

Application Number:	25/10640 Full Planning Permission
Site:	LAND EAST OF BULLS COPSE ROAD, MARCHWOOD BYPASS, MARCHWOOD, TOTTON SO40 4UE
Development:	The construction and operation of a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and associated infrastructure.
Applicant:	Sky UK Developments Ltd
Agent:	Clive Fagg Planning
Target Date:	09/10/2025
Case Officer:	Judith Garrity
Officer Recommendation:	Service Manager - Grant
Reason for Referral to Committee:	Delegated Authority be given to the Service Manager Development Management to Grant Permission

1 SUMMARY OF THE MAIN ISSUES

The key issues are:

- 1) Principle of Development
- 2) Design, site layout and impact on local character and appearance of area
- 3) Landscape impact and trees
- 4) Highway safety, access and parking
- 5) Residential amenity
- 6) Ecology, On Site Biodiversity and protected species
- 7) Other environmental impacts

2 SITE DESCRIPTION

The site is 1.6 ha in size and is located to the east of Bulls Copse Road in Totton. Access to the site is from the Marchwood Bypass A326 on the spur road from the roundabout with the Totton Bypass A35. Hounsdawn Business Park is located opposite and to the east of the site. To the north is a water pumping station and railway line.

The site is existing open countryside used as a field for grazing horses with the adjacent area being largely agricultural. The site is at a higher level than the road but is screened by an embankment of mature trees and vegetation. There is an Ancient and semi-natural Woodland (Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)) running along the southeastern boundary of the site with Marchwood Bypass and adjacent to the proposed access. There are a limited number of mature trees within the application site.

The site boundary is located approximately 300m from the nearest residential properties at Sunnyfields Farm to the north, and Trotts Farm and Holly Cottage (on Trotts Lane) 625m to the east.

The site is located approximately 300 metres from the boundary of the New Forest National Park.

3 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposal is for the construction of a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and associated infrastructure for a 30-year temporary period which represents the operational lifespan of the BESS. The BESS would connect to the high voltage overhead line at the pylon and a Grid Supply Point located at Bury Brickfield Park located to the northwest of the site.

The development of energy storage facilities such as this allows the local grid network to operate more efficiently by taking excess energy, storing it in batteries, and releasing it into the network when the grid needs it at times of peak demand. As such, the proposed development would help support the energy security of businesses and households in the New Forest.

The overall planning application site is 1.6 ha in size, but the site compound itself would be 0.5ha in size and would be located to the north of the field.

The proposed Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) would comprise the installation of the following:

- 24 no. modular battery units;
- 12 no. transformer/inverter units;
- 8 no. fire water storage tanks;
- 1 no. 33kV DNO (Distribution Network Operator) substation compound;
- 1 no. substation;
- 1 no. DNO substation;
- 1 no. site supply transformer;
- 1 no. switchroom;
- 1 no. welfare office; and
- 1 no spare parts container.

Each battery container and transformer would be 2.9 m high x 6.1m long and 2.4m wide finished in light grey. A single transformer would serve each pair of battery containers. The spare parts container would be 2.6 m high x 6.1m long and 2.4m wide. Each fire water storage tank would have a capacity of 25,000 litres, with a diameter of 2.7 m and be 4.6m high. The sub-station would be 15.5 m long x 3m high and 4m wide and finished in holly green. The DNO substation would be 4.0 m high x 7m long and 3.5m wide finished in light grey. There would also be a 33 kV DNO substation compound located towards the front of the site, with structures and cables extending a maximum of approximately 7m in height.

The compound area would comprise a semi-permeable gravel surface enclosed by 2.0 m high security fences and gates. There would be 34 floodlights on 2m high columns in addition to 5 no. CCTV cameras on 3.5m high poles.

A new widened access would be provided off the A326 Marchwood Bypass on the southern site boundary. Two car parking spaces would be provided within the compound on the site.

As part of this application the scheme has been Screened under the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations as the proposals would fall within Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations. The proposals were considered to fall within development type 2.3 of Schedule 2. This covers Energy and Industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam and hot water. The Screening Opinion adopted on 25th July 2025 concluded that this was not an EIA development.

The applicant's agent has raised the issue around uncertainty about the date of connection to the grid as a result of changes that have been made by the Government and National Energy System Operator. This would have implications for the date of commencement of development and as such a request has been made that the time period for commencement of the development is extended to 10-years rather than the standard commencement period of 3-years. The justification put forward for this request is considered in the planning assessment below.

4 PLANNING HISTORY

None relevant

5 PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

Local Plan 2016-2036 Part 1: Planning Strategy

Policy STR1: Achieving Sustainable Development

Policy STR2: Protection of the countryside, Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the adjoining New Forest National Park

Policy STR3: The strategy for locating new development.

Policy STR8: Community services, Infrastructure and facilities

Policy ENV1: Mitigating the impacts of development on International Nature Conservation sites.

Policy ENV4: Landscape character and quality

Local Plan Part 2: Sites and Development Management 2014

DM2: Nature conservation, biodiversity and geodiversity

DM3: Mitigation of impacts on European nature conservation sites

DM4: Renewable and low carbon energy generation

DM22: Employment development in the countryside

CS21: Rural economy (saved policy)

Supplementary Planning Guidance And Documents

SPD - Air Quality in New Development.

SPD - Climate Change

SPD - Parking Standards

Neighbourhood Plan

N/A

National Planning Policy Framework 2024

NPPF Ch. 6 - Building a strong, competitive economy.

NPPF Ch.10 - Supporting high quality communications.

NPPF Ch.14 - Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change.

NPPF Ch.15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

National Policy Statement

National Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1)

National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3)

National Planning Policy Guidance

Plan Policy Designations

Countryside

6 PARISH / TOWN COUNCIL COMMENTS

Totton & Eling Town Council

The Town Council raise no objection.

The proposal is a positive use of the site to achieve more sustainable energy solutions.

RECOMMENDATION PAR1: We recommend PERMISSION, for the reasons listed, but would accept the decision reached by the District Council's Officers under their delegated powers.

7 COUNCILLOR COMMENTS

No comments received

8 CONSULTEE COMMENTS

Comments have been received from the following consultees:

Environmental Health (Contaminated Land) No concerns

The site is open space with a railway running along the north of the site since 1924, however there are no records of any contaminative activities on the site or within the vicinity.

Environmental Health (Pollution) No objection.

The submitted noise impact assessment, Construction Traffic Management Plan and Environmental Lighting Impact Assessment Report have been considered and there is no objection subject to conditions relating to noise levels, a CEMP, and development to be undertaken in accordance with the submitted CTMP and lighting impact assessments.

Ecology: No objection.

The updated Ecological Assessment refers to the Ancient Woodland (PAWS). Direct impacts on the woodland would be avoided by implementing a 15m buffer zone for construction activities, however the proposed access route is within the 15m buffer zone which will result in the permanent loss of habitat. However, these habitats are of low value and do not contain notable ancient woodland indicator species and are not of functional importance to the woodland. Further information has been submitted to confirm that alternative layouts to avoid impacts on the existing woodland have been considered. However, constraints from underground pipes/cables mean alternatives are unviable. The layout submitted is the only viable option and minimises encroachment into the woodland buffer zone as much as possible. Conditions are recommended to secure the provision of ecological enhancements, a Construction Environmental Management plan (CEMP) and the submission of updated ecological reports due to the extended commencement period proposed.

Trees: No objection

The revised tree report now recognises the PAWS status of the woodland and its buffer. It also recognises T9 as an Ancient/Veteran tree and provides a 20m buffer. Section 9 of the tree report sets out the issues of the PAWS and T9. In principle, the proposal of the screw piled upgraded access and extended buffer of T9 to 20m are acceptable. The loss of trees to accommodate the proposal and the replacement

planting, and the tree protection measures including the site monitoring and reporting are acceptable. A planning condition directly cross referencing to the tree report and plan is required to secure these tree protection measures.

Landscape: Comment.

The landscaping scheme should include trees in better locations, of a more substantial size, and a broader range of species. However, these matters can be addressed by a landscaping condition.

Conservation: Comment

Consultation not required

HCC Lead Local Flood Authority: No objection.

The additional information submitted demonstrates that there are existing ditch networks bordering the site that would be considered acceptable discharge points if infiltration was not viable. No objection is raised subject to conditions relating to submission of a surface water drainage scheme and details of long-term maintenance.

HCC Highways: No objection.

A traffic survey has been undertaken, and the required visibility splays can be provided at the access. No objection is raised subject to conditions relating to the provision of visibility splays and access widening to accommodate the proposed vehicle tracking.

Forestry England Comment.

Do not provide an opinion supporting or objecting to planning applications. Instead, FE provide advice on the potential impact that proposed developments could have on trees and woodland. In this case guidance is provided on Ancient woodlands, ancient trees and veteran trees which are irreplaceable habitats. Paragraph 193(c) of the NPPF sets out that development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats should be refused unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists.

