.11 Policies ENV 1 and ENV 2 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023) and Neighbourhood Plan policy SBNP13 require new development to complement the existing built form and relate sympathetically to its surroundings in terms of location, layout, scale, massing, materials, and colour. Proposals must respond positively to local context and architectural traditions, enhance the character and quality of the area, and contribute to the public realm. Local Plan policy ENV 6 requires development to avoid significant adverse visual landscape impacts.

7.12 The application site comprises an open parcel of land used for agriculture. To the east and north of the site, around 120Ha of solar PV array extends across the land, with nearby pylons also visible across the landscape. Whilst the general assumption or perception of the site and wider area may be of open countryside, it is clear that the landscape, particularly to the east and north of the site has been significantly altered through the energy infrastructure that currently exists.

7.13 The application is supported by a Landscape and Visual Appraisal ('LVA') which has considered the proposed development's landscape effects on the physical and perceptual characteristics of the surrounding environment during different phases; construction, operation, and decommissioning. The LVA considers the landscape will experience medium-level changes during the construction phase. The operational phase is anticipated to result in a minimal yet noticeable alteration to the existing landscape character, but with the overall impact on key landscape characteristics remaining limited. Decommissioning will bring about negligible changes, as the site is restored to its original state.

7.14 The LVA sets out that the landscape receptors, including the site itself, the Fens National Character Area, and the Fenland Local Character Area, have been assessed to have low to medium sensitivity to the proposed changes. The agricultural landscape surrounding the site is of medium value and lacks unique or rare features. The flat topography and existing human activity, such as nearby roads and overhead pylons, reduce the landscape's susceptibility to change. Consequently, the landscape is expected to endure the development with only slight to moderate adverse effects during the construction and operation phases, and imperceptible effects during decommissioning.

7.15 In respect to visual effects, these have been appraised by analysing its impact on various visual receptors, including users of Public Rights of Way (PRoW), road users, cyclists, pedestrians, and residents in the vicinity. The visual receptors adjacent to the site, particularly PRoW users, will experience moderate to substantial adverse effects during the construction phase, as the development will be highly visible due

to minimal existing vegetation for screening. The operational phase is anticipated to continue to exert substantial adverse visual effects, particularly during the first year, as the large-scale structures introduced will dominate the view (the highest element being the substation at around 6.8m in height). However, these effects will reduce slightly over time, as landscaping matures.

- 7.16 For road users along the A1123 and those on the National Cycle Network (NCN) 11, the visual effects are less pronounced due to the greater distance from the site and existing screening vegetation, anticipated to result in only slight adverse effects. Similarly, residents and train passengers within the Soham Conservation Area will experience only slight adverse visual effects due to the partial and distant views of the development, notwithstanding the aforementioned intervening energy infrastructure from these views.
- 7.17 In this regard, the LVA also considers the cumulative impacts of the development and the nearby solar farms of existing on the landscape and visual environment. It concludes that nearby developments, such as Wicken, North Angle, and Triangle Farm Solar Farms, have been designed with consideration for the existing landscape, integrating features like field hedgerows to reduce visual intrusion. While these solar farms have modestly altered the landscape by introducing industrial elements, the overall character remains consistent with the area's pre-existing industrial features, like pylons. The cumulative visual effects are most noticeable to pedestrians using nearby public paths, where repeated views of solar infrastructure diminish the scenic quality. However, the addition of the proposed Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) is expected to have a minor cumulative impact, blending into the existing landscape.
- 7.18 In summary, the LVA considers that the development will have noticeable effects on both the landscape and visual aspects of the area. The construction phase will bring about temporary changes, with medium impacts on the landscape and moderate to substantial adverse visual effects for those closest to the site. During the operational phase, while the landscape effects will remain slight to moderate, the visual impact will be more significant, particularly for nearby PROW users. However, these effects are expected to diminish over time and become imperceptible during the decommissioning phase, as the site is restored to its original condition. Mitigation strategies, such as preserving existing vegetation and enhancing screening through additional planting, are recommended to minimise these impacts.
- 7.19 The change to the character of the area would result in some conflict with policies ENV1, ENV 2 and SBNP13 and in this regard carries negative weight. In addition, there would be some short-term disruption during construction and then during decommissioning which also carries a degree of negative weight albeit this is very limited given its temporary nature. Whilst the development would bring about adverse visual impacts to users of nearby rights of way, the degree of impact is anticipated to reduce during the lifetime of the development. Notwithstanding that these impacts are likely to be confined to only a relatively short distance around the site. As such it is not anticipated that the development would result in 'significant' adverse visual or landscape impacts during its lifetime. As such, there is no conflict with policies GROWTH2 or ENV6 when considering visual landscape impact of the development.

Residential Amenity

- 7.20 Policy ENV2 of the Local Plan seeks to protect residential amenity. Local Plan Policy ENV 9 seeks to protect residents from noise, smell, vibration and other forms of pollution. ENV 6 and SBNP17 requires renewable energy developments to avoid significant adverse effects on residential amenity.
- 7.21 It is noted that the nearest residential properties are in Wicken; around 490m (0.3miles) away to the south along Church Road, and around 650m (0.4miles) away at Drury Lane to the west. Nearest properties to the east and north are over 1Km away. It is considered that the location and layout of the BESS infrastructure, would not be significantly close to the nearest residences so as to incur any adverse visual amenity impacts. It is noted that the access from Church Lane does run in relatively close proximity to residential properties adjacent to it. It is likely that some impact will arise from the construction of the development using this access point and in this regard the Council's Environmental Health team (EH) has recommended a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) is secured via condition, with recommendations of construction and delivery operations taking place during sociable hours, to reduce undue interference. The construction engineering itself may give rise to amenity harm, for example where piling may be required. Whilst the applicant has confirmed if this will be necessary at this stage, the EH team has recommended a condition requiring further details if this is required, in advance of said construction methods taking place.
- 7.22 As such, the construction process may give rise to adverse amenity impacts through noise, vibration and air pollution, but the severity of this can be reduced via appropriate safeguards, which can be secured via planning condition, as is standard across many developments currently underway across the district.
- 7.23 A number of concerns raised centre around potential noise nuisance during the operational phase of the development. In this regard, the application is supported by a noise impact assessment. The NIA has taken a precautionary approach and has modelled the noise outputs as a 'worse-case' scenario in that all cooling equipment is working at full rate at all times, whereas in reality this may only occur during short periods of the day.
- 7.24 The NIA concludes that, based on the modelled specification, the daytime BS4142 rating sound level is anticipated to only marginally exceed the background sound level as a 'worst-case' scenario. Consequently, the daytime noise impacts at the nearest receptors are thought to be more akin to 'low impact' in accordance with BS4142 and would be classed as a 'No Observed Adverse Effect Level' ('NOAEL') when assessed in accordance with the NPSE and NPPF. It does conclude that at this level it can slightly change the acoustic character of the area but not such that there is a change in quality of life for residents. The daytime noise impacts at all other receptors are negligible and classed as 'No Observed Effect Level' ('NOEL') when assessed in accordance with the NPSE and NPPF. Night-time noise levels are also considered to be acceptable based on the likelihood of people being indoors but with taking into account windows may be open e.g., for natural ventilation. The NIA also takes into account the low-frequency Moorhouse curve criteria and concludes that levels at receptors would be below levels that would otherwise cause disturbance.

