

REPORT OUTLINE FOR AREA PLANNING COMMITTEES**Report No.**

Date of Meeting	31 May 2018
Application Number	18/00457/FUL
Site Address	Land at Court Farm Court Farm LOWER WOODFORD SP4 6NQ
Proposal	Energy Storage Capacity Mechanism Plant to Support the National Grid
Applicant	Mr Simon Wheeler
Town/Parish Council	WOODFORD
Electoral Division	BOURNE AND WOODFORD VALLEY – Councillor Hewitt
Grid Ref	412588 135338
Type of application	Full Planning
Case Officer	Richard Nash

Reason for the application being considered by Committee:

The Head of Development Management considers it appropriate to refer the application to Committee given the level of public opposition to the proposal.

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to assess the merits of the proposal against the policies of the development plan and other material considerations and to consider the recommendation that the application be approved.

2. Report Summary

The application proposes an energy storage plant to support the National Grid. The report assesses this proposal against planning policy and recommends that conditional planning permission be granted.

3. Site Description

The site comprises approximately 0.9 hectares of Grade 3 agricultural land situated on high land to the west of the Woodford Valley. The site would be accessed via a largely unmade track running west from the valley road at the northern end of Lower Woodford. The track also serves other agricultural land and buildings and is a Public Right of Way leading across to the A360 Devizes Road to the west. The site has an existing fence line to the track frontage but its boundaries are otherwise currently unmarked. A line of electricity pylons runs north to south a little to the west of the site and would be linked to the proposal.

The site is generally surrounded by extensive agricultural fields with some wooded areas nearby. The wooded areas, along with contouring and buildings to the east provide a degree of screening from public viewpoints of the site over a wide area, although the site is highly apparent in closer views when moving along the Public Right of Way. The site lies in a Special Landscape Area and an Area of Special Archaeological Significance.

4. Planning History

None

5. The Proposal

The application proposes an energy storage plant to support the National Grid. This would comprise of a number of battery units within containers, inverter/transformers, a switchgear unit, larger transformer, relay room, overhead link to the nearby pylons and associated external areas. Security columns (supporting cameras) and floodlighting are also proposed. The site would be enclosed within a security fence, with planting proposed to the outside on the east, south and west boundaries. Some of the detailed drawings of the proposal are of a generic nature but are considered sufficient to be able to make a decision on the proposal.

6. Local Planning Policy

The following Core Policies of the Wiltshire Core Strategy are relevant to the determination of this application and are considered to align with the principles, aims, objectives and intentions of the NPPF. The following policies (amongst others) are therefore considered to carry significant weight.

Wiltshire Core Strategy

Core Policy 1 (Settlement Strategy)

Core Policy 4 (Spatial Strategy for the Amesbury Community Area)

Core Policy 42 (Standalone Renewable Energy Installations)

Core Policy 48 (Supporting Rural Life)

Core Policy 50 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity)

Core Policy 51 (Landscape)

Core Policy 57 (Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping)

Core Policy 58 (Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment)

Core Policy 60 (Sustainable Transport)

Core Policy 61 (Transport and Development)

Core Policy 62 (Development Impacts on the Transport Network)

Saved Policies of the Salisbury District Local Plan

C6 (Special Landscape Area)

C21 (Farm Diversification)

7. Summary of consultation responses

Both Woodford and Durnford Parish Councils have submitted lengthy and detailed objections to the proposal, which can be viewed on the Council's website. In summary:

Woodford Parish Council: Support principle of battery storage sites but object to this application on the following grounds:

- Inappropriate siting in relation to Old Sarum Scheduled Ancient Monument, Grade I listed Durnford Manor House, Conservation Area, Devenish Nature Reserve and other ecologically designated areas, many residential properties and roads and direct line of sight of Salisbury Cathedral.
- Inappropriate large industrial scale development in prominent position even considering proposed bunding and screening. Screening itself would have a significant adverse initial impact. A conifer screen would be particularly inappropriate.
- Unsuitable access route to site via Church Bottom/Wishford Road particularly during construction phase and would aggravate situation with subsequent maintenance visits and battery replacements.

- No financial benefit either to the PC or Wiltshire Council should permission be granted.
- Not convinced of claimed potential power supply to local community.
- Not convinced of claimed benefit to local employment.
- Not convinced by evidence of site search.
- Light and noise pollution emanating from plant – to residents and ecology.
- Land has not been used in recent years solely for arable farming. For the past 10 years or so it has been permanent pasture and used for lambing. While the loss of this area of land would not be of major significance, it would however be an inconvenience to the local farmer.
- Proposal would conflict with policies CP42, CP48, CP51, CP57, CP58, PS7 and C21 and the NPPF.