New Forest National Park Authority Comment.

The site is located some distance from the boundary of the National Park, with an intervening block of woodland. Given the nature of the proposed development, it is not considered that it would affect the landscape or special qualities of the National Park.

Natural England: No objection.

Based on the plans submitted, Natural England considers that the proposed development will not have significant adverse impacts on statutorily protected nature conservation sites. Natural England's generic advice on other natural environment issues is set out in Annex A to their response.

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Services: Comment.

A detailed Battery Safety Management Plan and Emergency Response Plan is required and can be secured by a planning condition. HFRS comment that the site layout needs to include a perimeter access road to allow access to the whole site from multiple directions as the lack of such provision may hamper the ability of attending fire crews to engage in firefighting activities on-site. It is noted that for BESS sites there are very few fire safety regulations that will apply once planning permission is granted and so is therefore important to ensure all safety matters are identified and secured as part of the planning process.

NatureSpace: Comment

The proposed development would present a low risk to great crested newts and/or their habitats. An informative note is recommended.

National Grid Company Transmission Assets: Comment

There are no National Grid Electricity Transmission assets affected in this area.

HSE: Comment

Do not advise against granting planning permission. Refer to Marchwood Power Line crossing the site.

Marchwood Power: Comment

Marchwood Power own and operate the High-Pressure Natural Gas Pipeline within relative proximity to the planned Battery Storage Facility location. Many assessments including Pre and Post Pipeline Protection testing (Cathodic Protection) will be required before any works are undertaken (chargeable to the developer). If works encroach the 3m wayleave of the Pipeline - including crossing the Pipeline with any machinery - a legally binding crossing deed will be required. The developer should make contact with Marchwood Power regarding these matters.

SGN: No objection.

Although SGN has a high-pressure gas pipeline in the vicinity of the site, the safety and integrity of these high-pressure assets will not be affected by the proposal based on the information submitted.

SSEN: No objection.

Works are in close proximity to overhead lines electricity lines therefore further detail of distance is required. An Overhead line (OHL) plan has subsequently submitted showing the location of overhead lines and SSEN have no objections after reviewing the plans.

The New Forest Verderers: No response received.

9 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

No representations received.

10 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

Introduction

One of the remedies to the climate crisis is to reach net zero carbon emissions as soon as possible and the Government has set very challenging targets to reach net zero. It is acknowledged by national policy that electrical storage capacity is required to support the growth of renewable energy generation to meet the Government's 2050 net zero target. The National Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) states that "*Storage has a key role to play in achieving net zero and providing flexibility to the energy system...*". Battery energy storage system facilities (BESS) support the provision of increased renewable energy generation nationally and assist in meeting energy security challenges.

Principle of Development

Policy STR1 of Local Plan Part 1 Planning Strategy relates to achieving sustainable development. All new developments are expected to make a positive social,

economic and environmental contribution to community and business life in the area. Most development needs should be met within settlement boundaries in a manner that is appropriate and proportionate to the nature and size of the settlement.

The site is located within the countryside where restrictive policies on development apply. Policy STR3 relates to the strategy for locating new development and sets out that outside of the built-up area the primary objectives are to conserve and enhance the countryside and natural environment. The policy states *"Development will generally be restricted unless the development proposed is appropriate in a rural setting in accordance with Saved Policy CS21: Rural economy"*.

Policy CS21 Rural economy of the Core Strategy (saved policy) identifies that the strategy for the rural economy is to:

- (a) encourage agricultural, horticultural and forestry enterprises and farm diversification projects where this would be consistent with maintaining and enhancing the environment, and contribute to local distinctiveness;*
- (b) keep existing employment sites, and encourage improvements and redevelopments that will help maintain and enhance the environment, and contribute to local distinctiveness;*
- (c) allow small-scale built development for employment purposes in rural settlements (CS9, Level 3 settlements);*
- (d) support local business development through the conversion of existing buildings, with particular encouragement of enterprises that have little adverse environmental impacts (e.g. design/research activities);*
- (e) support the local delivery of services and the retention of local shops and pubs;*
- (f) work with the New Forest National Park Authority and other neighbouring authorities to protect essential back-up grazing land to support commoning; and*
- (g) allow developments essential to support a rural workforce, including agricultural workers dwellings and rural community facilities*

Policy STR3 restricts development unless the proposals are appropriate in a rural setting, and as such the criteria of saved Policy CS21 need to be considered. In making an assessment of the current proposals against Policy CS21, the scheme (a) would not be an agricultural, horticultural and forestry enterprises or a farm diversification project (b) does not relate to an existing employment site (c) is not for employment purposes, and (d) does not support local business as it does not entail the conversion of existing buildings. All the other policy criteria are not relevant.

As such it is concluded that the current proposals would not comply with Policy STR3 or Policy CS21 and would therefore needs to be considered as departure from the development plan.

Policy DM22 of the Local Plan Part 2 relates to employment development in the countryside. However, as the proposals are not for an employment use and do not relate to existing buildings Policy DM22 is not relevant.

Policy DM4 of the Local Plan Part 2 relates to Renewable and low carbon energy generation. The policy set out that the benefits associated with development proposals relating to renewable energy schemes will be given significant weight, provided that they avoid unacceptable impacts on:

- (i) land uses, including all nature conservation designations (with particular regard to any impacts on international designations within, or near to, the Plan area) and heritage assets, including the setting of heritage assets;*
- (ii) the immediate and wider landscape, giving particular importance to impacts on the New Forest National Park and the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB;*

(iii) residential amenity both during and after construction; and
(iv) the road network.

However, although the application site is located outside of the built up area and within the designated countryside, the benefits of the proposals should be given significant weight in accordance with Policy DM4, and subject to consideration of the impacts identified in (i) - (iv) of that policy. Although Policy DM4 of the Local Plan Part 2 was adopted in 2014, it remains part of the development plan and as such is a relevant material consideration.

Although it is acknowledged that these proposals represent a departure from local development plan, in making a planning judgment on the principle of the development, the wider national policy context is also an important material consideration.

The principle of the proposed development is strongly supported and encouraged by national policy in the NPPF 2024. NPPF Chapter 6. 'Building a strong, competitive economy' Paragraph 85 states that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity.

NPPF Chapter 14 relates to "Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change" and is particularly relevant to renewable energy proposals. Paragraph 161 encourages the increased use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy. The Framework sets out that the planning system should support the transition to net zero by 2050 and that it should support renewable and low carbon energy schemes and their associated infrastructure.

NPPF Paragraph 166 states that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should expect new development to:

a) comply with any development plan policies on local requirements for decentralised energy supply unless it can be demonstrated by the applicant, having regard to the type of development involved and its design, that this is not feasible or viable; and
b) take account of landform, layout, building orientation, massing and landscaping to minimise energy consumption.

NPPF Paragraph 168 states that, when determining planning applications for all forms of renewable and low carbon energy developments and their associated infrastructure, applicants are not required to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy. Significant weight should be given to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy generation and the proposal's contribution to a net zero future.

Furthermore, the National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) states, that electricity storage *"has a key role to play in achieving net zero and providing flexibility to the energy system..."* (Paragraph 3.3.25), and EN-1 goes on to state that *"Storage is needed to reduce the costs of the electricity system and increase reliability by storing surplus electricity in times of low demand to provide electricity when demand is higher"* (Paragraph 3.3.26).

The Clean Power 2030 Action Plan (CP30AP): "A new era of clean electricity" was published by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) in December 2024. The CP30AP states that the Government *is 'accepting government's central role in steering the creation of this new energy system, setting our expectations for the 2030 capacities of key technologies at national and regional level.'*

The Action Plan sets out that successful delivery will require rapid deployment of new clean energy capacity across the whole of the UK, reflecting the shared renewable ambitions of the UK, Scottish and Welsh Governments. These factors are acknowledged to have significant weight.

The emphasis in the NPPF and National Policy statements is clear in its ambition and strongly encourages the delivery of this type of infrastructure. It acknowledges the positive benefits associated with renewable energy generation and the key role played by battery storage facilities in providing flexibility in the energy supply. The planning assessment of the current proposals needs to be made within this national policy context.

This type of energy storage infrastructure project is further encouraged given the declaration of a climate emergency by NFDC, reflected in the NFDC Climate Change SPD. This SPD provides guidance for the planning policies contained in the Local Plan Part One and clarifies how developers should address climate change in planning applications, in order to meet Local Plan policies, in particular for Policy STR1 and Policy ENV3.