- 7.25 It should be noted that given the bespoke nature of the 2 no. grid transformers, data is not yet available and technical noise guidance requires specification details that are yet to be determined. Consequently, the NIA sets out that noise limit levels have been defined to ensure that the cumulative noise emissions do not exceed the adopted criteria at the closest sensitive receptors. The BS4142 rating level noise limits and NANR45 limits set out in Section 3.4 of the NIA should be adhered to and the EH has recommended that planning conditions are secured to ensure this.
- 7.26 The noise impacts on bats flying above and foraging at the site boundaries has also been considered. It is thought that the proposed development poses a low risk of adverse noise impacts upon bats.
- 7.27 Concerns have also been raised regarding potential light pollution. In this regard, details are yet to be finalised, but it is considered that a suitable scheme could be secured via planning condition, taking in the need to ensure site security, but also the impact of lighting on the wider character of the area, dark skies and nocturnal wildlife. Notwithstanding, it is unlikely that, given the distances to the nearest dwellings and the proposed site boundary landscaping, light interference on residential properties would be significant.
- 7.28 In summary, it is not anticipated that the development would have any significant adverse impacts on residential amenity, subject to the development satisfying relevant conditions in respect of noise management, lighting and construction nuisance.

Fire Safety

- 7.29 Linked with residential amenity concerns, many comments received referred to concerns over fire safety and risk of fire from faulty or damaged batteries, with concerns over fire, smoke and ground/ watercourse pollution as a result.
- 7.30 The applicant has submitted a submitted a Detailed Safety and Emergency Management Strategy (DSERS) Revision C, which seeks to demonstrate that the site layout would comply with latest guidance in respect of fire separation, battery cabinet design and mitigation measures in the event of failure and/or fire breakout, and an emergency response plan would facilitate emergency services to intervene to contain/ control fire spread as well as on-site suppressants and alarm systems. The document sets out that the developer has engaged with the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) to ensure that the most appropriate methods are employed and will continue to do so during the final design stages. Whilst the Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service has not responded to the latest consultation on this document, the document itself, when compared against other planning approvals for this type of development, appears robust and an appropriate framework against which final details can be secured via planning condition.
- 7.31 The latest DSERS has been produced following the latest NFCC advice on BESS development, which was updated in February 2026 (<https://nfcc.org.uk/our-services/building-safety/grid-scale-energy-storage-system-planning-guidance-for-fire-and-rescue-services/>).

- 7.32 The latest site layout plan denotes two 240,000L water storage tanks at either end of the compound. This ensure that Fire and Rescue Services would have access from any wind direction/plume scenario and with sufficient water supply (exceeding NFCC requirement of 180,000L). Furthermore, in respect to ground/ water pollution, the fire water and potential contaminants are managed via a hydraulically isolated drainage system discharging to an on-site, lined attenuation basin of sufficient capacity to contain the full fire water volume together with runoff from a 1-in-100-year storm event without overtopping. The basin outfall is fitted with an automatically actuated, fail-safe containment valve interlocked with the fire detection system, closing on alarm and failing closed on loss of power, to ensure that the water does not continue through the drainage infrastructure into the nearest watercourse.
- 7.33 The DSERS sets out that all sensitive receptors within the NFCC V2 required 1 km radius have been considered with the nearest dwelling 490m from the BESS compound. Published data from large-scale BESS tests indicate that IDLH (Immediately Dangerous to Life or Health) gas concentration zones are typically limited to the immediate vicinity of the incident unit (of the order of tens of metres), with no off-site impacts reported from recent real incidents. The 490m separation therefore provides a substantial margin beyond these zones.
- 7.34 Some comments received refer to generalised concerns over regular failure of lithium batteries. In respect to the UK and statistics, the government's 'Renewable Energy Planning Database' (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/renewable-energy-planning-database-monthly-extract>), identifies that currently there are 136 operational BESS sites in the UK, ranging from standalone schemes to ones supporting renewable energy and fossil fuel schemes.
- Recorded Incidents*
- 7.35 In respect of recorded incidents, the government has set out that there is no reliable, publicly accessible record of the number of BESS fires that have occurred in the UK or elsewhere. The House of Commons recent research briefing on BESS (<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-07-07/29036>) does however cite the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI) as a source for information, although caveats this with advising that the EPRI database relies on news articles and does not verify their validity, so the list may not be accurate or exhaustive. Notwithstanding, this source is cited in the government document and is therefore material to understanding where incidents may have occurred and the specifics of each incident.
- 7.36 The EPRI database (accessed 09.02.2026) identifies three documented incidents of BESS fires in the UK: a fire at a BESS site in Liverpool in September 2020; a fire at a BESS project under construction in Essex in February 2025, and one at a site in Cirencester in March 2025:
(https://storagewiki.epri.com/index.php/BESS_Failure_Incident_Database)
- 7.37 A research paper on the Liverpool incident by EPRI (also referred to in the government's briefing and the latest NFCC advice) opines that BESS design has improved since the Liverpool BESS was installed in 2018: Some newer system designs use smaller, modularized cabinets with a few racks of batteries. The system layout limits damage because of thermal runaway and allows a more targeted first responder approach in the event of a fire. Indeed, whilst the Liverpool incident (the

first recorded in the UK) took two days until the site could recommence operations, the Essex incident took one day, and Cirencester incident, seven hours until operations could resume, indicating a more controlled incident, therefore broadly supporting EPRI's findings.

7.38 Many battery fires recorded in the EPRI database occurred in South Korea. It estimates 38 fires between 2017 and 2022. The South Korean Ministry of Industry found that the fires were caused by errors during installation, a lack of protection from the environment and a lack of safety systems.

7.39 Despite this number of fires, reports by EPRI states that the global failure rate for grid-scale BESS has decreased significantly since 2018, from almost 10 failure events per GW of storage per year, to less than one failure event per GW per year since 2020. For context, this development proposes 90MW of storage (1000MW=1GW). As such, based on this evidence, risks of fires have decreased and can be reasonably considered to be uncommon, particularly in the UK. There is no reliable, publicly accessible record of the number of BESS fires that have occurred in the UK or elsewhere.