Durnford Parish Council: Object on the following grounds:

- Proposal is not in the interests of the wider Woodford Valley on any level.
- Inappropriate siting in relation to Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, World Heritage Site and Conservation Area.
- Inappropriate materials and inadequate screening.
- Intrusive security fencing and lighting.
- Noise pollution.
- Batteries are prone to fires and leakage - implications have not been addressed in the application.
- Impact of construction traffic on inadequate local highway network.
- Loss of key agricultural land contributing to loss of income for local farmers.
- Impact on Ecology.
- Insufficient time for consultation due to apparent fast-tracking application process (Officer Note: This application has been the subject of the normal publicity and timescales for a Full planning application).

Highways: Acknowledge access to site for construction traffic may cause some disruption. However, this will be for a limited time only and once complete traffic movements to the site would be minimal. Therefore wish to raise no highway objection providing the following condition is imposed:

WM4 No development shall commence on site (including any works of demolition), until a Construction Method Statement, which shall include the following, has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority:

- the parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors
- loading and unloading of plant and materials

- storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development
- the erection and maintenance of security hoarding including decorative displays and facilities for public viewing, where appropriate
- wheel washing facilities
- measures to control the emission of dust and dirt during construction
- a scheme for recycling/disposing of waste resulting from demolition and construction works
- measures for the protection of the natural environment
- hours of construction, including deliveries

The approved Statement shall be adhered to throughout the construction period. The development shall not be carried out otherwise than in accordance with the approved construction method statement without the prior written permission of the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To minimise detrimental effects to the neighbouring amenities, the amenities of the area in general, detriment to the natural environment through the risks of pollution and dangers to highway safety, during the construction phase.

Further Highways comments following submission of vehicle movement information:

Inevitable there will be disruption during construction. Request following condition:

No development shall commence on site until a photographic pre-condition highway survey of the following roads; Church Bottom, the C42 (from Church Bottom to Salterton Farm Road) and Salterton Farm Road, has been carried out and issued to the Local Highway Authority. Within 3 months of the completion of the development, a post condition survey should be made available to the Highways development management team.

REASON: To ensure Church Bottom, the C42 (from Church Bottom to Salterton Farm Road) and Salterton Farm Road are maintained to an acceptable standard and any defects attributed to the construction traffic are rectified in the interests of highway safety.

Landscape Officer (in response to Landscape Appraisal): Views of the site appear to be very limited and in combination with the mitigation planting and change of colour to the containers (at paragraph 9.4) should help to reduce visual effects from the wider landscape. Content to remove holding objection on the proviso we can include a condition for the colour of the containers to be agreed before commencement and that you are satisfied with the information supplied for the lighting.

Historic England (in response to Heritage Impact Assessment): Have undertaken site visit and consulted records of heritage assets and viewed data available from Environment Agency. Concur with principle conclusion that application will not result in substantial harm to designated heritage assets via change in setting. Note that proposals are likely to be visible in glimpsed views from grade II listed buildings in Lower Woodford Conservation Area. However, do not consider that could reasonably be defined as substantial harm to the Conservation Area. No objection to application on heritage grounds – application accords with paragraph 128 of the NPPF.

Archaeologist: Support Subject to Conditions: Site is of archaeological interest. There are HER records all around the site relating to prehistoric settlement and agriculture...[refers to NPPF 128]...Given the limited proposed footprint of impact, do not consider that field evaluation is necessary...[refers to NPPF 141]...It is therefore recommended that a programme of archaeological works in the form of an archaeological watching brief is carried out as part of any development.

The applicant should be aware that, if archaeological remains are encountered, this may have an effect on their programme of works. If human remains are encountered during the works, they cannot be removed without the appropriate permissions.

Recommendation: Full condition (WL26): No development shall commence within the area indicated (proposed development site) until:

A written programme of archaeological investigation, which should include on-site work and off-site work such as the analysis, publishing and archiving of the results, has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority; and

The approved programme of archaeological work has been carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: To enable the recording of any matters of archaeological interest.

Informative: Further Recommendations: The work should be conducted by a professionally recognised archaeological contractor in accordance with a written scheme of investigation approved by this office and there will be a financial implication for the applicant.

Ecologist: No objection in principle but has some relatively minor queries regarding the submitted Ecology Report. It is anticipated that these queries will be resolved by the date of the Committee meeting.