Overall, a balanced view needs to be taken within the local and national policy context that is set out above. National policy strongly encourages low carbon energy projects in meeting climate change challenges and striving to achieve carbon Net Zero by 2050

Officers acknowledge that the applicant is seeking to provide an important piece of energy infrastructure for the region. However, a BESS facility is not a typical planning land use or type of development. As such the District Council has not planned for this type of development through a criteria-based planning policy or site allocation. Furthermore, consideration of restrictions on identified grid capacity and the need to identify sites of a certain size and characteristics are important factors that add justification for the selection of the application site for the proposed BESS use.

As such, significant weight that must be given to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy generation, and the proposal's contribution to a net zero future, as set out in national policy. This demonstrates that there is a clear unmet need for the type of energy storage facility that the proposed BESS would deliver.

As such these benefits are considered to outweigh the harm that would result from conflict with local plan policy, and as such the principle of the development is considered to be acceptable in this instance.

Impact on New Forest National Park

Local Plan Policy STR2 seeks to protect the countryside and the adjoining New Forest National Park and its setting. Section 245 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA) requires Local Planning Authorities to seek to further the statutory purposes of Protected Landscapes including National Parks in respect of decision-making in planning applications. The statutory purposes of National Parks are:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the areas designated; and
- To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of those areas by the public.

Impacts on the immediate and wider landscape of the adjoining New Forest National Park need to be considered. The proposed development is located some distance outside of the boundary of the National Park. The built form is low level and set back from the road beyond a large mature woodland.

Having regard to the Council's duty to seek to further conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park and to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities, by reason of its siting relative to the boundary of the National Park, and its limited height, any impact would be negligible. In respect of the second test, the proposal is for an infrastructure project located outside of the National Park boundary and so it does not provide opportunity to promote opportunities for the enjoyment of the National Park.

The New Forest National Park Authority have been consulted on the application and comment that the site is located some distance from the boundary of the National Park, with an intervening block of woodland. Given the nature of the proposed development, it is not considered that it would affect the landscape or special qualities of the National Park. As such, the proposal is not considered to have an adverse impact on the New Forest National Park and so would accord with Policy STR2 and the duties set out in Section 245 of LURA (2023).

Design, site layout and impact on local character and appearance of area.

Local Plan Policy ENV3 (Design quality and local distinctiveness) requires that all development should achieve high quality design that contributes positively to local distinctiveness, quality of life and enhances the character and identity of the locality. In particular, development should be:

- *Functional: well, connected to surrounding uses, and logically laid out so that different elements work well together in a manner that is safe to access, easy to navigate, convenient to use and that makes effective use of both developed land and open spaces;*
- *Appropriate: sympathetic to its environment and context, respecting and enhancing local distinctiveness, character and identity; and*
- *Attractive: visually appealing and enjoyable to be in.*

The proposed battery containers, transformer units, spare parts container and larger sub station would all be flat roof structures of no more than 3 m high, They would be coloured grey and be set back a minimum of approx. 65m from road. The smaller sub-station, which is closer to the front of the site, it would also be flat roofed but would be 4m high and coloured green. It would be set back approximately 48m from the road. The widened access and removal of trees to facilitate the development would increase the visibility of the site from public vantage points. However, all of these proposed structures would be of a modest scale, and their proposed colours (light grey or green) would assist to make them appear recessive against their backdrop and appropriate within their context.

Although the fire water storage tanks would be 4.6m high they would be located behind the retained ancient woodland and so not easily visible from outside of the site.

The 33 kV DNO substation compound would be the most prominent element on the site due to its location towards the front of the site, with structures and cables extending a max of approximately 7m in height. However, it would be set back within the site and despite the widened access would be screened by existing retained trees making its visual impact acceptable.

As such, overall, the development is considered to result in limited visual impact, which is not considered to be out of character, harmful or significant within its setting. As such the development would comply with Policy ENV3 of the Local Plan Part 1 and the NPPF.

Residential amenity

Policy ENV3 of the NFDC Local Plan Part 1 requires the impact on the residential amenity of existing and future occupiers to be taken into consideration in making planning decisions. NPPF Paragraph 135, subparagraph (f) states development should promote health and wellbeing, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

The site is located in the countryside and so it is not densely populated. The site boundary is within 300m of the nearest residential properties at Sunnyfields Farm to the north, and Trotts Farm and Holly Cottage (on Trotts Lane) are 625m to the east. There are nearby employment uses at Hounsdawn Business Park which is located opposite and to the east of the site.

Noise

A Noise Impact Assessment (NIA) has been submitted with the planning application. The NIA includes a review of the existing background sound levels and predictions of the noise impact using modelled data at the nearest noise sensitive receptors. Environmental Health has been consulted and has commented that the NIA has appropriately considered the impact of the proposed development in accordance with relevant acoustic standards as well as low frequency noise capable of being generated from the proposed plant and equipment.

The noise impacts are considered below:

Construction Impacts

There will be some limited noise and disturbance to the amenity of nearby neighbours during the construction period of 12 months although this would be a relatively short-term impact and these impacts can be mitigated. A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) and Addendum have been submitted with the application. This part of the submission provides sufficient information in relation to the control of amenity impacts arising from the construction of the development. The CTMP specifies the likely hours of construction would be between 08:00 and 18:00 in winter (October - March) and 08:00 and 20:00 (April - September). On Saturday work would be between 08:00 and 13:00 with no work taking place on Sunday or bank holidays.

Whilst it is noted that the proposed site working hours during the summer months would exceed those typically recommended by Environmental Health, given the locality of the site these would appear to be acceptable in this instance. A planning condition is however recommended to ensure adherence to the CTMP.

Operational impacts:

Once operational, the proposed development would be relatively quiet, with noise being limited to electrical transmission equipment and so, given its context it is unlikely that any adverse impacts relating to noise and vibration would result.

The NIA considers that noise impact both during the daytime and at night is predicted to be significantly below existing background sound levels, accordingly the risk of adverse impact is considered to be low. It is further noted that the NIA adopts a highly conservative scenario in which all plant is assumed to operate continuously at full

capacity during the quietest part of the night, despite actual operation being expected only for short periods during peak demand - which typically does not occur overnight. Internal noise levels within nearby dwellings are also expected to remain well below guideline thresholds and are likely to be imperceptible in most conditions.

It is noted that the conclusions of the NIA are based on the plant specification outlined and utilise integrated rooftop silencers on the battery containers. With this design, no noise fencing or acoustic barriers around the compound are considered necessary to comply with the identified noise limits. However, if alternative plant were to be selected it will be essential that the overall site design remains compliant with the noise limits established in the NIA. Therefore, a condition is required to ensure specified plant noise levels which are indicative of a low adverse impact are achieved at nearby receptors.

Lighting

Security lighting, consisting of 34 flood lighting units mounted 2m from ground level, are proposed which would be used at night. An Environmental Lighting Impact Assessment Report has been submitted which outlines that the proposed lighting will not exceed the recommended limitations given in the ILP Guidance Notes for an Environmental Zone E2 location. A condition is however recommended to secure this.

As such the impacts on residential amenity are considered to be acceptable and would accord with Policy ENV3 of the Local Plan Part 1.

Highway safety, access and parking

Policy CCC2 of the Local Plan seeks to provide sufficient car and cycle parking for developments. Policy ENV3 seeks to create streets and spaces that are safe and easy to navigate and to ensure that sufficient parking is provided without detriment to the character of the area or highway safety.

Access:

Access to the site is from the Marchwood Bypass A326 on the spur road from roundabout with the Totton Bypass A35. Buses run northbound approximately every 20 minutes. There is a bus stop near the site entrance and a central pedestrian refuge.

HCC Highways have been consulted on this planning application. HCC Highways raised initial concerns relating to visibility and vehicle tracking. Further information has been submitted to address these matters as an addendum to the submitted Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP). This CTMP proposes measures for managing construction access, an updated visibility assessment and a swept path tracking assessment. Additional traffic surveys were undertaken for seven consecutive days to the north and south of the access. These surveys were carried out during neutral traffic conditions and school term time in order to ensure that an accurate reflection of traffic flows in the vicinity of the site were obtained.

Based on the surveyed speeds (85th% speed of 46.5mph Northbound and 45.7mph Southbound) the visibility requirements are 2.4m x 126m to the south, and 2.4m x 129.8m to the north. A revised drawing to demonstrate how these visibility splays could be achieved has been submitted. HCC Highway Authority are satisfied with the provided visibility drawings, and it is further noted that any obstruction above 600mm within the visibility splays will be removed. A planning condition is required to ensure the provision of these visibility splays prior the commencement of the development and their retention thereafter.

A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) has been submitted which advises there would be 207 vehicle movements during the first 24 weeks of construction. Based on the use of a 5.5 day working week, this would equate to an average of 8.6 vehicles leaving the site per week. Accepting that deliveries would not be constant, the CTMP states that there would be no more than 5 vehicles leaving and entering the site per day. Construction vehicles leaving the site would have clear visibility both north and south and would be travelling slowly. There is existing signage to ensure vehicles leaving the site only turn left (south).