Planning Appeals

7.40 Notwithstanding the above statistics, fire risk is a common concern with BESS schemes across the country and recent appeal decisions (appeals determined in 2025/ 2026) are helpful in understanding how the Secretary of State approaches this matter. Whilst appeal decisions do not necessarily set any precedent, they are capable of carrying material weight and in some instances, significant weight where clear comparisons are found. In a recent appeal for a BESS scheme in North-west Leicestershire (ref: APP/G2435/W/25/3370481) the Inspector acknowledged concerns over fire risk but concluded that conditions securing submission of a Battery Safety Management Plan, incorporating a risk reduction strategy and an Emergency Response Plan before the site became operational, would be reasonable and necessary to make the development acceptable.

7.41 In an appeal against the decision of Hertsmere Borough Council (APP/N1920/W/25/3368845), the Inspector concluded that evidence indicated that fires at BESS sites were rare and also concluded that a Battery Safety Management Plan and an Emergency Response Plan could be controlled by planning condition. The Inspector here notes that The NPPF makes it clear that the focus of planning policies and decisions should be on whether proposed development is an acceptable use of land, rather than the control of processes or emissions (where these are subject to separate pollution control regimes), citing NPPF paragraph 201 which sets out that "Planning decisions should assume that these regimes will operate effectively".

Regulatory Regime

7.42 On the matter of regimes, the Health and Safety Executive has a Grid-scale battery energy storage systems webpage (<https://www.hse.gov.uk/electricity/battery-energy-storage-systems.htm>), which sets out relevant health and safety legislation for BESSs in Great Britain as including:

- The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, which places legal duties on employers to manage risks to employees, other workers and the public.

- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, which requires employers to identify potential risks to employee health and safety and appropriately manage them.
- The Electricity at Work Regulations 1989, which requires all work activities that uses or might be affected by electricity to be done safely. All foreseeable risks must also be assessed and minimised as far as possible.
- The Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations 2002, which requires employers to identify the risks posed by dangerous substances (which are substances that may be explosive, flammable or oxidising) in the workplace. Employers must put in place measures to remove risks to the safety of employees and others or, if it is not possible to fully remove risks, mitigate them and limit the effects of potential incidents involving the dangerous substances.
- The Construction Design and Management Regulations 2015, which sets requirements to ensure construction projects are carried out in a way that secures health and safety, from conception to completion.
- The Dangerous Substances (Notification and Marking of Sites) Regulations 1990 (NAMOS), which requires the operators of sites that hold 25 tonnes or more of a dangerous substance to notify their local fire and rescue service in writing, and to display signs.

7.43 The website states that “If you comply with these regulations you will manage the health and safety risks of BESS”. The Health and Safety Executive considers that the current regulatory framework is sufficient and suitably robust in relation to lithium-ion batteries and battery energy storage systems, as set out in the aforementioned House of Commons research briefing.

7.44 Furthermore, the government published guidance: Health and Safety Guidance for Grid Scale Electrical Energy Storage Systems in April 2024. Notwithstanding, the government’s Clean Power Action Plan (December 2024) stated that Defra would consult on including grid-scale batteries within the Environment Agency’s review of ‘Environmental Permitting Regulations’. This consultation was initiated in August 2025 and closed in October 2025, with feedback expected to be used to shape detailed proposals, which will likely be subject to further consultation.

7.45 It is clear that BESS developments and the technology within them is evolving and the government are seeking to review regulatory regimes to ensure that the safety of such operations is maintained as it evolves. Notwithstanding, at this present time, the current regimes and regulations as set out above, are considered to be sufficient in accordance with the Health and Safety Executive advice. Therefore, in accordance with NPPF paragraph 207, it should not therefore fall to the planning regime to control every aspect of BESS schemes safety. The LPA should assume that the regimes will operate effectively. This is also relevant where the matter of potential cyber-attacks could undermine the safety of the site which has been raised during the recent consultation. In this regard, the applicant would be expected to ensure that their systems are safeguarded as other potentially vulnerable operations. It is not for the planning system to address such matters and no evidence of such attacks undermining BESS systems has been presented.

7.46 A condition can be secured which sets out a requirement for the developer to submit an Detailed Safety and Emergency Management Strategy, which would build on and finalise the outline DSERS to establish the final battery design and containment and,

in the event of a fire; potential chemical hazards; isolation of electrical infrastructure and measures to extinguish or cool batteries in the event of a fire; management of toxic gas release, and; measures to minimise environmental damage e.g., ground contamination, water run-off, toxic gases. The plan would also establish handling and disposal of damaged batteries and details of regular on-site emergency training exercises. The condition would be expected to be considered by the Local Fire and Rescue Service, to ensure that it meets with their standards and guidance set out within the 'National Fire Chiefs Council: Grid scale energy storage system planning - Guidance for fire and rescue services' (February 2026) and would likely be informed by the government's aforementioned Health and Safety Guidance for Grid Scale Electrical Energy Storage Systems. There is no reason, based on the submission, that the development could not meet these standards.

- 7.47 Paragraph 56 of the NPPF sets out that local planning authorities should consider whether otherwise unacceptable development could be made acceptable through the use of conditions or planning obligations. It is considered that in this regard, the aforementioned planning appeals carry significant weight in advising the Local Planning Authority that planning conditions securing final details of fire risk mitigation and management are appropriate. As such, a refusal on grounds of fire risk is not one that could be robustly defended based on the details submitted thus far, and where the development could otherwise be made acceptable through planning condition(s) and would be capable of avoiding conflict with Local Plan policies ENV 2, ENV 6 and ENV 9.
- 7.48 Notwithstanding the above and for completeness, officers have commissioned an independent review of the fire safety strategy proposed by the applicant, the costs for which the applicant has agreed to cover. The findings of this will follow as an update to this report.

Highways, Access and Movement

- 7.49 Local Plan policy ENV 2 requires development proposals to incorporate the highway and access principles set out in Policy COM 7, ensuring safe and convenient access for all users, minimising conflict between vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists, and providing permeability to walking and cycling routes while protecting public rights of way. Neighbourhood Plan policies SBNP22 and SBNP23 and SBNP24 echo this and reinforce the need to protect and enhance public rights of way including bridleways. Paragraph 115 of the NPPF requires "safe and suitable access for all users." Paragraph 116 of the NPPF states that development should only be refused on highway grounds where there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety or where the residual cumulative impacts on the network would be severe.
- 7.50 The proposal utilises the existing access off Church Lane and a transport technical note demonstrates that adequate visibility splays can be achieved at the access. The access itself, whilst serving an agriculture use, was also used as a construction access for a County Council planning permission for underground cabling, whereby the access was used by construction vehicles CCC/22/083/FUL, with no improvements required to the access track itself, aside from some hedge cutting. This indicates that its use for both short-term construction/decommissioning and in the longer term e.g., for maintenance and, where necessary, emergency access is

achievable. Furthermore, the applicant has agreed to make slight improvements to the access radii which requires works within the highway. Separate consent would be required from the Local Highway Authority in this regard, but the LHA raises no objection.

