

20 October 2023

For the attention of Laura Taylor

By email only: laura.taylor@solihull.gov.uk

**Hampton in Arden Parish Council response to Planning Application PL2023/01954/PPFL
Battery Electric Storage Facility, Henwood Lane, Catherine de Barnes, Solihull**

This proposed site is not designated for development in either in SMBC's adopted local plan or the emerging local plan, nor in our current adopted Neighbourhood Plan (NP) or in the revised draft NP.

We object to the application for the following reasons:

Solihull Local Plan Policy P3– Provision of Land for General Business and Premises

The site is not allocated in the Solihull Local Plan 2013 Policy P3 for General Business and Premises nor included in the Figure 13 Table of Allocated General Business Sites in that policy.

It does not meet the requirements of SMBC Local Plan Policy P7 Accessibility and Ease of Access

Access to the construction site is only practical by car. The application acknowledges the site is 600m from the only bus stop, where the service is hourly, often unreliable and operates with restricted hours.

Henwood Lane is very narrow and not a suitable access route for 16.5 tonne articulated vehicles. In addition, the lane is regularly used by cyclists, runners, dog walkers and horse riders who will be severely restricted during the construction phase. Henwood Lane also has a double bend with limited visibility which is dangerous for both cars and pedestrians. We anticipate that an articulated vehicle and possibly a mobile crane would have some difficulty in making the turn into Henwood Lane from Hampton Lane.

There is no mention of a mobile crane having to be used during the construction phase but suggest that there would be a significant risk of that type of vehicle damaging the road surface, verges, and the bordering re=trees and bushes.

It conflicts with SMBC Local Plan Policy P10: Natural Environment - "The Council will seek to protect, enhance and restore diverse landscape of the borough and create new woodlands and other characteristic habitats, so as to halt and where possible reverse the degrading of the Arden landscape and promote local distinctiveness".

This development does exactly the opposite. In fact, the applicant's own landscape and visual impact report states "the introduction of new energy infrastructure which would result in substantial change across the site. The change would be long term and permanent. Overall, this is considered to result in a high magnitude of change in the landscape character of the site" (Ref 6.14).

Hampton-in-Arden Parish Council

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We are concerned that, despite the type of development and the potential hazards that could result from failures of the equipment, so close to residential dwellings no comment on the potential hazardous materials seems to have been offered in the application documents nor any environmental impact assessment incorporated in this application.

We have concerns around SMBC Local Plan Policy P11: Water Management

We are concerned that it is proposed for some water to be allowed to run off into the canal. We feel it is important that all water should be contained on site and there should be no discharges into the canal.

It does not meet the requirements of SMBC Local Plan Policy P14: Amenity

Because of the nature of this development, we believe it is impossible to imagine the visual impact simply by reading the text of the report. Bearing in mind the equipment (some over 6m. high), the lighting, CCTV cameras (height to be decided later) and the two types of fencing proposed we feel it would have been essential to have included a computer-generated image of the site incorporating all the components of the development. Images of how the site would appear from the canal, for at least 15 years, should have been included.

The acoustic fence is 3m high, yet several pieces of equipment are over 6m, so we query whether the proposed fence is adequate.

We believe this development fails to meet Paragraphs (i) and (ii) of this Policy.P14

It appears that all the noise measurements have been taken from residential properties. No measurements have been taken from the canal where people walking along the towpath will be impacted.

We do not feel it meets the criteria set out in SMBC Local Plan Policy P15 Securing Design Quality

This policy states *“All development proposals will be expected to achieve good quality, inclusive and sustainable design.....”*. A successful development *“Conserves and enhances local character, distinctiveness and streetscape quality and ensures that the scale, massing, density, layout, materials and landscape of the development respect the surrounding natural, built and historic environment”* We don't think this development does.

We suggest that this development does not meet the criteria as described in para I of this policy.

The policy also states *“ Applicants should adhere to the urban design principles set out in established current design guidance, including at present; Urban Design Compendium 1 and 2 (2007), By Design (2000 and 2001), Manual for Streets 1 (2007) and 2 (2010), Car Parking: What Works Where (2006), Building for Life and Secured by Design principles, or their equivalents”*. We do not believe that the palisade fencing proposed does not comply with Secure by Design and is therefore not meeting this policies requirement.

It conflicts with SMBC Local Plan Policy P17: Countryside and Green Belt –

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The Council will safeguard the “best and most versatile” agricultural land in the borough.

The policy states that development affecting “the best and most versatile” land will only be permitted if there is an over-riding need for the development “or new use”.

|The Planning Statement accompanying this proposal recognises that it involves blighting of @Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Agricultural Land (Grade1) and we don’t believe the applicant has established an overriding need for development on this site.

We don’t consider the review of alternative sites to be adequate. There us a large substation situated at junction 5 of the M42(described as Copt Heath 132/11KV substation) which appears to be “potentially *suitable*” for connection (ref Arlington Energy site assessment report). Alternative POC sites have only been assessed within 1 km of the application site. We feel this has not been an exhaustive investigation. Consequently an @pverriding need’ to use this site has **not** been established.