The applicant has now provided a revised tracking drawing demonstrating how a 12.0m HGV could enter and exit the site shown for both left out and left in. These tracking movements are now within the red line boundary of the planning application site and are considered acceptable to the Highway Authority.

Works will need to be undertaken to widen the access hard surfaced area accordingly and this need to be completed as the first operation prior to construction of the BESS on the site. These works need to be implemented via a S278 agreement with HCC as Local Highway Authority. However, the original layout plan showed the hard surfaced area of the existing site access on these tracking drawings to significantly smaller than the hard surfaced area required to encompass the vehicle tracking movements. A planning condition for the submission of further details of the required access widening, to enable the vehicle tracking movements shown on the tracking drawing to be provided before the development commences on the site was recommended.

However, a plan to show this widened access on the site layout plan has subsequently been submitted and this plan is acceptable to HCC Highways. The implementation of the access widening prior to other work to implement the planning permission can be subject of a planning condition.

Parking:

Construction:

Construction of the development will be undertaken over a temporary period of approx. 12 months. The submitted CTMP indicates that the construction workforce is anticipated to be 20 each day.

A temporary construction compound will be created adjacent to the site entrance which will allow for the parking of construction vehicles, for lorry turning and will also provide a set down area during construction. All delivery vehicles will be able to enter the site and unload within the compound area. There will be no queuing, parking or unloading on the highway. The temporary construction compound is only required for the duration of construction period and will be removed on completion of the construction period. As such this compound has not been included within the red line boundary as it is considered to be permitted development.

Operation:

Once operational the site will be remotely managed with only occasional staff maintenance visits. Two car parking spaces would be provided on the site, and this would meet with requirements.

Overall, the proposals would comply with Policy ENV3 and CCC2 of the Local Plan Part 1.

Landscape and trees

Policy ENV4 of the Local Plan Part 1 seeks to retain and/or enhance landscape features through sensitive design, mitigation and enhancement measures.

Landscape:

A Landscape Visual Assessment (LVA) has been submitted, and a landscape mitigation plan shows new tree and native planting within the site. The new access will require the removal of 8 trees however 16 replacement trees are proposed to be planted within the site. There is an existing mixed shrub and tree hedgerow along the northern boundary of the site which would be retained.

The Landscape officer has been consulted and comments that the removal of trees to create the required visibility splays and the vehicular access to the site would open up views of the existing electricity pylon which is not currently noticeable. The originally proposed soft landscape proposal was not considered to mitigate this increased visibility of the site from the road or other visual receptors. Further information and a revised landscape proposal have been submitted to address the comment made.

Trees of a more substantial size, a broader range of species and in better locations would be preferable although it is acknowledged that there are significant constraints on the site due to above and below ground utility infrastructure. The existing mature trees would be retained, and additional landscaping would assist to further mitigate the visual impact of the development from the road when viewed through the trees.

It is considered appropriate to agree the details of the landscaping scheme by planning condition which will require the submission of details of the proposed planting including sizes and species as well as on-going management and maintenance arrangements.

As such, subject to this condition, the proposals would comply with Policy ENV3 and ENV4 of the Local Plan Part 1 and no landscape objection is raised.

Trees:

There is an Ancient semi-natural Woodland and Ancient Replanted Woodland (Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites PAWS) located along the southeastern boundary of the site and adjacent to the proposed access.

The Forestry Commission practice guide defines PAWS as '*Ancient woodland site which has been converted to a plantation dominated by non-native broadleaved and conifer species*'

Ancient woodlands, ancient trees and veteran trees are irreplaceable habitats. Paragraph 193(c) of the NPPF sets out that development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats should be refused unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists.

The Forestry Commission have been consulted and commented that they do not provide an opinion supporting or objecting to planning applications. Instead, they provide advice on the potential impact that proposed developments could have on trees and woodland. In this case guidance is provided on Ancient woodlands, ancient trees and veteran trees and that they are irreplaceable habitats.

NPPG also provides guidance on how to consider these designations, as well as Ancient and Veteran trees. An assessment guide is provided on making planning decisions in line with the NPPF. Matters to consider are:

- conserving and enhancing biodiversity
- avoiding and reducing the level of impact of the proposed development on ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees.

Planning permission should be refused if development results in the loss or deterioration of ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees unless both of the following applies:

- there are wholly exceptional reasons;
- there is a suitable compensation strategy in place (this must not be a part of considerations of wholly exceptional reasons) - in accordance with the guidance in paragraphs 33 and 34 of the planning practice guidance and decisions are made in line with paragraph 193 (c) of the NPPF.

The revised tree report now recognises the PAWS status of the woodland located along the south eastern boundary of the site and its required 15m buffer zone. It also recognises T9 as an Ancient/Veteran tree and provides for a 20m buffer around it. The revised site layout plan and oak tree protection plan indicate that the hardstanding of the compound is now outside of this 20m buffer which exceeds the standard 17m Root Protection Area requirement for ancient trees. The revised tree report also provides details of the Root Protection Suspended Track Plan and a cross-section plan through this track to show its construction.

In principle, the proposal for the screw piled upgraded access and extended buffer of T9 to 20m are acceptable in tree terms. The loss of trees to accommodate the proposal and the replacement planting is also accepted. The tree protection measures, including the site monitoring and reporting are acceptable. A planning condition to ensure works are undertaken in accordance with the revised tree report and tree protection plan is recommended.

Subject to conditions, in tree terms the proposals would be in accordance Policy ENV3 and ENV4 of the Local Plan Part 1, and Paragraph 193 (c) of the NPPF.

Ecology and On-Site Biodiversity and protected species

Policy DM2 of the Local Plan Part Two seeks to conserve nature and enhance biodiversity. The policy states that the Council will use planning conditions to provide mitigation and where appropriate, enhancement measures.

As set out above, the site is located adjacent to both Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and Ancient Replanted Woodland (Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites PAWS), which are located on the southern boundary. The implementation of a 15m buffer zone between construction activities and the ancient woodland is required not only to protect trees located within the woodland but to protect the integrity of soils and prevent woodland edge effects, which can degrade the woodland ecological character.

There were initial ecological concerns expressed about direct and indirect impacts from construction. The originally submitted Ecological Impact Assessment (August 2025) did not make reference to the ancient woodland habitat, outside of the SINCS. The Ecological Impact Assessment was updated in October 2025 with reference to the ancient woodland. The report stated that direct impacts during construction would be avoided as root protection measures would be employed. The NFDC Ecologist

was satisfied that direct impacts on the woodland itself would be avoided during construction, and due to the nature of the proposals impacts during operation are unlikely.

The current proposals entail an access route within the 15m buffer zone which would result in the permanent loss of some semi natural habitat. There were ecological concerns about the reduction of the amount of semi-natural habitats next to ancient woodland that provide important dispersal and feeding habitat for woodland species and these concerns were not addressed by the revised Ecological Impact Assessment (October 2025).

Additional comments were requested from the ecological consultant on the status of the habitats within the buffer zone and the impacts of these losses. In line with the mitigation hierarchy impacts should always be avoided first and strong justification is therefore required for the current layout to satisfy compliance with the NPPF and local policies.

A further updated Ecological Assessment (dated November 2025) was submitted in December 2025. This document address earlier comments relating to tree inclusion within the BNG baseline and the provision of enhancement measures.

Whilst the proposed access route is located within the 15m PAWS buffer zone and would result in the permanent loss of semi natural habitat, additional details have been provided about the current status of habitats present within this woodland buffer zone. The habitats which would be lost are of low value and do not contain notable ancient woodland indicator species. It is therefore considered that those habitats that would be lost within the buffer zone are not of functional importance to the woodland.

The NPPF has a requirement to apply the mitigation hierarchy and local policy protections for ancient woodland and associated habitats. Further information has been submitted to confirm that alternative layouts to avoid impacts on the existing woodland have been considered. However, constraints from underground pipes and cables mean alternatives are unviable. The layout submitted is the only viable option and minimises encroachment into the woodland buffer zone as much as possible and therefore is considered to be acceptable in this instance.

Designated Sites

The site is located within proximity to the following statutory designated sites:

- Solent & Southampton Water Ramsar and SPA;
- Solent Maritime SAC;
- Eling and Bury Marshes SSSI;
- Fletchwood Meadows SSSI; and
- New Forest SPA & SAC.

In addition, a total of 24 non-statutory designated sites, SINC and cSINC, were identified in the desktop study. No impacts are anticipated on the surrounding statutory designated sites however impacts on the non-statutory designated is considered likely during the construction phase. A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) is however recommended to be submitted as a pre-commencement condition.

Habitats

The site has been assessed as largely horse grazed modified grassland with a small area of other neutral grassland with patches of bramble scrub and mixed scrub.