Public Protection: Have read and considered noise assessment. Whilst it is of concern that the BS4142 assessment for one of the measurement points has resulted in a difference of +7 between the background and rating level the assessment is very robust. Source sound levels are based on the whole battery site running at maximum capacity and propagation calculations are based on a free field with no natural noise barriers between the source and receiver. There are a number of farm buildings between the source and receiver which will further attenuate noise. Therefore extremely unlikely that noise from the proposed development would cause loss of amenity inside residential properties at night time. The assessment shows that during day time the sound levels would be unlikely to have an adverse impact. Therefore we would not be able to support an objection to this application based on noise impacts.

There is the potential for noise and dust impacts during construction. The following condition is therefore recommended:

No development shall commence on site until a construction management plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The plan shall include details of the measures that will be taken to reduce and manage the emission of noise, vibration and dust during construction phase of the development. It shall include details of the following:

- The movement of construction vehicles;
- The cutting or other processing of building materials on site;
- Wheel washing and vehicle wash down facilities;
- The transportation and storage of waste and building materials;
- The recycling of waste materials (if any)
- The loading and unloading of equipment and materials
- The location and use of generators and temporary site accommodation
- Pile driving (If it is to be within 200m of residential properties)

The construction/demolition phase of the development will be carried out fully in accordance with the construction management plan at all times.

Rights Of Way Officer: No particular concerns.

8. Publicity

The application was advertised by 4 site notices and consultations were carried out with neighbours closest to the site.

1 letter of support has been received, from a member of the Family Trust that owns the site, on the following grounds (in summary):

- Proposal will help national need to de-carbonise energy requirements
- Grade 3 is not prime farming land - loss of 2 acres out of 577 will not materially affect earning potential of farm
- Site well screened by maturing plantations and barn and developer intends further landscaping
- Camp Hill available as alternative access to site
- Once site is in operation additional daily traffic impact is negligible
- Four additional jobs will be created in the locality
- Planning permission sought for limited period only
- Site will have no impact on conservation measures already in place
- Field has little conservation merit
- Land owner's connection to village is long-term

134 objections have been received from the community on the following grounds (in summary):

- Introduction of industrial development into countryside
- Visual Impact
- Landscape Impact
- Impact on highway safety
- Impact on Ecology
- Noise and Light Pollution
- Fire Hazard
- Health Implications
- Impact on Heritage Assets
- Impact on drainage and flooding
- Lack of information submitted
- Fast Tracking of Application
- Alternative sites more appropriate
- Loss of agricultural land
- Unconvinced of community benefit
- Precedent

9. Planning Considerations

ASSESSMENT

Principle

Section 55 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 defines the meaning of development as the means of carrying out of building, engineering, mining, or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or other land. The development plan accepts the principle of development subject to the aims and objectives of policy being met.

The site lies within the Open Countryside for planning purposes. In such locations new development would normally only be permitted in particular circumstances related to specific needs and criteria.

The proposal relates to energy supply. Rather than a standalone renewable energy source the development would store energy supplied by the National Grid, which would then be fed

back in to the Grid at times of peak demand. However, the proposal would tie in with the Government's aims around energy supply, specifically in terms of providing a secure and reliable supply of electricity. This is a relatively new approach to maintaining power supply and it is considered reasonable to assess the proposal against CP42 as the issues arising from a storage proposal are likely to be similar to those arising from a renewables proposal. CP42 is supportive of schemes subject to satisfactory resolution of site specific constraints.

Applicants are not required to justify the overall need for energy development, either in a national or local context. However, in particular, proposals must demonstrate how impacts on the following factors have been satisfactorily assessed, including any cumulative effects, and taken into account:

- i. The landscape, particularly in and around Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- ii. The Western Wiltshire Green Belt
- iii. The New Forest National Park
- iv. Biodiversity
- v. The historic environment including the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site and its setting
- vi. Use of the local transport network
- vii. Residential amenity, including noise, odour, visual amenity and safety
- viii. Best and most versatile agricultural land.

Criteria ii, iii and viii do not apply in this case and the matters affecting other criteria of CP42 are discussed below.

The proposal can also be considered as diversifying traditional farming activities. Saved Policy C21 is supportive of such development provided that:

- i. access is suitable at all times of the year
- ii. the proposal will not prejudice the viability of nearby village shops
- iii. the proposal does not result in inappropriate levels of traffic generation
- iv. any building necessary to implement the new activity is of an appropriate scale to that activity and of a high standard of design; and
- v. there is no adverse impact of the activity or any building associated with the activity on either the landscape, the local built environment or nature conservation interests

Criterion ii does not apply in this case and the matters affecting other criteria of C21 are discussed below.

CP48 is in principle supportive of infrastructure improvements, provided the development would not be to the detriment of the local environment or local residents.