- 7.51 The Highways officer in their response refers to local public rights of way (PRoW), noting that some are close by and are regularly used and that there will need to be carefully managed during construction, to avoid any pedestrian/ equestrian vs. construction vehicles conflict. Indeed, this is a matter of concern for a number of residents and users of the PRoWs, including for equestrian uses.
- 7.52 Whilst no further comments from the County Council's Definitive Mapping team have been received following their initial objection and further to re-consultation on the applicant's footpath strategy plan (1076-RPC004-LA014 v2), nonetheless the Definitive Mapping team implied that a planning securing further details as to how the PRoWs would be safeguarded and or temporarily diverted during construction, could be secured. In this regard a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) could be secured via condition. This would seek to establish details of the proposed routes for construction vehicles and including mitigation and notification measures for users of the highways and rights of way (including pedestrian and equestrian users) during the construction and decommissioning phases. The aforementioned CEMP, would also ensure that construction materials storage did not impede any PRoW.
- 7.53 In summary, the development, subject to the aforementioned conditions raises no concerns in respect of access and highway safety.

Historic Environment

- 7.54 Whilst there are no listed buildings, scheduled monuments or conservations areas who's setting could be affected by the development, Cambridgeshire County Council's Historic Environment team has identified that the site lies in an area of archaeological potential. A pre-commencement condition, securing a strategy for further investigation is therefore necessary to ensure that appropriate works are undertaken to establish the presence of any artefacts of historic relevance before construction works proceed.

Biodiversity and Trees

- 7.55 Local Plan Policy ENV 7 and Neighbourhood Plan policy SBNP12 recognise the importance of habitats such as trees, hedgerows, wetlands, and ponds in supporting biodiversity and ecological connectivity. Paragraphs 180 and 187 of the NPPF require development to minimise impacts on biodiversity, deliver measurable net gains, and contribute to resilient ecological networks. Policy NE6 of the Natural Environment SPD also requires applicants to provide clear evidence of how biodiversity impacts will be avoided, mitigated, and managed, supported by pre-and post-development biodiversity assessments.
- 7.56 The application is supported by an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) which seeks to establish the potential impacts of the development and enhancement opportunities

for species and habitats. The application is also supported by a Biodiversity Net Gain metric, which establishes the baseline biodiversity value of the site and sets out how the development will achieve 20% net gain in biodiversity (rather than the statutory 10%), as per the requirements of Neighbourhood Plan policy SBNP12.

- 7.57 In respect of general biodiversity impacts, the site is currently generally a mixture of hardstanding, arable agricultural field and grassy tracks and is considered to currently have relatively low biodiversity value. The proposed development targets arable land of low biodiversity value for habitat creation whilst retaining habitats of higher value such as woodland, hedgerows, and off-site ditches to minimise losses and maximise gains. The application is also supported by a Planting Plan which is considered to coincide and is complementary with the habitats identified in the local vicinity, including those within designated sites and Priority Areas, as well as local priority habitats, providing measurable gains and expansion of ecological networks. The Landscape Strategy plan, Planting Plan and Landscape Ecological Management Plan include the creation of new wildlife corridors and networks through woodland, hedgerow, and tree planting, as well as grassland and wetland features.
- 7.58 In respect to birds; Habitat creation occupies around two-thirds of the overall application site area and comprises the replacement of monoculture perennial rye with meadow grassland and a wetland area, woodland, and the creation and extension (both on and off-site) of hedgerows and tree planting. These measures are considered by the applicant to represent a substantial improvement of habitats and therefore will benefit a wide range of breeding bird species (including ground nesting birds), both through increased foraging and nesting opportunities.
- 7.59 In respect to bats, the EclA considers the impacts of construction and operational phases, taking into account noise, vibration, lighting and building in the vicinity that may be suitable roosting habitat. Whilst the construction phase does not identify any significant impacts, nonetheless the applicant's ecologist has recommended that works are undertaken with oversight by a suitably experienced Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) who will also need to carry out regular pre-works inspections of the buildings and features beside the access track. Mitigation by way of the ECoW, as well as restricting hours of construction, and restricted lighting both at construction and operation phases of the development are identified recommendations.
- 7.60 The EclA also considers other mammals, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates and opportunities to enhance habitat for these groups is identified. Noting resident's concerns raised over the presence of Hares at the site, the EclA concludes that the proposals are unlikely to benefit or cause detriment to this species.
- 7.61 Two statutory designated sites for nature conservation were scoped into the detailed assessment, which included Wicken Fen and Soham Wet Horse Fen. The proposal also fell within the Impact Risk Zone of these two sites, with water discharge and the construction of underground cables being highlighted as potential impact pathways on these sites. Three non-statutory designated sites for nature conservation were scoped into the assessment, which included New River and Monk's Lode CWS, Burwell Brick Pit CWS and Moat Closes CWS. The greatest identified impact to these sites is in respect of construction, where surface water could enter into the watercourses linked to these sites. In regard, the applicant's ecologist has

recommended that a Construction Environment Management Plan is secured, to ensure that surface water is managed and pollutants prevented.

7.62 The EclA also identifies that the northern proportion of the Site falls within the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan area, where two biodiversity policies are outlined; SBNP11 Soham's Commons and the aforementioned SBNP12 Biodiversity and Wildlife Habitats. The survey notes that SBNP11 refers to the protection of the Soham Commons, the nearest parcel of which to the Site being South Horse Fen (850m northeast) and considers that the proposal aligns with this policy through the creation of comparable habitat that acts as a stepping stone for biodiversity within the green network, outlined as L01 in Soham Design Guidance. In conclusion, the EclA opines that no significant effects on designated sites and irreplaceable habitats are anticipated.

7.63 The EclA sets out recommendations for further details to be secured by planning condition which are summarised as;

- Precautionary Method of Working (PMW) – as an annexe to the CEMP
- Sensitive Lighting Strategy (as already noted above)
- Landscape Ecological Management Plan (LEMP)
- Biodiversity Gain Plan and Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan
- Decommissioning Strategy

7.64 The Council's Ecologist and Tree officer has engaged proactively with the applicant which has led to amendments and clarifications on a number of biodiversity and soft landscaping matters associated with the development. They have concluded that the latest surveys and proposals are acceptable, subject to conditions.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

7.65 The LNRS is a statutory document which plans, maps and creates priorities for nature in a given area. The LNRS identifies on a map (the 'habitat map') "areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity" (ACB sites), which have been determined to offer the potential to become important if measures were taken to improve the habitats on that particular site.

7.66 For this particular application, a small parcel of land west of the BESS compound and east of the access track (but outside of the application site) is identified a LNRS ACB site, and which is currently of the same agricultural status of the application site. In this instance, the ACB site is located immediately adjacent to land proposed to be enhanced through the landscaping and planting plan, incorporating linear native hedgerow and it is considered that the development would complement the opportunities identified through the LNRS. As such, this carries some positive weight.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

7.67 The applicant's BNG metric identified that through both on and off-site mitigation and enhancement, 129% habitat units, 97% hedgerow units and 14% watercourses units can be achieved. In respect to habitat and hedgerow units, this is far in excess of statutory and Neighbourhood Plan policy requirements. Whilst the watercourse units fall shy of the 20% target, this is understood to be largely due to limitations resulting from the need to maintain riparian access to the watercourses. Nonetheless, the total

gains achieved across all three habitat units are considered to satisfy the policy requirements.