- *BNG*

The statutory metric has been completed by a suitably qualified ecologist, the calculation states that there will be a net gain in 3.28 habitat units, or 93.95%. There were some matters of update and clarification required in this respect of the baseline to include the individual trees, a commentary on the tree losses, and justification for the selection of lowland acid grassland habitat.

A revised Biodiversity Impact Calculation (dated November 2025) was submitted in December 2025 and the NFDC Ecologist is satisfied that the captures the existing baseline assessment.

- *Significance*

There are a number of potentially significant on-site habitats. A Biodiversity Net Gain Plan/ Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) is therefore required. The maintenance and monitoring of these habitats in line with the HMMP should be secured by planning condition for a period of 30 years.

- *Ecological Enhancements*

The Ecological Assessment states that ecological enhancements are included in relation to bats and reptiles and details have now been now provided. The provision of ecological enhancements should be secured via the Ecological Enhancement Schedule Condition.

Species

- *Amphibians including Great Crested Newt*

- No breeding habitat was recorded on site while a single off-site pond was subject to an eDNA survey, which returned a negative result for great crested newt. The habitats are considered sub-optimal for amphibians and therefore no impacts are anticipated and the NFDC Ecologist is satisfied with this conclusion.

- *Badger*

- No direct evidence of badger was recorded on site however suitable foraging habitat is present. Should any potential evidence of badger be identified prior to development, or during construction a suitably qualified ecologist should be contacted to advise on next steps.

- *Bats*

The site has been assessed to contain suitable habitat for foraging and commuting bats while the adjacent woodland has the potential to support roosting habitat. The recommendation for a sensitive lighting plan is welcome, in particular recommendations for the creation of dark corridors around the boundaries of the site (in particular woodland). On review of the Environmental Lighting Impact Assessment Report, the NFDC Ecologist is satisfied that these recommendations have been followed, and development is unlikely to cause an adverse effect on bats.

- *Birds*

Suitable habitat for nesting birds is present within the site. Woody vegetation removal should be undertaken outside of the nesting bird period (March to August, inclusive). This recommendation is welcomed.

- *Hazel Dormouse*

The majority of the site has been assessed as being unsuitable for hazel dormouse however the woodland that forms the southern boundary is considered suitable. The submitted documents set out that removal of scrub is to be undertaken under the supervision of an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW). These works will be undertaken over winter when dormouse is in hibernation, and this will also avoid the bird nesting period. This recommendation is welcomed and details should be secured within the CEMP to be submitted by planning condition.

- *Reptiles*

There are limited habitats on site that are considered suitable for reptiles. The majority of suitable habitat is recorded around the peripheries. Given the limited suitable habitat for reptiles no further surveys have been undertaken. However, the site should continue to be grazed to prevent development of suitable habitat for the species. If this does not occur further surveys and mitigation measures may be required.

The agent has requested to extend the commencement period for the development. This has implications for the timespan of ecological reports which usually remain valid for a 12–18-month period. Whilst the current reports and ecological baseline is adequately captured, reports over 18 months old are required to be updated. Given the potential time delay between determination and commencement of development a pre-commencement condition is required for an updating ecological walkover survey to be undertaken, if the existing ecology baseline is more than 18 months old.

Overall, subject to conditions, in ecological terms the proposals would be in accordance Policy DM2 of the Local Plan Part 2 and Paragraph 193 (c) of the NPPF.

Drainage

Policy CCC1 seeks to ensure that development should not result in pollution or hazards which prejudice the health of communities. Furthermore, the policy requires development to mitigate impacts or risks from development on community health and safety.

The site is located in Flood Risk Zone 1 which has the lowest risk from flooding. The Environment Agency have therefore not been consulted on this planning application.

Environment Agency's risk of flooding from surface water map presented in the submitted FRA indicates that the proposed development site has a very low risk of surface water flooding. The submitted FRA and Drainage Strategy has assessed drainage capacity based on Design 1:100-year rainfall event + 25% climate change allowance.

HCC Lead Local Flood Authority have been consulted and initially raised concerns relating to the lack of groundwater monitoring or an alternative drainage option for the site. The alternative drainage option is required so that infiltration testing can be conditioned.

Further drainage information has been submitted to address these matters. The Applicant's drainage consultant has undertaken a site survey and identified two potential discharge points in a Drainage Site Walkover. It is proposed that if infiltration rates are insufficient, the existing drainage ditches shown on the submitted drainage walkover plan would be reinstated and the flow rates and potential capacity modelled.

The additional information provided demonstrates that there are existing ditch networks bordering the site which would be considered acceptable discharge points if infiltration was not viable. It is understood from the walkover plan that the southern / eastern watercourse is bounding the site boundary, and it is likely that the applicant has a level of riparian responsibility in relation to these features. HCC LLFA recommend that maintenance is undertaken regardless of the final drainage strategy as required under the Land Drainage Act.

Given the site levels and proximity to these watercourses, there is sufficient confidence that there is an alternative viable drainage option and on this basis HCC LLFA are satisfied that further information in relation to the surface water drainage scheme for the site can be secured by a planning condition.

In addition, details of the long-term maintenance arrangements for the surface water drainage system are required to be provided by a planning condition.

As such, subject to conditions the proposals are considered to comply with Policy CCC1 of the Local Plan Part 1 and the NPPF.

Other environmental impacts:

Local Plan Policy ENV3 (Design quality and local distinctiveness) criterion (ii) sets out that new development will be required to avoid unacceptable effects by reason of visual intrusion or overbearing impact, overlooking, shading, noise and light pollution or other adverse impacts on local character or residential amenity.

Local Plan Policy CCC1 (Safe and healthy communities) criterion (i) sets out that development should not result in pollution or hazards which prejudice the health and safety of communities and their environments including air quality and the water environment. Criterion (iv)(c) sets out that on contaminated, polluted or unstable land unless it is first adequately remediated or otherwise made safe for the proposed use and for the local community prior to occupation vulnerable development will not be permitted. The Council has also adopted an Air Quality in New Development SPD.

Air Quality and Dust

The NFDC Air Quality SPD sets out criteria to determine whether an air quality statement or detailed air quality assessment is required. The document also details what should be included within each document and appropriate mitigation measures to reduce emissions.

An Air Quality Statement (AQA) has been submitted that sets out the principle mitigation measures proposed to address any air quality impacts. A qualitative assessment of air quality impacts during the construction phase has been undertaken and evaluated using methodology detailed in the IAQM guidance document.

Dust is likely to be generated during the construction phase of the development. The submitted AQA and CTMP set out how dust impacts would be managed and mitigated during the construction period. The Proposed Development would lead to a negligible risk for dust during demolition and low risk with dust from construction and

earthworks. Given the low level of risk, no mitigation measures beyond those required by legislation are required.

However, a pre-commencement planning condition is recommended for a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) to include air quality and dust mitigation matters.

Contaminated Land:

Local Plan Policy DM5 sets out that where development is proposed on a site that is known or suspected to be contaminated, a detailed site assessment will be required to establish the nature and extent of the contamination.

Inappropriate management of contamination may have a significant impact for the environment and human health and, therefore, must be managed appropriately.

Environmental Heath (contaminated land) has been consulted and comment that an Envirocheck Report: Datasheet has been submitted with the application which details environmental data information within 1000 metres of the application site.

This information, along with information held by the Council show the site as open space with a railway running along the north of the site since 1924, however there are no records of any contaminative activities on the site or within the vicinity.

As such there are no contaminated land issues that need further assessment.

Health and Safety Matters

Gas pipelines:

Policy CCC1 (iii) requires that development within the safeguarding area of a military explosives storage area or within the consultation zones of a hazardous industrial site or pipelines will be restricted or managed either in accordance with Health and Safety Executive guidelines, or in consultation with the Secretary of State for Defence, as applicable.

The site is located within the Inner and Middle zone of the Gas HSE Consultation Zone for Marchwood Power and Intermediate and Medium Pressure consultation Zones for SGN Pipeline consultations. There is a SGN pipeline located towards the north west and north east boundaries of the site.

Appropriate consultations have been undertaken as part of the planning application process.

The HSE do not advise on safety grounds against granting planning permission in this case. However, it is noted that there is a major hazard pipeline that is owned and operated by Marchwood Power located within the planning application site.

Marchwood Power have been consulted on the application and comment that many assessments including Pre and Post Pipeline Protection assessments will be required before any works are undertaken. If works encroach the 3m wayleave of the Pipeline including crossing the Pipeline with any machinery, a legally binding crossing deed will be required. The applicant is aware of these requirements. The submitted plans indicate a 9 m easement, and the developer will engage further with Marchwood Power separately from the planning application process.

SGN have commented that although there is a high-pressure gas pipeline within the site, the safety and integrity of high-pressure assets will not be affected by the proposal based on the information submitted.

