Fairholme BESS – Dog Trap Lane, Minety (PL/2022/05412)

Q&A for questions asked by Committee Members at Northern Planning Committee 16/04/24

	Question	Applicant's Response
1	What will the cumulative effect of the development be in the context of other BESS development coming forward?	Due to the nature of the development, the only impacts of the proposal that could potentially cause cumulative impacts are associated with noise and visual impacts. These have been addressed within the officer's report and the Secretary of State Screening Direction confirmed that these (along with any other impacts) would not cause significant cumulative effects. In terms of noise, the site is over 1km from other BESS schemes in the area and the noise levels would dilute to background levels before they could cumulate with noise from other sites. In terms of visuals, the significant separation distances (over 1km), along with the significant screening afforded to the existing site (plus the proposed landscaping), would negate any potential for visual cumulative effects with other BESS development.
2	What's happening with the Jubilee Woodland?	Whilst this has no weight in the planning decision, the Jubilee Woodland is a community benefit scheme put forward by the Applicant following discussions with Minety Parish Council. The Jubilee Woodland is proposed to be a community woodland on the field adjacent to the site which the Applicant discussed putting forward initial funding for the planting of and yearly maintenance funding for its upkeep over the 40 year lifetime of the development. A draft proposal was put forward to the PC in March 2022, which was responded to, but nothing was formally agreed and further conversations are pending.
3	How has the planning balance been arrived at in terms of policy compliance?	The officer's report and the submitted PDAS provides details of how the planning policy balance has been made. In summary, the only policy where there is considered any tension is the Landscape Core Policy 51. In considering how the proposal sits up to this policy, the proposal site is completely screened to the north, east and south and intervening hedgerows/trees sit to the west and therefore the development would have little or no visual presence beyond its immediate surroundings. The proposal includes

		substantial new landscape planting which would conceal the site completely over time. Accordingly, there would be no significant negative impacts on landscape character and the proposal would therefore comply with the thrust of CP51. Even if minor negative landscape impacts are attributed to the proposal, in the planning balance the significant positive weight afforded to the proposal (through the local and national benefits of providing energy security and supporting the drive towards net zero) clearly tips this towards the positive side.
4	What are the carbon benefits and carbon balance of BESS development?	See separate document provided on this.
5	Why are BESS considered renewable / low carbon development?	BESS developments support the increased generation of renewable energy through their storage capabilities. Renewable energy such as solar and wind are considered low-carbon energy sources. The majority of the energy that BESS store is likely to originate from low carbon energy sources, as high carbon energy sources (e.g. fossil fuels such as gas, oil and coal) are unlikely to be generating energy to the grid when there is surplus supply (i.e. at times when storage is needed). Accordingly, BESS developments can be considered low carbon development by virtue of the principally renewable energy they store. BESS are supportive of renewable energy development as they enable their increased deployment. Surplus renewable energy generated which isn't required in the grid or that cannot be stored, has to be curtailed at cost to the tax payer.
6	How much more BESS and solar is needed to meet Wiltshire's targets	There is no requirement for developers to demonstrate a need for BESS development. Notwithstanding, Solar and BESS deliver a national need for more renewable energy within the electricity grid. The Government has set a target of reaching a net zero electricity grid by 2035. Figures on the progress of this / what additional renewable and storage capacity is required can be found online.
7	Should Wiltshire be shouldering the requirements for the rest of the UK because it has the necessary grid locations?	Most (if not all) counties across the UK will have BESS projects coming forward wherever there is grid capacity available. However, not all substations in the UK have the capacity to support BESS developments so there are locational needs. The UK needs more BESS to provide the necessary storage for renewable energy to meet its net zero targets. If counties set a limit on this / restrict deployment of BESS in areas of

		available capacity, it is unlikely that the required battery storage capacity needs of the electricity grid would ever be meet, and thus the UK would not be able to meet its zero carbon targets.
8	Why are national grid having to upgrade their substation if there is 'capacity' for the planned BESS and Solar development?	The capacity is available on the network but these projects, amongst other reasons, need the infrastructure to allow the physical connection. Hence the substation requires expansion to provide this infrastructure.
9	Why can't BESS developments be hidden in agricultural style buildings?	Housing BESS in large agricultural buildings would be far more visually intrusive on the landscape. The height of the resultant buildings would be significantly greater than the tallest structures on the BESS site (to allow sufficient room for maintenance / cooling requirements etc being inside). A large agricultural style building would allow no opportunity for visual impermeability.
10	Why can't all BESS developments be housed within solar farm?	BESS doesn't connect directly with solar farms, all these projects are connected by the UK power grid. Many BESS developers also come forward with proposals independently of solar schemes developers, who themselves would likely include for BESS capacity within their schemes.