- 7.68 The final Biodiversity Net Gain Plan and detailed 30-year habitat management strategy will be required to be agreed prior to commencement of development, in accordance with the Environment Act 2020.

Flood Risk and Drainage

- 7.69 Local Plan Policy ENV 8 and Neighbourhood Plan policy SBNP21 requires all developments to avoid flood risk and contribute to an overall reduction in flood risk where possible. Development should normally be located in Flood Zone 1 and will not be permitted where it would increase the risk of flooding on-site or elsewhere, compromise flood defences, or create unsafe access during flooding events.

- 7.70 The application site lies in an area at high risk (Flood Zone 3) and medium risk (Flood Zone 2) of flooding but in an area benefitting from flood defences. At the time of the application submission (March 2025), the site was identified through Environment Agency (EA) mapping as lying wholly in Flood Zone 1. However shortly after submission, the EA revised their wider mapping which now places the site across Flood Zones 2 and 3, with the access from Church Road in Flood Zone 1.

- 7.71 The Council's adopted Flood and Water SPD follows the requirements of the NPPF which sets out that where development is proposed in higher areas of flood risk, the applicant should undertake a sequential test analysis, to demonstrate that other land at a lower risk of flooding, that is reasonably available to accommodate the development has been considered but has been scoped out, with evidence as to why. Following successful completion of the sequential test, the exception test must demonstrate that the development carries wider sustainability benefits that outweigh the flood risk and that the development can be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere.

Sequential Test

- 7.72 Due to the post-submission change to the EA's flood mapping, the applicant has not undertaken a sequential test, mainly due to the prior connection agreement with the network operator, which will naturally restrict the scope of where the BESS can viably go having regard to the necessary infrastructure e.g., cabling required to make the connection.

- 7.73 It is noted that there are areas within a similar range to the connection point that are at a lower risk of flooding. These areas however would bring the BESS closer to residences or the highway and therefore may yield significant adverse impacts in respect to visual or residential amenity harm.

- 7.74 Notwithstanding, a recent High Court judgement decided that the NPPF does not direct that failure to undertake the sequential test ought to lead to an automatic refusal of planning permission, particularly where there are associated material considerations. In this instance, the location of the development is obviously restricted by the agreed connection point and potential adverse impacts of alternative locations.

As such, whilst the failure to undertake the sequential test carries negative weight, this weight is tempered by these material considerations.

Exception test

- 7.75 The development by its very nature in respect of its contribution toward a more sustainable and stable energy network would yield wider sustainability benefits that would outweigh the flood risk.
- 7.76 Furthermore, the development is classed as 'essential infrastructure' and the Planning Practice Guidance sets out that essential infrastructure should be designed and constructed to remain operational and safe in times of flood, having regard to the exception test.
- 7.77 The application is supported by a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) which was updated following the EA's mapping update and considers the impacts of flooding at the site, setting out that due to flood defences, in a flood event the site would not be significantly exposed. Furthermore, having regard to two modelled defence breach scenarios the site would also not be at risk. Notwithstanding, the mitigation proposed is to raise the infrastructure above predicted flood heights that have been modelled based on a complete failure of defences and worse-case scenario, the risk of which is considered to be low. Access in the event of flooding would still be achievable by emergency vehicles if required, notwithstanding that the infrastructure can be controlled remotely e.g., turned off.
- 7.78 The Environment Agency has raised no objection to the development, subject to it being constructed in accordance with the design as set out in the FRA.
- 7.79 The Lead Local Flood Authority has considered how the development would address surface water. The site itself is generally in an area of low surface water flood risk and does not appear to lie across any surface water flow paths. As such, it is not anticipated that the development would displace surface water to the detriment of adjacent land and property. Furthermore, the development proposes to attenuate its surface water underneath the BESS infrastructure via a permeable sub-base, whereby once reaching, it will then discharge via pipework to the nearest drain on the western boundary. The outfall is intended to be fitted with a toggle switch that would activate automatically in the event of a failure e.g., fire, whereby the surface water would be shut off from discharging into the drain to prevent pollution. The freeboard of the attenuation infrastructure has been designed to accommodate maximum modelled rain event plus the volume of water necessary to tackle a fire outbreak, as per NFCC guidance. The LLFA raises no objection subject to conditions securing a detailed drainage strategy, and; a strategy to avoid pollution during construction.
- 7.80 In conclusion, the development demonstrates that it would be safe for its lifetime and would not increase flood risk. Furthermore, the development demonstrates that it can adequately manage surface water and would not cause risk of pollution to nearby watercourses.

Other material matters

Employment land policies

7.81 Reference has been made to the development failing to comply with local Plan policies EMP 2 and EMP 3. These policies deal with existing business in the countryside and new employment in the countryside which, based on the preamble to these policies is not relevant to the development at hand.

Site Security

7.82 Cambridgeshire Police has provided advice in respect of ensuring that security measures are built into the scheme e.g., lighting, CCTV, alarms. A suitable planning condition securing such measures can be reasonably imposed.

8.0 Planning Balance

8.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, requires that applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

8.2 The application site lies outside of the development envelope and within the countryside. Policy ENV6 and SBNP19 states that proposals for renewable energy and associated infrastructure will be supported, unless their wider environmental, social and economic benefits would be outweighed by significant adverse effects that cannot be remediated. The proposal has been assessed to not have a significant adverse impact on the prescribed criterion listed under ENV 6 and SBNP19 and spatially, such schemes are supported though policy GROWTH 2. As such, no policy conflict in this regard occurs. This carries neutral weight.

8.3 The scheme has demonstrated that, subject to appropriate mitigation secured through planning conditions, it would not result in unacceptable harm to the amenities of nearby dwellings e.g., through pollution or visual harm, protected species, key views or upon the landscape. This also carries neutral weight.

8.4 Naturally with all development, the character of an area will change. In this instance, the change to the character of the area will be notable, mainly in shorter-range views and only partially once the landscaping matures. Furthermore, the scheme is appreciated with the backdrop of the solar farm and substation which has already affected the rural character of this area. The change to the character of the area during the lifetime of the development, particularly localised visual impacts from users of nearby rights of way, would result in some conflict with policies ENV1, ENV 2 and SBNP13 and in this regard, officers consider this carries moderate negative weight. In addition, there would be some short-term disruption during construction and then during decommissioning which also carries a degree of negative weight, albeit this is limited given its temporary nature. Furthermore, the application of the sequential test for flood risk has not been undertaken, albeit the development in any case demonstrates that it will not be unduly exposed to flood risk and would not increase flooding elsewhere. This therefore which carries minor negative weight.