SSEN have commented that the proposed works are in close proximity to overhead lines electricity lines and requested further detail of distance is required. An Overhead line (OHL) plan has subsequently submitted showing the location of overhead lines. SSEN have no objections after reviewing the plans.

Fire Safety:

Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service (HIWFRS) comment that there are very few fire safety regulations that apply to BESS sites once planning permission is granted. It is therefore important to ensure all safety matters are identified and secured as part of the planning process. Initial consultation comments requested further information and clarification relating water supplies and management; spacing and separation; active fire protection systems; battery chemistry and details of testing. The agent has responded to advise that further discussions with HWFRS have been undertaken with respect to the matters raised and further information and clarification provided to HWFRS.

An Outline Battery Safety Management Plan has been submitted, however it is appropriate for full details of the Battery Safety Management Plan to be secured by a planning condition.

Community Engagement

NPPF Para 42 emphasises the importance of engaging with the local community, stakeholders and statutory and non-statutory consultees before submitting a planning application.

NFDC published a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) in February 2024 which sets out how NFDC involve the community and stakeholders in the preparation and review of planning policy documents and the consideration of planning applications.

The agent has confirmed that community engagement has been undertaken, and a website set up about these proposals. A list of local groups including the Ward Councillor and Parish Council who were contacted has been provided.

The website provides details of the project and requests ideas for how community benefit funds could be spent in this area. The website also lists various community benefit fund ideas that have been implemented in previous projects and could be used again here.

In October 2025 there had been 169 visitors to the site, 88 unique visitors. One community benefit suggestion had been made to support activities that promote walking, cycling, green public transportation and electric vehicle infrastructure. This suggestion will be considered by the applicant in the future should permission be granted. However, such community benefits are not considered necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms and are not, therefore, secured by planning obligation as part of this permission.

The above measures demonstrate that appropriate local community engagement has been undertaken prior to the submission of the planning application in accordance with the NFDC SCI and the NPPF.

Developer Contributions

N/A

11 OTHER MATTERS

Grid connection and period for commencement:

The Proposed Development BESS could only occur where it falls within the catchment area of a grid connection point which has capacity. The location of the proposed development has been selected to be in close proximity to a viable Grid Supply Point (GSP) with capacity which has been identified. It is proposed to connect to the high voltage overhead line at the pylon located at Bury Brickfield Park. A preliminary design for the grid connection has been prepared by Scottish and Southern Electricity (SSE), the Distribution Network Operator (DNO).

This element of the project would be undertaken by the DNO using their permitted development rights and so the electrical connection from the site to the network are not been included within this planning application.

When the planning application was submitted in July 2025 an extended 10-year period for commencement - rather than the standard commencement period of 3-years - was requested in order to allow time for a grid connection to be established.

NPPG Para 025 states that while the standard commencement time period is 3 years other periods can be imposed. This guidance states that *“A longer time period may be justified for very complex projects where there is evidence that 3 years is not long enough to allow all the necessary preparations to be completed before development can start”*

The agent has confirmed that the request for 10-year commencement period is due to the Grid Reform process currently underway with the National Energy System Operator (NESO). The formal connection date will not be known until the NESO assessment is completed. This assessment was due to be completed in January 2026 (at the earliest) and was expected to confirm either a 2030 or 2035 connection date.

Information was released by NESO in December 2025 in relation to Grid Reform outcomes, but this was very limited, and no formal offers of connection dates were issued. In addition, the current network is unable to accommodate connections until network reinforcement works are completed. The connection offers are now due to be issued between the end of quarter 1 to quarter 3 of 2026 with a large number of projects likely to be in the 2031-35 connection period due to the network reinforcement requirements by NESO. It is unlikely that a formal connection date for these proposals will be confirmed until at least mid-2026. It is therefore anticipated that the connection will be possible between 2031-35 but based on reinforcement works required at Nursling grid supply point it is likely to be towards the end of this period.

Once a connection date is offered and accepted, it will require the developer to meet this date or the connection would be lost. Construction will need to commence well in advance of the confirmed connection date, and this construction period is anticipated to be 12 months. The uncertainties about the date of connection as set out above seek to justify the request made for a 10-year period for commencement of the development.

Based on the above information, in the absence of confirmation of the connection date and to allow for a 2035 connection to be made, an 8-year commencement period is considered to be justified in this instance

12 CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

In accordance with the National Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy, the NPPF and the NFDC Climate Change SPD significant weight must be placed on the need for proposals that reduce carbon emissions and strive to achieve carbon net zero by 2050. The Government has set challenging targets to reach net zero and has stated, in EN-1, that *“Storage has a key role to play in achieving net zero and providing flexibility to the energy system...”*.

The development of renewable energy projects and battery storage facilities in particular, are strongly supported and encouraged by NPPF and other national policy documents which emphasise the benefits of BESS proposals to meeting wider climate change objectives. It is recognised in these policies that battery storage has a key role to play in achieving net zero and providing flexibility to the energy system. Battery energy storage system facilities (BESS) support the provision of increased renewable energy generation nationally and assist in meeting energy security challenges.

The planning statement sets out the case for the proposals, the site selection process and the benefits of the proposals within the national policy context. These needs be set against the impact of the development within the countryside and the departure from local plan policy.

Consideration needs to be given as to whether the benefits of the scheme outweigh the identified conflict with Policy STR3 of the Local Plan Part 1 and saved Policy CS21 of the Core Strategy. Officers acknowledge that the application seeks to provide an important piece of energy infrastructure. A BESS facility is not a typical planning land use or type of development. As such the District Council has not planned for this type of development through a criteria-based planning policy or site allocation.

Justification for any departure is a matter of planning judgement based on the planning balance. Taking all of these material considerations, and the significant weight which must be given to the need for the BESS, the planning balance concludes that when carefully considering all the issues, a departure from development plan policy can be justified in this instance for a period of 30 years and as such the principle of the development is accepted.

The scheme has been designed to ensure that the impact of the scheme on the Ancient woodland (PAWS) along the southern boundary of the site and adjacent to the access would be minimised. The semi-natural habitat to be lost in the 15 m buffer zone are of low value and does not contain notable species which are of functional importance to the woodland. In addition, there are no other viable layouts that could be delivered given other constraints on the site. As such, this can be justified in this instance and as such the proposals would be in accordance with Policy DM2 of the Local Plan Part 2 and NPPF Para 193 (c).

Ecological interests on the site would be safeguarded and appropriate ecological enhancement secured along with BNG. Although there would be some tree loss, important protected trees on the site would be retained and protected. Tree planting and associated landscaping would be undertaken.

The visual impact of the development would be acceptable when considered within the context of the character of the area during the 30-year lifetime of the development.

Associated dust and noise would primarily be limited to during the construction period. Any impact on residential amenity would be minimal and can be effectively mitigated, and hours of construction can be limited. The required mitigation can be secured by planning conditions.

Highway safety would not be prejudiced by the proposed development, and all other health and safety issues have been addressed.

When the planning application was submitted in July 2025 an extended period for commencement of 10 years was requested as it was not known whether the formal connection date would be 2030 or 2035. In the absence of confirmation of the connection date and the likelihood that this connection will not be until 2035, an 8-year commencement period is considered to be justified in this instance.

As such, the application is therefore recommended for approval subject to conditions once the publicity period relating to the development plan departure has expired.

13 RECOMMENDATION

Delegated Authority be given to the Service Manager Development Management to **GRANT PERMISSION** subject to:

- i) no material comments being made following the end of advertisement period of the application as a departure to the development plan.
- ii) the imposition of the conditions set out below.

Proposed Conditions:

1. Time: Commencement

The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of eight years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To allow time for connection of the BESS to the electricity grid to be made and to comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. Time: 30 year temporary consent

The use shall cease within 30 years from the date of first operation of the development hereby permitted and the land restored to a condition which has first been agreed by the Local Planning Authority. Written confirmation of the first import of electricity date shall be provided to the Local Planning Authority within one month after the event. 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 cleared condition) and a Decommissioning Landscape Plan

shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) shall then be removed and the ground reinstated in accordance with the Decommissioning Method Statement and Decommissioning Landscape Plan.

Reason: Because of the temporary nature of the development, in order to safeguard the amenities of the area and to ensure that the land is restored as open countryside at the end of the temporary period in accordance with Policy STR3 of the Local Plan Part 1 for the New Forest outside of the National Park.