The Applicant has explained how the site (as one of around 100 nationally) has been selected. Initially, matters such as high level planning constraints (National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Conservation Areas and European nature sites), landowner interest and Grid availability and practicality were considered. The precise preferred siting was then pinpointed on a more local level by looking at relationships with nature and heritage designations, dwellings and public viewpoints. This approach is considered reasonable although the questions of ease of accessibility to the National Grid and land availability are of course critical to the final choice.

It is not disputed that the proposed site may be one of the 'best c100' available out of the many considered, in terms of balancing out these various considerations. However, it does not follow that its development should then be automatically granted planning permission.

The proposal would still have to meet more detailed and site specific policy requirements and these are discussed below.

Character and Visual Impact
(Pertains to criteria i and v of CP42 and iv and v of C21)

The various proposed structures would have a generally bulky and harsh appearance that would be expected from energy or other infrastructure plant and have a range of heights up to approximately 4.7 metres. The outer security fence would be 2.4 metres in height with security lighting at a suggested height of 4 metres and security camera columns at a suggested height of 6 metres.

In terms of character and visual amenity, such development would clearly in itself be considered as highly intrusive in this location. However, screening planting is proposed with a view to reducing visual impact and the much higher existing pylons immediately to the west would also provide a vertical context for the higher sections of the security columns. Precise details of security lighting and camera provision, as well as landscaping, could be agreed by way of planning conditions.

The Applicant has advised that the security lighting would be designed to be activated by sensors, which can be adjusted to enable them to distinguish between small animals and humans. The lights would therefore illuminate only when people access the site and would switch off again once the sensors were not picking up movement of human sized objects. This would avoid intermittent illumination should small wildlife enter the site. In addition the lights could also be installed with timers to ensure that lights are not left on overnight and designed only to illuminate the area relating to the sensor detecting movement (i.e. wholly within the site). These details could be agreed by way of a planning condition.

As noted above, neither the Landscape Officer nor Historic England has objected to the proposal, subject to condition. It is therefore considered that, subject to appropriate details and mitigation being agreed, the proposal would not have a detrimental impact on the character or visual amenity of the site or locality.

Neighbouring Amenity
(Pertains to criteria vii of CP42)

There are no residential properties close to the site. However, the proposed access track would pass by a number of dwellings. This track already apparently has an unfettered right of vehicular access to agricultural land and buildings which is likely to involve regular movements by large vehicles. There would be a concentrated period of increased movements arising from the proposal and involving construction and delivery vehicles during the construction phase of approximately 6 months. However, on an individual basis it is considered these would be unlikely to be any more obtrusive than is the case with the current use of the track. The Public Protection Officer has recommended a condition relevant to this issue as noted above.

Once operational the number of vehicle movements to and from the site would be restricted to visiting engineers and service contractors. The site would be visited daily by the engineers. It is considered that, in terms of ongoing noise and general disturbance, this level of vehicle movement would be unlikely to cause a detrimental level of additional impact to residential properties, over and above the existing situation.

The installation would in itself produce a degree of noise and a Noise Report has been submitted in support of the application. The Public Protection Officer has no objection to the proposal on these grounds.

It is therefore considered that, subject to appropriate details and mitigation being agreed, the proposal would not have a detrimental impact on neighbouring amenity.

Highways

(Pertains to criteria vi of CP42 and i and iii of C21)

The Applicant advises that vehicles delivering to the site would travel from the A360 along a road north of the site named Church Bottom into Middle Woodford, and then along the valley road to the entrance to the track. The Highways Officer has raised no objections to the proposal subject to the condition noted above.

Other Matters

(Pertains to criteria iv and v of CP42 and v of C21)

The Archaeologist has no objection to the proposal subject to the conditions noted above. It is anticipated that queries raised by the Ecologist will be resolved by the date of the Committee meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

1 WA1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.
REASON: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2 WM13 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

1395-PL-01 04 (Planning Layout)
1395-PL-02 04 (Site Location Plan)
Design and Access Statement
ENS-STD-PL-25 (Standard Battery Container Plans and Elevations)
ENS-STD-PL-27 (Standard HVAC Slab Plans and Elevations)
ENS-STD-PL-28 (Standard Inverter/TX Container Plans and Elevations)
ENS-STD-PL-29 (Standard Inverter/TX Skid Plans and Elevations)
ENS-STD-PL-30 (Standard Containerised Switchgear Plans and Elevations)
ENS-STD-PL-32 (Standard Security Fencing Typical Details)
ENS-STD-PL-33 (Standard 132kv Single Circuit Tee Off (Underground) Details)
ENS-STD-PL-34 (Standard 132kv Single Circuit Tee Off (Overhead) Details)
ENS-STD-PL-45 (Standard Control and Metering Room Plans and Elevations)
ENS-STD-PL-46 (Standard Marshalling Kiosk Details)
ENS-STD-PL-48 (Standard 33kv Cable Cross section in Agricultural Land)
ENS-STD-PL-51 (Standard Palisade Security Fence Details)
SOL1801EE0_1 (Environmental Noise Assessment)