8.5 The scheme would provide battery storage for electricity, lessening the pressure on the grid given the recent rise in demand for renewable energies and would assist toward energy security and management. The PPG identifies that Battery Energy Storage Systems enable the use of energy more flexibly and de-carbonise the energy system cost-effectively, deferring or avoiding the need for costly network upgrades

and new generation capacity. The NPPF at paragraph 168(a) states that significant weight should be given to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy generation and the proposals contribution to a net zero future.

- 8.6 The proposal would cause some harm to the character and appearance of the immediate surrounding area to the site resulting, with visual effects highly noticeable, particularly to those using the public rights of way adjacent to the development, until the landscaping matures which will reduce this effect over time. Therefore, there is some conflict with the development plan. This harm, however, would be limited both in respect of its localised nature, and that the development is temporary in nature. As such, these conflicts do not indicate conflict with the development plan as a whole. Furthermore, having regard to the significant weight that is to be afforded to the benefits of renewable energy development, this is considered to outweigh the identified but limited conflicts with the development plan.
- 8.7 In applying the planning balance, the proposal is considered to comply with the development plan when taken as a whole. Notwithstanding, the identified benefits outweigh any limited adverse impacts identified. The application is therefore recommended for approval.

9.0 Human Rights Act

- 9.1 The development has been assessed against the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998, and in particular Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life) and Article 1 of the First Protocol (protection of property). Under the Act, it is unlawful for a public authority, such as East Cambridgeshire District Council, to act in a manner that is incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights. In arriving at this recommendation, due regard has been given to the applicant's reasonable development rights and expectations which have been balanced and weighed against the wider community interests, as expressed through third party interests / the Development Plan and Central Government Guidance. The Council is also permitted to control the use of property in accordance with the general interest and the recommendation set out below is considered to be a proportionate response to the submitted application based on the considerations set out in this report.

10.0 Equalities and Diversities

- 10.1 In considering this planning application due regard has been had to the public sector equality duty (PSED) under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, which means that the Council must have due regard to the need (in discharging its functions) to put an end to unlawful behaviour that is banned by the Equality Act, including discrimination, harassment and victimisation and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not. Account has been taken of the PSED and it is considered that the recommendation set out below would not undermine the objectives of the duty.

11.0 APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 - Recommended Planning Conditions

APPENDIX 1 - Recommended Planning Conditions

- 1 Development shall be carried out in accordance with the drawings and documents listed below

Plan Reference	Version	Date Received
Site Location Plan 1076-RPC004-PL02-FG01	1.0	17.03.2025
Site Layout Plans 1076-RPC004-PL02-FG03	2	10.02.2026
Switchroom Elevation 1076-RPC004-TE01-FG01		17.03.2025
32kV Substation Elevation 1076-RPC004-TE01-FG02		17.03.2025
DNO Control Room Elevation 1076-RPC004-TE01-FG03		17.03.2025
BESS Container Elevation 1076-RPC004-TE01-FG06		17.03.2025
BESS Transformer 1076-RPC004-TE01-FG07		17.03.2025
Site Access Fencing and CCTV Column 1076-RPC004-TE01-FG04		17.03.2025
Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy 316414 Highways Technical Note - P24073	4.0	19.09.2025
Footpath Strategy 1076-RPC004-LA014	2.1	19.09.2025
Noise Impact Assessment NP-011562	7	17.03.2025
Landscape Ecological Management Plan RPC004-EC03	6.0	19.09.2025
Landscape Strategy Plan 1076-RPC004-LA03	3	19.09.2025
Planting Plan 1076-RPC004-LA07	3.1	19.09.2025
Water Storage Tank 1076-RPC004-TE01-FG08	1	10.02.2026

- 1 Reason: To define the scope and extent of this permission.
- 2 The development hereby permitted shall be commenced within 3 years of the date of this permission.
- 2 Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended.
- 3 The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to their use in the construction of the development. All works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
- 3 Reason: To safeguard the character and appearance of the area, in accordance with policy ENV2 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023) and Policy SBNP17 of the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan 2024.
- 4 Prior to any work commencing on the site a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority regarding mitigation measures for noise, dust and lighting during the construction phase and a Waste Minimisation Plan. These shall include, but not be limited to, other aspects such as access points for deliveries and site vehicles, site compound, waste and proposed phasing/timescales of development etc, The CEMP shall be adhered to at all times during all phases.
- 4 Reason: To safeguard the residential amenity of neighbouring occupiers and the local environment, in accordance with policies ENV 2 and ENV 6 of the East Cambridgeshire

Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023) and Policy SBNP19 of the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan 2024. The condition is pre-commencement in order to ensure that the protection measures are implemented prior to any site works taking place.

- 5 Prior to the commencement of the development, a Noise Management Plan shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. The Noise Management Plan (NMP) shall include the following details;
- A Noise Verification Assessment detailing the specification of all plant equipment to be installed within the development and evidence to demonstrate how the installed plant equipment does not exceed the predicted noise levels as set out in the submitted Noise Impact Assessment ref NP-011562 Revision 07 dated 21 November 2024 ('the NIA').
 - A schedule detailing how regular noise monitoring will be conducted and recorded for the lifetime of the development. Records of the noise monitoring shall be made available to the Council on request.
 - A noise complaint action plan which shall include details of how the operator will investigate and record any noise complaints received and the contact details of who noise complaints can be made to.

The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved noise management plan.

- 5 Reason: To safeguard the residential amenity of neighbouring occupiers, in accordance with policies ENV 2 and ENV 6 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023) and Policy SBNP19 of the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan 2024. The condition is pre-commencement in order to ensure that the protection measures are implemented prior to any site works taking place.
- 6 Notwithstanding Condition 5, the level of sound emitted from any fixed plant, infrastructure and/or machinery associated with the operational element of the development shall not exceed:
- i) the daytime and night-time noise rating levels, measured at the nearest sound-sensitive premises as set out in Table 9, of the Noise Impact Assessment ref NP-011562 Revision 07 dated 21 November 2024 ('the NIA'); and,
 - ii) the maximum low frequency levels as set out within the NANR 45 low frequency criteria within Table 10, of the NIA.
- 6 Reason: To safeguard the residential amenity of neighbouring occupiers, in accordance with policies ENV 2 and ENV 6 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023) and Policy SBNP19 of the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan 2024.
- 7 Prior to the commencement of the development, a full schedule of all soft landscape works, which follows the principles set out in the submitted Landscape Strategy Plan 1076-RPC004-LA03 V3, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The schedule shall include tree protection and planting plans, a written specification; schedules of trees and plants noting species, plant sizes, proposed numbers/densities; and a detailed implementation programme and long-term management strategy for the lifetime of the development, including a replacement planting strategy where planting is removed, uprooted or destroyed or dies. It shall also indicate

all existing trees and hedgerows on the land and details of any to be retained. The works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

- 7 Reason: To safeguard the character and appearance of the area, in accordance with policies ENV 1, ENV 2 and ENV 6 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023) and Policies SBNP13 and SBNP19 of the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan 2024.
- 8 No development shall take place including any site clearance works until a Construction Ecological Management Plan (CEcMP) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The CEcMP shall include the following:
 - a) Risk assessment of potentially damaging construction activities.
 - b) Identification of "biodiversity protection zones".
 - c) Practical measures (both physical measures and sensitive working practices) to avoid or reduce impacts during construction (may be provided as a set of method statements).
 - d) The location and timings of sensitive works to avoid harm to biodiversity features.
 - e) The times during which construction when specialist ecologists need to be present on site to oversee works.
 - f) Responsible persons and lines of communication.
 - g) The role and responsibilities on site of an ecological clerk of works (ECoW) or similarly competent person.
 - h) Use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs if applicable.
 - i) The location for the storage of materials.