3. The development permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

Revised Location Plan - 3001-01-02 Rev B
Revised Site Layout Plan - 3001-01-01 Rev E
Revised Site Elevations Plan - 3001-01-03 Rev A
Site Plan with Utilities and Easements 3001-01-14 Rev B
Overhead Lines Plan 3001-01-18-A
DNO Sub Station elevations 3001-01-04 AO
DNO Sub Station floor plans 3001-01-04 A
CCTV Columns - 3001-01-05A
Battery container plan-3003-01-07O
Gate and Fence - 3001-01-12O
Spare Parts container - 3001-01-11O
Sub station elevations - 3001-01-10O
Sub station floor plans -3001-01-09O
Transformer Skid Plans -3001-01-08O
Water Tank Plans -3001-01-06O
Ecological Assessment The Ecology Co-op Ref P10387 Rev 1.2 dated 19th November 2025
Biodiversity Impact Calculation Report The Ecology Co-op Ref P10387 Rev 1.2 dated 21st November 2025
Drainage Site Walkover dated 13th November 2025
Tracking Assessment Plan 250436-RAP-XX-XX-DR-TP-4200 P01
Visibility Assessment Plan 250436-RAP-XX-XX-DR-TP-3200 P01
Traffic Survey Results
Arboricultural Survey Project G117 Rev 2 dated 21st November 2025
Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) V1 dated 18 May 2025 prepared by Toucan Environment
Construction Traffic Management Plan Addendum (CTMP) V2 dated 11th December 2025 prepared by Toucan Environment
Landscape Visual Assessment CPF1601Iva dated April 2025
Noise Impact assessment - Parker Jones Acoustics First issue Dated 3rd April 2025
Environmental lighting Impact assessment - SHD dated 13th May 2025
Heritage Appraisal - V1 dated 16th April 2025 Toucan Environment

Reason: To ensure satisfactory provision of the development.

4. **Visibility Splays:**

No development shall start on site until the visibility splays of 2.4 x 126m.0m and 2.4 x 129.8m have been provided in accordance with approved drawing

250436- RAP-XX-XX-DR-TP-3200 Rev P01. The lines of sight splays shown on the approved plans shall be kept free of any obstruction exceeding 0.6 metre in height above the adjacent carriageway and shall be subsequently maintained so thereafter.in perpetuity.

Reason: To provide satisfactory access and in the interests of highway safety in accordance with Policies ENV3 and CCC2 of the Local Plan 2016-2036 Part One: Planning Strategy for the New Forest District outside of the National Park.

5. Access Construction:

No development shall start on site until the access including drop kerb / vehicle crossover works and hardstanding area have been completed in accordance with approved drawing 250436- RAP-XX-XX-DR-TP-3200 Rev P01. No other development shall commence on the site unless and until the access widening works so approved have been fully implemented.

Reason: To ensure satisfactory access is provided the interest of highway safety and in accordance with Policies ENV3 and CCC2 of the Local Plan 2016-2036 Part One: Planning Strategy for the New Forest District outside of the National Park.

6. Construction Transport Management Plan:

The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in full accordance with the Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) V1 dated 18 May 2025 and Construction Traffic Management Plan Addendum (CTMP) V2 dated 11th December 2025 prepared by Toucan Environment. The approved CTMP shall be adhered to throughout the construction period unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interest of amenity and highway safety in accordance with Policy ENV3 and CCC2 of the Local Plan Part 1 for the New Forest outside of the National Park

7. Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP):

Prior to construction (including demolition) commencing on the site, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The CEMP shall include the following details:

- Development contacts, roles and responsibilities
- Public communication strategy, including a complaints procedure.
- Dust Management Plan (DMP) including suppression, mitigation and avoidance measures to control dust.
- Noise reduction measures, including use of acoustic screens and enclosures, the type of equipment to be used and their hours of operation.
- Use of fences and barriers to protect adjacent land, properties, footpaths and highways.

- Details of parking and traffic management measures.
- Measures to control light spill and glare from any floodlighting and security lighting installed.
- Pest control

The approved details shall be implemented before the development hereby permitted is commenced and retained throughout the duration of construction. The development shall only be carried out in accordance with the CEMP so approved.

Reason: In order that the Local Planning Authority can properly consider the effect of the works on residential amenity and highway safety and in accordance with Policy ENV3 and CCC2 of the Local Plan Part 1 Planning Strategy.

8. Noise:

The rating level of noise emitted from fixed plant and equipment associated with the development shall not exceed the background sound levels (both during the day and at night) specified in Table 5.1 of the Noise Impact Assessment (NIA) prepared by Parker Jones Acoustics, dated 23 April 2025. The assessment of noise levels shall be carried out in accordance with the methodology set out in BS 4142:2014 "Methods for rating and assessing industrial and commercial sound" and its subsequent amendments.

Reason: In the interest of amenity and in accordance with Policy ENV3 of the Local Plan Part 1 for the New Forest outside of the National Park.

9. External Lighting:

All external operational lighting associated with the development shall be designed, installed, and operated such that it does not exceed the obtrusive light limitations for Environmental Zone E2 as set out in the Institution of Lighting Professionals' Guidance Note 1 for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light (2021) or any subsequent update. This includes limits on vertical illuminance at windows, light trespass, sky glow, and luminaire intensity.

Reason: In the interest of amenity and in accordance with Policy ENV3 of the Local Plan Part 1 for the New Forest outside of the National Park.

10. Battery Safety Management Plan:

Prior to the commencement of the development, a detailed Battery Safety Management Plan (BSMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The details in the BSMP shall include the following :

- i Fire safety measures for emergency personnel attending a fire incident, such as deflagration vents (including installation of an audible fire alarm on the site)

- ii. A comprehensive review of the space between units in line with the UL9540A testing information to establish whether there is potential for fire to spread between units
- iii. A review of the detailed battery safety management plan and any associated fire safety systems
- iv. Details of the proposed battery chemistry

The proposals must be implemented in accordance with the approved details and thereafter retained as such.

Reason: To protect adjoining land and habitats from increased fire risk associated with the proposed development in accordance with Policy CCC1 of the Local Plan Part 1 Planning Strategy for the New Forest outside of the National Park.

11. Tree protection:

No development shall take place until the trees on the site which are shown to be retained on the approved plans are protected as shown on Figure 4 Tree Protection Plan. Tree protective fencing shall be erected prior to any site clearance and during all demolition and building works in accordance with the measures set out in the approved Arboricultural Statement reference Arboricultural survey, project number G117, dated 9th April 2025 as amended on 3rd October 2025 and 21st November 2025. During the construction period for the development hereby approved, no fires, building operations, storage of goods including building materials, machinery and soil, or discharge of any chemical substances, including petrol and diesel, shall be undertaken within the tree protection zones or within the canopy spreads, whichever is the greater, nor shall any change in soil levels or routing of services within those defined areas be carried out without the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To safeguard trees and natural features which are important to the visual amenities of the area, in accordance with Policies ENV3 and ENV4 of the Local Plan 2016-2036 Part One: Planning Strategy for the New Forest District outside of the National Park.

12. Trees - No dig access construction:

The access road shown hatched on Figure 3 of the Arboricultural report and site layout plan 3001-01-01-Rev E shall be constructed using a screw-piles temporary suspended road system with no dig construction in accordance with the measures set out in the submitted Arboricultural Statement reference: Arboricultural survey, project number G117, dated 9th April 2025 as amended on 3rd October and 21st November 2025.

Reason: To safeguard trees and natural features which are important to the visual amenities of the area, in accordance with Policies ENV3 and ENV4 of the Local Plan 2016-2036 Part One: Planning Strategy for the New Forest District outside of the National Park.

13. Updated Ecology surveys required:

Prior to the commencement of development (including any site clearance, groundworks, or construction), an updated ecological walkover survey shall be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist to assess any changes in the baseline ecological conditions since the original ecological assessments were completed. The findings of the walkover survey shall be compiled into a report and submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval.

The report shall:

- Confirm whether the baseline ecological conditions remain valid or have changed;
- Identify any new ecological constraints or opportunities;
- Provide updated recommendations for mitigation, compensation, or enhancement measures if required; and
- Include a timetable for implementing any necessary ecological measures.

Development shall not commence until the Local Planning Authority has approved the updated ecological report and any necessary measures have been implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: Due to the lifespan of the submitted reports and potential length of time until development commences, and to safeguard protected species in accordance with Policies ENV3, ENV4 of the Local Plan 2016-2036 Part One: Planning Strategy for the New Forest District outside the National Park and Policies DM1, DM2 and DW-E12 of the Local Plan for the New Forest District outside the National Park (Part 2: Sites and Development Management).

14. Biodiversity Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)

No development shall take place (including demolition, ground works and vegetation clearance) until a Biodiversity Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Biodiversity CEMP shall include, but not be limited to, 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 timing of sensitive works to avoid harm to biodiversity features (nesting birds, hazel dormouse).
- e) The times during construction when specialist ecologists need to be on site to oversee works.
- f) Responsible persons and lines of communication.
- g) The role and responsibilities of an ecological clerk of works (ECoW)/similarly competent person.
- h) Use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs.
- i) Details of site waste management and material storage.
- j) Measures to protect public rights of way and access routes.
- k) Monitoring and compliance arrangements.

