

PLANNING DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE PRE-APPLICATION FORUM

ABERDEEN, 15 May 2024. Minute of Meeting of the PLANNING DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE PRE-APPLICATION FORUM.
Present:- Councillor McRae, Convener; Councillor Greig, Vice-Convener; and Councillors Alphonse, Boulton, Clark, Copland and Farquhar.

The agenda and reports associated with this minute can be found [here](#).

Please note that if any changes are made to this minute at the point of approval, these will be outlined in the subsequent minute and this document will not be retrospectively altered.

INTRODUCTION AND PROCEDURE NOTE

1. The Forum had before it the procedure note and guidance for members on the operation of Forum meetings.

The Forum resolved:-

to note the procedure note and guidance for members.

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING OF 21 SEPTEMBER 2023

2. The Forum had before it the minute of the previous meeting of 21 September 2023, for approval.

The Forum resolved:-

to approve the minute as a correct record.

PROPOSED BATTERY STORAGE UNITS WITH ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE, CONTROL AND SWITCH BUILDING, CONTAINERS AND ASSOCIATED WORKS INCLUDING ACCESS - LAND NORTH OF ARYBURN FARM, DYCE, ABERDEEN - 230869

3. The Forum had before it a report by the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning, on the submission of a Proposal of Application by Sustainability Unlimited LLP, for the proposed battery storage units with associated infrastructure, control and switch building, containers and associated works including access at land north of Aryburn Farm, Dyce, Aberdeen, planning reference 230869.

The report advised that in terms of the site description, the application site related to an area of an agricultural field extending to approximately 0.74 hectares. It was located approximately 975m to the west of Whitestripes Road and approximately 1km to the

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east of the A947; the settlement of Dyce was located approximately 210m to the south, separated by a commercial woodland and the River Don. The surrounding area on the north side of the river was predominantly agricultural and wooded in nature, but did include a number of residential properties including South Lodge and Gean Cottage located to the immediate north of the site. A grouping of farm buildings and associated farm cottage (Aryburn Farm) are located to the immediate south-east.

In terms of the proposal, it related to the provision of multiple containerised battery storage units totalling 33 megawatts of export capacity along with associated infrastructure, control building, switch room, inverter containers, lighting and other associated works. The connection to the Dyce (Cothal View) substation to the west would be by an underground cable, approximately 1.5km in length.

The Forum heard from Mr Gavin Clark, Senior Planner, who addressed the Forum and provided details regarding the planning aspects of the application.

Mr Clark provided details on the relevant planning policies noting that the following policies were relevant to the proposed application in regards to the Local Development Plan (2023):-

- Policy D1 (Quality Placemaking)
- Policy D2 (Amenity)
- Policy D4 (Landscape)
- Policy NE1 (Green Belt)
- Policy NE2 (Green and Blue Infrastructure)
- Policy NE3 (Natural Heritage)
- Policy R7 (Renewal and Low Energy Developments); and
- Policy WB3 (Noise)

In regards to National planning Framework 4, the following policies were relevant:

- Policy 1 (Tackling the Climate and Nature Crises)
- Policy 2 (Climate, Mitigation and Adaptation)
- Policy 3 (Biodiversity)
- Policy 4 (Natural Places)
- Policy 5 (Soils) • Policy 11 (Energy)
- Policy 13 (Sustainable Transport)
- Policy 14 (Design, Quality and Place)
- Policy 22 (Flood Risk and Water Management)

It was noted that as part of the application, the applicant had been advised that the following information would need to accompany the formal submission:-

- Design and Access Statement
- Drainage Assessment
- Noise Impact Assessment
- Planning Statement

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- Pre-Application Consultation Report

The Forum then heard from Mr David Bowman, agent for the proposed development.

Mr Bowman began the presentation by explaining that Battery Energy Storage (BESS) had a key part to play in ensuring homes and businesses could be powered by more green energy, even when the sun was not shining or wind not blowing. He noted that battery storage technologies were essential to speeding up the replacement of fossil fuels with renewable energy and explained that battery storage systems would play an increasingly pivotal role in allowing energy supplies to meet electricity demands.