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3 WB2 Notwithstanding Condition 2, no development shall commence on site until details of the finishing materials to be used on the development have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
REASON: The application contained insufficient information to enable this matter to be considered prior to granting planning permission and the matter is required to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority before development commences in order

that the development is undertaken in an acceptable manner, in the interests of visual amenity and the character and appearance of the area.

- 4 WC1** No development shall commence on site until a scheme of soft landscaping has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, the details of which shall include a detailed planting specification showing all plant species, supply and planting sizes and planting densities.
REASON: The application contained insufficient information to enable this matter to be considered prior to granting planning permission and the matter is required to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority before development commences in order that the development is undertaken in an acceptable manner, to ensure a satisfactory landscaped setting for the development and the protection of existing important landscape features.
- 5 WC2** All soft landscaping comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding season following the first occupation of the completion of the development; All shrubs, trees and hedge planting shall be maintained free from weeds and shall be protected from damage by vermin and stock. Any trees or plants which, within a period of five years, die, are removed, or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of a similar size and species, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority. All hard landscaping shall also be carried out in accordance with the approved details prior to the occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with a programme to be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.
REASON: To ensure a satisfactory landscaped setting for the development and the protection of existing important landscape features.
- 6** No external lighting, cameras or speakers shall be installed on site until plans showing the type of appliance, the height and position of the appliance (including any supporting structures), illumination levels and light spillage details have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved lighting, cameras and speakers shall be installed and maintained in accordance with the approved details and no additional external lighting, cameras or speakers shall be installed.
REASON: In the interests of the amenities of the area and to minimise unnecessary light spillage above and outside the development site.
- 7 WM4** No development shall commence on site (including any works of demolition), until a Construction Method Statement, which shall include the following, has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority:
- The parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors
 - loading and unloading of plant and materials
 - transportation and storage of plant, materials and waste
 - the erection and maintenance of security hoarding including decorative displays and facilities for public viewing, where appropriate
 - wheel washing and vehicle wash down facilities;
 - measures to control the emission of dust and dirt during construction
 - a scheme for recycling/disposing of waste resulting from demolition and construction works
 - measures for the protection of the natural environment
 - hours of construction, including deliveries
 - The location and use of generators and temporary site accommodation
 - Pile driving (If it is to be within 200m of residential properties)

- The movement of construction vehicles;
- The cutting or other processing of building materials on site;

The approved Statement shall be adhered to throughout the construction period. The development shall not be carried out otherwise than in accordance with the approved construction method statement without the prior written permission of the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To minimise detrimental effects to the neighbouring amenities, the amenities of the area in general, detriment to the natural environment through the risks of pollution and dangers to highway safety, during the construction phase.

- 8** No development shall commence on site until a photographic pre-condition highway survey of the following roads; Church Bottom, the C42 (from Church Bottom to Salterton Farm Road) and Salterton Farm Road, has been carried out and issued to the Local Highway Authority. Within 3 months of the completed development, a post condition survey should be made available to the Highways development management team.

REASON: To ensure Church Bottom, the C42 (from Church Bottom to Salterton Farm Road) and Salterton Farm Road are maintained to an acceptable standard and any defects attributed to the construction traffic are rectified in the interests of highway safety.

- 9** **WL26** No development shall commence until;

A written programme of archaeological investigation, which should include on-site work and off-site work such as the analysis, publishing and archiving of the results, has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority; and

The approved programme of archaeological work has been carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: To enable the recording of any matters of archaeological interest.

- 10** The development shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the recommendations set out in the Ecological Survey carried out by Clarkson and Woods and dated January 2018.

REASON: To safeguard ecology interests.

- 11** The development hereby approved including all related on-site built infrastructure (such as any CCTV cameras and poles, switch gear, access tracks, security fences, etc.) shall be removed and the land restored to a condition suitable for agricultural use within 6 months of the batteries ceasing to be used, or the expiry of 30 years after the date of first connection of any element of the development to the National Grid, whichever is the sooner.

REASON: In the interests of amenity and the timely restoration of the land.

ARCHAEOLOGY INFORMATIVE:

The work required under Condition 10 should be conducted by a professionally recognised archaeological contractor in accordance with a written scheme of investigation approved by this office and there will be a financial implication for the applicant.