The approved Biodiversity CEMP shall be adhered to and implemented throughout the construction period strictly in accordance with the approved details, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that construction activities are managed in a way that protects the environment, biodiversity, and the amenity of the surrounding area, in accordance with Policy DM2 of the Local Plan Part 2 of the New Forest District Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

15. Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP):

The development shall not commence until a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP), prepared in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan, has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority and including:

- a) a non-technical summary;
- b) the roles and responsibilities of the people or organisation(s) delivering the HMMP;
- c) the planned habitat creation and enhancement works to create or improve habitat to achieve the biodiversity net gain in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan;
- d) the management measures to maintain habitat in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan for a period of 30 years from the completion of development; and
- e) the monitoring methodology and frequency in respect of the created or enhanced habitat to be submitted to the local planning authority.

Notice in writing shall be given to the Council when:

- the HMMP works have started.
- the habitat creation and enhancement works set out in the approved HMMP have been completed.

A completion report, evidencing the completed habitat enhancements, shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The created and/or enhanced habitat specified in the approved HMMP shall be managed and maintained in accordance with the approved HMMP. Monitoring reports shall be submitted to local planning authority in writing in accordance with the methodology and frequency specified in the approved HMMP.

Reason: To ensure the development delivers a biodiversity net gain on site in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

16. Ecological Enhancements:

Prior to the installation of the battery storage containers and associated structures on the site hereby approved an Ecological Enhancement Schedule shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Schedule to include an appropriately detailed plan

showing the locations of the enhancement measures in relation to bats and reptiles based on Section 5, of the Ecological Assessment shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for written approval. Prior to the first operation of the BESS hereby approved, evidence shall be submitted to and approved in writing to confirm the agreed features have been installed as agreed, for example, a photographic record and/or a signed statement by a suitably qualified ecologist.

Reason: To ensure ecological enhancements to be delivered as part of the development and in accordance with Policy DM2 of the Local Plan Part 2 for the New Forest outside of the National Park.

17. Landscaping scheme:

Notwithstanding the submitted landscaping plan, prior to the installation of the battery storage containers and associated structures on the site hereby approved, a scheme of landscaping of the site shall be submitted for approval in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This scheme shall include :

- (a) the existing trees and shrubs which have been agreed to be retained;
- (b) a specification for new planting (species, size, spacing and location);
- (c) areas for hard surfacing and the materials to be used;
- (d) other means of enclosure;
- (e) a method and programme for its implementation and the means to provide for its future maintenance.

No development shall take place unless these details have been approved and then only in accordance with those details.

Reason: To ensure that the development takes place in an appropriate way and to comply with Policies ENV3 and ENV4 of the Local Plan 2016-2036 Part One: Planning Strategy for the New Forest District outside of the National Park.

18. Landscaping implementation:

Any trees or plants which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size or species, unless the Local Planning Authority gives written consent to any variation.

Reason: To ensure the appearance and setting of the development is satisfactory and to comply with Policies ENV3 and ENV4 of the Local Plan 2016-2036 Part One: Planning Strategy for the New Forest District outside of the National Park.

19. Surface Water Drainage scheme:

Before development commences, details of the means of disposal of surface water from the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The submitted details should include:

- a. A technical summary highlighting any changes to the design from that within the approved Flood Risk Assessment.
- b. Infiltration test results undertaken in accordance with BRE365 and providing a representative assessment of those locations where infiltration features are proposed and demonstrating the 1m unsaturated zone.
- c. Detailed drainage plans to include type, layout and dimensions of drainage features including references to link to the drainage calculations.
- d. Detailed drainage calculations to demonstrate existing runoff rates are not exceeded and there is sufficient attenuation for storm events up to and including 1:100 + climate change.
- e. Confirmation that sufficient water quality measures have been included to satisfy the methodology in the Ciria SuDS Manual C753.
- f. Exceedance plans demonstrating the flow paths and areas of ponding in the event of blockages or storms exceeding design criteria.

The drainage scheme shall be implemented on the site in accordance with the approved details and thereafter retained.

Reason: In order to ensure that the drainage arrangements are appropriate and in accordance with Policy ENV3 of the Local Plan 2016-2036 Part One: Planning Strategy for the New Forest District outside of the National Park and the New Forest District Council and New Forest National Park Authority Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for Local Development Frameworks.

20. Surface Water Drainage maintenance:

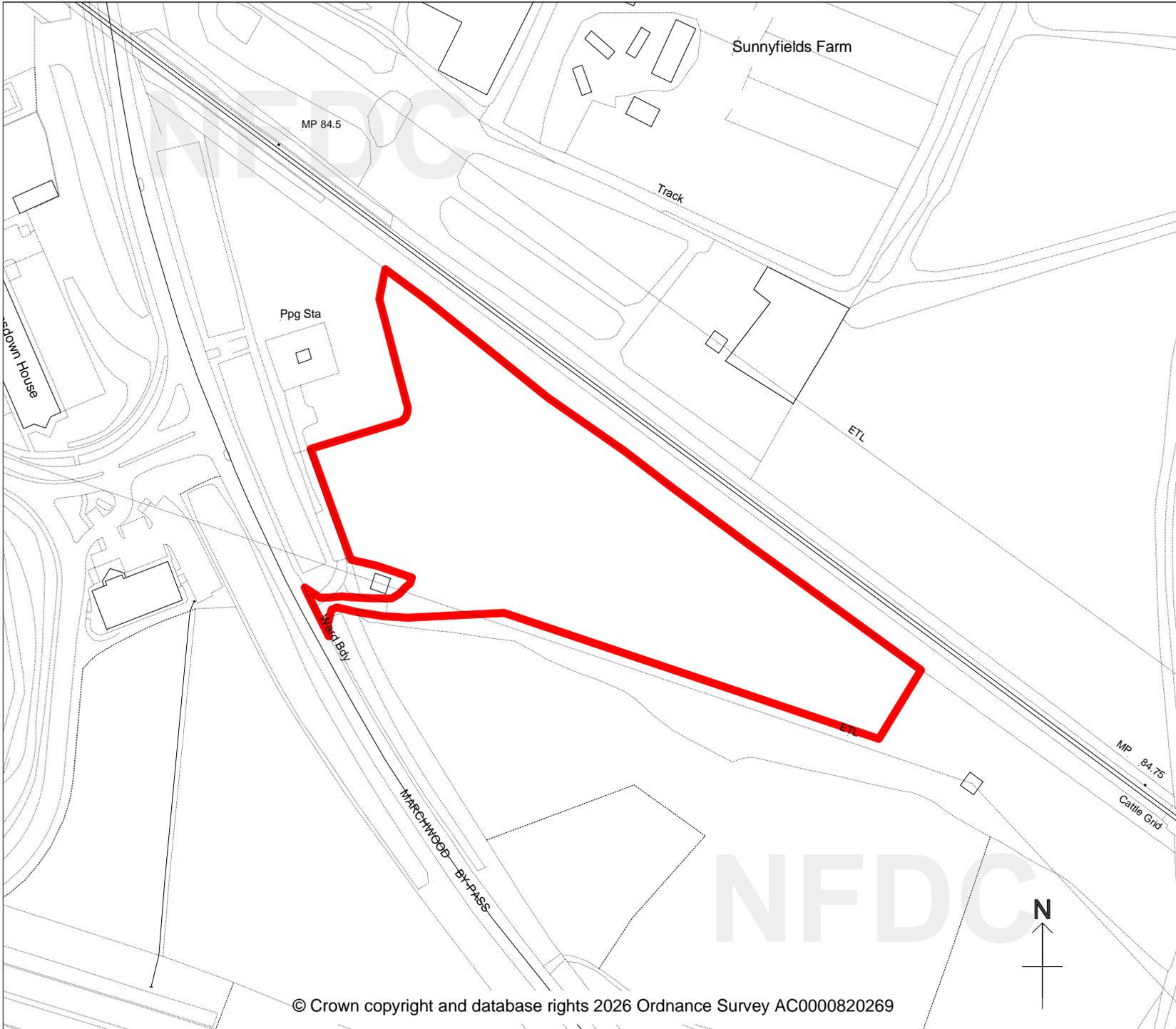
Before the first operation of the BESS use hereby permitted, details for the long term maintenance arrangements for the surface water drainage system shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The submitted details shall include maintenance schedules for each drainage feature type and ownership including the boundary ditch features. Development shall only take place in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In order to ensure that the long term maintenance arrangements for the surface water drainage system are appropriate and in accordance with Policy ENV3 of the Local Plan 2016-2036 Part One: Planning Strategy for the New Forest District outside of the National Park and the New Forest District Council and New Forest National Park Authority Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for Local Development Frameworks.

Further Information:

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New Forest

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PLANNING COMMITTEE

February 2026

Land East of Bulls Copse Road
Marchwood Bypass

25/10640

Scale 1:2000

N.B. If printing this plan from
the internet, it will not be to
scale.