The approved CEcMP shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

- 8 Reason: To protect and enhance species in accordance with policies ENV1, ENV2 and ENV7 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023) and policies SBNP12 and SBNP19 of the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan 2024.
- 9 No development, including vegetation/site clearance, shall commence on site until a detailed 'Landscape and Ecology Management & Monitoring Plan' (LEMMP) for all soft landscaping and habitat creation within the application site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This plan shall cover the operational lifetime of the development and include long term objectives, management responsibilities, creation timescales and maintenance schedules for all landscaped areas of the development site. Thereafter, these areas shall be managed and maintained in full accordance with these agreed details unless first agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority for the duration of the development's lifetime. The Plan shall include, as a minimum, the following:
 - a) Details on the creation and management of target habitats identified within the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment Report and Metric for on-site net gain.
 - b) Monitoring details for all target habitats identified within the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment Report and Metric, including targeted review years.
 - c) Details of any corrective action that will be undertaken if habitat delivery fails to achieve the requirements set out in the approved Biodiversity Net Gain Report.

- 9 Reason: To protect and enhance species in accordance with policies ENV1, ENV2 and ENV7 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023) and policies SBNP12 and SBNP19 of the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan 2024.
- 10 Prior to works proceeding above ground level and notwithstanding the plans submitted, a method statement and plan for enhancing biodiversity throughout the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the biodiversity enhancement measures shall be carried out and retained in accordance with the approved details.
- 10 Reason: To ensure the protection of wildlife and the habitat which supports it and secure opportunities for the enhancement of the landscape value of the site in accordance with policies in accordance with policies ENV1, ENV2 and ENV7 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023) and policies SBNP12, SBNP13 and SBNP19 of the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan 2024.
- 11 Notwithstanding the plan submitted, no development shall commence until a detailed Fire Mitigation, Verification and Compliance Report and updated Battery Safety Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The submitted strategy shall:
- Confirm the battery technology intended to be utilised and identify how any specific risk associated with this technology will be intended to be mitigated against.
 - Confirm the protection measures which will be implemented within the design of battery cabinets to mitigate against the risk of contaminant release to sensitive environmental receptors, notably underlying ground.
 - Provide details of water supply/hydrants to be utilised in the event of a fire.
 - Detail the specification fire detection system intended and its operation, including the specific operating parameters of the detectors and how they will be monitored.
 - Detail the specification and duration of fire protection provided by the partitions between battery cabinets and by the enclosure of the battery unit, offering justification as to why this is appropriate relative to risk posed.
 - Detail the intended fire suppression system specification and its operation, including detail of the suppression technology intended and product to be utilised for the purpose of suppression.
 - Detail the design methodology for the deflagration vents and/or explosion prevention measures.
 - Provision of an Emergency Response Plan (to include details of the emergency, environmental and recovery plan which would be enacted in the case of emergency event occurring, and details demonstrating how it will be ensured that potential release of adverse contamination to the surrounding environment, including through any drainage strategy will be prevented and mitigated against effectively, considerate to emergency water supply and discharge requirements). The Emergency Response Plan shall be maintained and reviewed on a regular basis (at least once every 2 years) and any material changes notified to Cambridge and Suffolk Fire and Rescue.

The development shall be undertaken strictly in accordance with the approved details.

- 11 Reason: To ensure proper infrastructure for the site in the interests of public safety in accordance with policy ENV 2 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023) and Policy SBNP17 of the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan 2024.

- 12 No development shall commence until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has implemented a programme of archaeological work, commencing with the evaluation of the application area, that has been secured in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) that has first been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority in writing. For land that is included within the WSI, no development shall take place other than under the provisions of the agreed WSI, which shall include:
 - a. the statement of significance and research objectives;
 - b. The programme and methodology of investigation and recording and the nomination of a competent person(s) or organisation to undertake the agreed works;
 - c. The timetable for the field investigation as part of the development programme;
 - d. The programme and timetable for the analysis, publication & dissemination, and deposition of resulting material and digital archives.
- 12 Reason: To safeguard archaeological assets within the approved development boundary from impacts relating to any demolitions or groundworks associated with the development scheme and to ensure the proper and timely preservation and/or investigation, recording, reporting, archiving and presentation of archaeological assets affected by this development, in accordance with policy ENV 14 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023).
- 13 The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until such time as a scheme to contain and dispose of surface water in the event of a fire has been submitted to, and approved in writing, by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall be implemented as approved.
- 13 Reason: To protect and prevent the pollution of controlled waters from potential pollutants associated with current and previous land uses in accordance with policy ENV 9 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023) and policy SBNP19 of the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan 2024.
- 14 Prior to the first use of the development a scheme of hedgehog recovery measures has shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved measures shall be implemented prior to first use and maintained for a minimum of 10 years following their installation.
- 14 Reason: This is to protect and enhance species in accordance with policies ENV1, ENV2 and ENV7 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023) and in accordance with policy SPD HR1 of the Hedgehog Recovery SPD 2024.
- 15 Prior to the commencement of use, visibility splays shall be provided each side of the vehicular access in full accordance with the details indicated on the submitted plan reference P24073-001B Revision B. The splays shall thereafter be maintained free from any obstruction exceeding 0.6m above the level of the adjacent highway carriageway.
- 15 Reason: In the interests of highway safety and to ensure satisfactory access into the site in accordance with policies ENV 2 and COM 7 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023) and Policy SBNP22 of the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan 2024.