Despite being described as a temporary development this will blight the Green Belt for 40 years. Any planting in mitigation will not adequately minimise the significant visual impact of the development for up to 10/15 years or more.

The development would significantly impact the openness of the Green Belt at this location, particularly the unique historic nature of the landscape from the Grade 2 listed building (listing 1045849) Henwood Mill, across the fields to the canal. Incidentally the mill is a residential property and whilst the mill itself is no longer functioning, is not disused as indicated on some of the maps included in the document.

We have concerns of SMBC Local Plan Policy P18: Health and Well Being

No environmental impact assessment document is included with the application. We note that on 19th May an EIA Screening report was submitted to SMBC who subsequently confirmed that proposals do not comprise an EIA development. We feel an EIA is a vital piece of work that should be open to public scrutiny. A planning application PL2013/01129 EIASCR was validated on the 19th May relating to an EIA screening report but viewing the website, no documents were uploaded to the planning portal. The Parish Council is particularly concerned as a Statutory Consultee we should be made aware of all planning applications but on this occasion, we have no record of receiving any notification of this application.

We are also concerned that despite the type of development involved no Hazardous Substances Consent seems to be required. We understand there are several potential risks relating to fire and emissions of hazardous vapour and feel the local community needs some reassurance on this.

Very Special Circumstances (vsc)

We note that the applicant has suggested seven “very special circumstance” justifications in support of the application and wish to make the following comments concerning them.

VSC1: *Contribution to meeting the national need for battery energy storage systems (BESS) facilities and in doing so allowing the usable output from intermittent renewable energy generation (such as*

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from wind and solar) to be maximised which in turn will contribute to the meeting of legal obligations and policy objectives relating.

We accept this development would contribute to the national need we suggest that this contribution would not be very significant and could not therefore be considered a sufficient vsc for a development on this site.

VSC2: *Contribution to address Climate Emergency objectives, including reducing levels greenhouse gas emissions.*

Whilst we do not dispute this to be the case. There seems to be a complete absence of any data as to harmful carbon emissions generated during the 18/24-month construction period or throughout the lifetime of the development.

VSC3: *The absence of alternative sites located outside the Green Belt capable of accommodating the Proposed Development and located within a reasonable distance of the identified point of connection to the electricity network.*

See our comments against Policy P17 above. We consider the review of alternative sites to be inadequate.

We note that in the Sire Assessment section of the Planning Statement (page 18) an alternative potential site, referred to as 3.3.11 at Copt Heath 132/11Kv close to the M42, was identified as a possible location but **no** data as to why it was not progressed has been provided.

VSC4: *The contribution of the Proposed Development to socio-economic growth and security*

We recognise many the issues that BESS looks to address. One area that has not been mentioned under this heading is the subject of food security. The land to be used for this development has been identified as Grade 1 agricultural land which contributes to the food provision in one way or another.

The site is not allocated in the Solihull Local Plan 2013 Policy P3 for General Business and Premises nor included in the Figure 13 Table of Allocated General Business Sites in that policy.

We recognise that employment has a role to play but do not consider 20 FTE positions to be a significant contribution to the local economy. - We do not accept the point that construction workers could use local transport networks to access the site. The site is 600m from a bus stop for the 82-bus route which runs hourly and generally has been viewed by residents as unreliable. As to access to the two available railway stations in Solihull and Hampton in Arden. These can only be accessed using this bus route and suggest that excessive journey times would not be acceptable to those having to access the site between 7/8.00 am in the morning.

VSC5: *Contribution to enhancement of local landscape character through the incorporation of appropriate new Green Infrastructure.*

We fail to see how this Bess can contribute to the enhancement of the local landscape character, especially as it will be highly visible, especially from the canal, for probably up to 10/15 years, before any mitigation planting has a serious impact.

VSC6: *Delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain*

Biodiversity Net Gain is a requirement of Policy P10 Natural Environment of the Solihull Local Plan 2013 so its identification as being a 'very special circumstance' in support of development in the Green Belt is spurious at best. One of our parishioners has submitted a detailed commentary on the damage to biodiversity that this development will entail.

VSC7: *The temporary nature of the Proposed Development and the reversibility of the identified impacts upon decommissioning of the Proposed Development and reinstatement of site conditions.*

How 40 years can be interpreted as a temporary period is beyond reasonable comprehension. We have very little faith that over time regulatory conditions won't change that will allow this site to be treated as a 'previously developed site and mean the Green Belt will be lost forever.

We are not opposed in principle to the construction of sympathetic battery storage sites or renewable energy projects within the Green Belt, but do not support such developments that remove Grade 1 or Grade 2 agricultural land. Moreover, this proposed site, by being adjacent to the

We do not support this application for a facility on this site and respectfully request that it is **refused**.

Julie Barnes

Financial Officer and Clerk to

HAMPTON IN ARDEN PARISH COUNCIL