Mr Bowman noted that under National Planning Framework 4's Policy 1 on Climate and Nature Crisis, planning authorities should prioritise climate concerns. Given that BESS aids Scotland's shift to renewables, this proposal aligned well with the policy and warranted support in principle for this reason. He also advised that local and national policies generally supported BESS proposals due to their role in reaching net-zero targets. However, the suitability of specific proposals depended on certain location-based criteria which would be fully addressed in the application.

Mr Bowman highlighted that the proposed BESS development would consist of the construction of:

- battery storage infrastructure;
- new access tracks;
- underground cabling;
- perimeter fencing
- CCTV cameras;
- access gates;
- a temporary construction compound; and
- all ancillary grid infrastructure and associated works.

Mr Bowman explained that the site had been selected due to the following reasons:-

- Poorest quality land in terms of agricultural production
- It was shaded by trees which meant crops were unable to ripen due to the soil not fully drying out
- There was good existing screening by trees which would always be maintained due to it being uneconomical to fell
- Moving elsewhere would mean using more economical land.

Mr Bowman advised that the applicant carried out three in person Pre-Application consultations and an online question and answer session during September 2023. He noted there was no feedback provided at the Pre-Application events, and an application for a site nearby identified the following salient items to be addressed by an application.

- Biodiversity and removal of trees/other habitats
- Fire Safety

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- Noise
- Benefit for the local community.

Mr Bowman indicated that although the proposed application was situated in the green belt, there was a need for this green belt location and no other alternative location was suitable.

- BESS was considered as essential infrastructure and/or as a renewable energy development;
- The distance to the substation with available capacity;
- Site Constraints;
- Available Land; and
- Assessment of the quality of the agricultural land and justification for its loss.

In regards to noise, Mr Bowman noted the following:-

- The applicant has undertaken a detailed Noise Impact Assessment for the site;
- A total of 13 noise sensitive receptors would be on the site;
- Results showed only negligible impacts during the daytime periods and low impacts at eight receptors and negligible impacts at five receptors during night-time periods;
- During the day, noise would be virtually inaudible, blending into background sounds like leaves rustling;
- At night, 8 properties may faintly hear the noise (from outside the property), but would be like the sound of gentle rain fall, while the other properties would find it practically inaudible.

Mr Bowman advised that the applicant had undertaken a detailed landscape and visual appraisal for the site. He explained that whilst residential dwellings were located within 250m of the site, receptors experiencing visibility beyond 500m were extremely limited due to existing vegetation and landform screening. Mitigation planting would be an enhancement to the landscape structure adding to the characteristics of the surrounding landscape character. He noted that all viewpoints demonstrated that the proposed development would be fully screened by intervening landform and existing mature vegetation, resulting in no visual change and no significant visual effects. Mr Bowman advised that any noticeable visual changes were limited to within about 250 meters of the site. However, this would be largely screened by planting, vegetation and landforms meaning only minor impacts on the overall view.

Mr Bowman explained about perceived fire risks associated with BESS, and these included:

- Thermal runaway
- 'Deep-seated' fires
- Faulty battery management control systems

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However, these perceived risks were unlikely to occur with the modern BESS units and their infrastructure. In addition, the following mitigations would be considered and deployed where appropriate for in monitoring, protecting and managing fire risk:-

- Control Panel technology
- Detection (Heat, Smoke, Gas, etc)
- Ventilation control
- Battery Separation and Containment

In terms of lighting, Mr Bowman confirmed that there was no lighting on site which would illuminate the development on a permanent basis. There were plans for motion sensitive security lighting around the substation only. • The CCTV would use infrared to switch on and off.

Mr Bowman advised that the applicant was liaising with the nearby Dyce Boys Football club on potential areas where the applicant could support and enhance their work in the local community.

The Committee then asked various questions of the Planning Officer and Mr Bowman and the following information was noted:-

- Existing trenching would be utilised and would be no more than one metre in depth;
- A flooding impact assessment was carried out and there was no potential flooding concerns or issues;
- In regards to sound impact, no mitigations would be required for sound.

The report recommended:-

that the Forum –

- (a) note the key issues identified;
- (b) if necessary, seek clarification on any particular matters; and
- (c) identify relevant issues which they would like the applicant to consider and address in any future application.

The Forum resolved:-

- (i) to thank Mr Bowman for his informative presentation; and
- (ii) to request that the applicant consider the points raised above.

- **Councillor Ciaran McRae, Convener**