- 16 Demolition or construction vehicles with a gross weight in excess of 3.5 tonnes shall service the site only via the A1123 east (via Soham/A142)) between the hours of 9:00hrs -15.30hrs, seven days a week.
- 16 Reason: In the interests of highway safety in accordance with policies ENV 2 and COM7 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023) and Policy SBNP22 of the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan 2024.
- 17 No development shall commence other than access works, until the junction widening works have been completed as per plan reference: P24073-001B Revision B.
- 17 Reason: In the interests of highway safety in accordance with policies ENV 2 and COM7 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023) and Policy SBNP22 of the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan 2024.
- 18 Any gate or gates to the vehicular accesses shall be set back a minimum of 20 metres from the near edge of the highway carriageway. Any access gate or gates shall be hung to open inwards.
- 18 Reason: To prevent obstruction of the highway in the interests of highway safety in accordance with policies ENV 2 and COM7 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023) and Policy SBNP22 of the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan 2024.
- 19 Prior to the installation of any permanent plant or equipment serving the battery energy storage scheme hereby permitted, a scheme of security measures shall be submitted to an approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall be implemented prior to the first use of the development and thereafter retained and maintained in operation for the lifetime of the development.
- 19 Reason: In the interest of reducing the risk of crime in accordance with policy ENV 2 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023) and Policy SBNP17 of the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan 2024.
- 20 Notwithstanding the approved plans, no external lighting shall be erected within the application site until details of the proposed lights, their specification, location, the orientation/angle of the luminaries, predicted light spill and hours of proposed use, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Any external lighting that is installed shall be implemented in accordance with the approved scheme and thereafter maintained and retained as agreed.
- 20 Reason: In the interests of residential amenity protection, landscape character and to manage the impacts on nocturnal species, in accordance with policies ENV1, ENV2 and ENV 7 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023) and policies SBNP13, SBNP12, SBNP17 and SBNP19 of the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan 2024.
- 21 If, during development, contamination not previously identified is found to be present at the site then no further development (unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority) shall be carried out until the developer has submitted a remediation

strategy detailing how this unsuspected contamination shall be dealt with and obtained written approval from the Local Planning Authority. The remediation strategy shall be implemented as approved.

- 21 Reason: To protect and prevent the pollution of controlled waters from potential pollutants associated with current and previous land uses in line with policy ENV 9 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023).
- 22 No works involving piling shall take place until a report/method statement has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority, detailing the type of piling and mitigation measures to be taken to protect local residents from noise and/or vibration. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
- 22 Reason: To safeguard the residential amenity of neighbouring occupiers, in accordance with policies ENV 2 and ENV 6 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023) and Policy SBNP19 of the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan 2024.
- 23 No laying of services, creation of hard surfaces or erection of a building shall commence until a detailed design of the surface water drainage of the site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Those elements of the surface water drainage system not adopted by a statutory undertaker shall thereafter be maintained and managed in accordance with the approved management and maintenance plan.

The scheme shall be based upon the principles within the agreed Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy: Church Road Farm BESS prepared by Mabbett (ref: 316414) dated 19th February 2025 and shall also include:

- a) Full calculations detailing the existing surface water runoff rates for the QBAR, 3.3% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) (1 in 30) and 1% AEP (1 in 100) storm events;
- b) Full results of the proposed drainage system modelling in the above-referenced storm events (as well as 1% AEP plus climate change), inclusive of all collection, conveyance, storage, flow control and disposal elements and including an allowance for urban creep, together with an assessment of system performance;
- c) Detailed drawings of the entire proposed surface water drainage system, attenuation and flow control measures, including levels, gradients, dimensions and pipe reference numbers, designed to accord with the CIRIA C753 SuDS Manual (or any equivalent guidance that may supersede or replace it);
- d) Full detail on SuDS proposals (including location, type, size, depths, side slopes and cross sections);
- e) Site Investigation and test results to confirm infiltration rates;
- f) Details of overland flood flow routes in the event of system exceedance, with demonstration that such flows can be appropriately managed on site without increasing flood risk to occupants;
- g) Demonstration that the surface water drainage of the site is in accordance with DEFRA non-statutory technical standards for sustainable drainage systems;
- h) Full details of the maintenance/adoption of the surface water drainage system;
- i) Permissions to connect to a receiving watercourse or sewer;
- j) Measures taken to prevent pollution of the receiving groundwater and/or surface water

- 23 Reason: To prevent an increased risk of flooding and protect water quality in accordance with Policy ENV 8 and ENV 9 of the East Cambs Local Plan 2015 and Policy SBNP17 of the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan 2024.
- 24 No development, including preparatory works, shall commence until details of measures indicating how additional surface water run-off from the site will be avoided during the construction works have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The applicant may be required to provide collection, balancing and/or settlement systems for these flows. The approved measures and systems shall be brought into operation before any works to create buildings or hard surfaces commence.
- 24 Reason: To ensure surface water is managed appropriately during the construction phase of the development, so as not to increase the flood risk to adjacent land/properties or occupied properties within the development itself in accordance with Policy ENV 8 and ENV 9 of the East Cambs Local Plan 2015 and Policy SBNP17 of the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan 2024; recognising that initial works to prepare the site could bring about unacceptable impacts.
- 25 The development hereby approved is for a period of no more than 35 years from the date when electricity is first exported from the Battery Energy Storage Scheme to the electricity network (the First Export Date). Written confirmation of the First Export Date shall be given to the local planning authority within 14 days of the First Export Date.
- 25 Reason: To safeguard the character and appearance of the area and to reinstate the land to its original appearance following the expiration of the temporary consent applied for on the site, in accordance with policies ENV2 and ENV 6 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023) and Policy SBNP13 and SBNP19 of the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan 2024.
- 26 Decommissioning of the Battery Energy Storage System, comprising discontinuance and removal of all buildings, works, uses of land and other development hereby permitted and the restoration of the land to its former condition shall take place within 12 months of the expiry of this permission. At least 6 months before the planning permission is due to expire, a Decommissioning Method Statement (to include a timetable for implementation and a scheme to restore the land to its former condition) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The site shall be decommissioned and restored in accordance with the approved Statement.
- 26 Reason: To safeguard the character and appearance of the area and to reinstate the land to its original appearance following the expiration of the temporary consent applied for on the site, in accordance with policies ENV 1 and ENV2 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023) and Policy SBNP13 and SBNP19 of the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan 2024. In addition to ensure that the development is decommissioned out safely without unacceptable risks to workers, neighbours and other offsite receptors, in accordance with policy ENV 9 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023).
- 27 Prior to any work commencing on the site and notwithstanding the plans submitted, a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority, regarding the proposed routes for construction vehicles and including mitigation and notification measures for users of the highways and

public rights of way (including pedestrian and equestrian users) during the construction and decommissioning phases. The approved CTMP shall be adhered to at all times during all phases of construction and decommissioning.

- 27 Reason: To safeguard the amenity and safety of other users of the highway and rights of way, in accordance with policy COM7 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023) and Policies SBNP22, SBNP23 and SBNP24 of the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan 2024. The condition is pre-commencement in order to ensure that the protection measures are implemented prior to any site works taking place.

PLANS

The following plans are a selection of those submitted as part of the application and are provided to illustrate the proposed development. They may not be to scale. The full suite of plans can be found on the Council's website.

25/00303/FUM