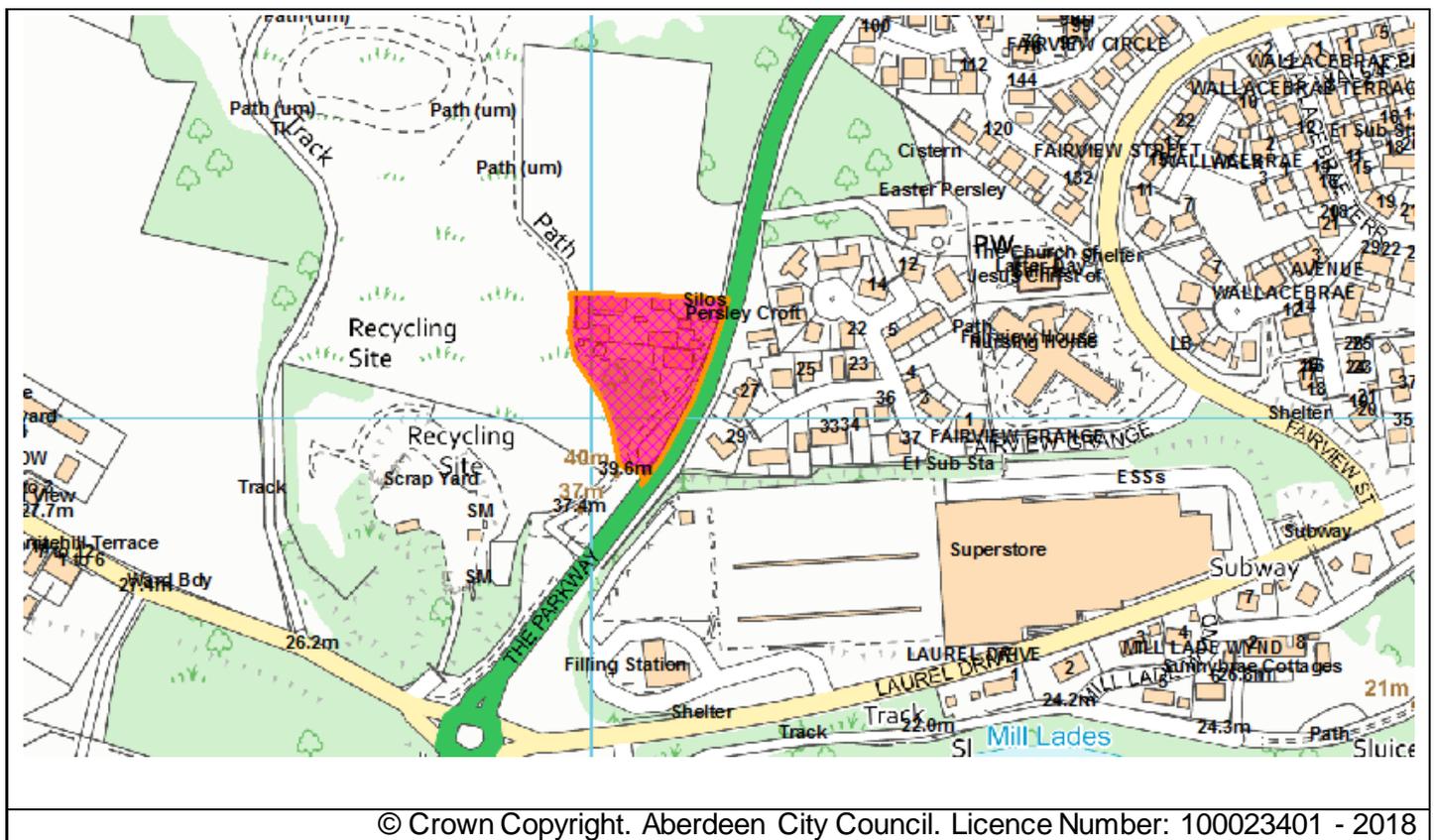


	<h1>Pre-Application Forum</h1>
	<p>Report by Development Management Manager</p>
	<p><b>Meeting Date:</b> 25 May 2023</p>
<p><b>Site Address:</b></p>	<p>Land at Persley Croft, Aberdeen, AB22 8AN,</p>
<p><b>Description of Proposal:</b></p>	<p>Battery energy storage system and associated infrastructure</p>
<p><b>Notice Ref:</b></p>	<p>230447/PAN</p>
<p><b>Notice Type:</b></p>	<p>Proposal of Application Notice</p>
<p><b>Notice Date:</b></p>	<p>12 April 2023</p>
<p><b>Applicant:</b></p>	<p>RE Projects Development</p>
<p><b>Ward:</b></p>	<p>Dyce/Bucksburn/Danestone</p>
<p><b>Community Council:</b></p>	<p>Danestone</p>
<p><b>Case Officer:</b></p>	<p>Matthew Easton</p>



## RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Forum –

- note the key issues identified;
- if necessary seek clarification on any particular matters; and
- identify relevant issues which they would like the applicants to consider and address in any future application.

## **APPLICATION BACKGROUND**

### **Site Description**

The site relates to a group of derelict agricultural buildings and associated land extending to around 0.7 hectares. It is located immediately west of the Parkway (A92) from where vehicular access to the site exists. The site slopes from north to south.

To the north is an agricultural field; to the west is an area of mixed woodland & improved grassland; to the south is a recycling/scrap yard; and to the east across the Parkway are residential properties and the Tesco supermarket forming part of the wider Danestone residential area.

### **Relevant Planning History**

- The applicant submitted an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening opinion request (230453/ESC) in April 2023. The Planning Service determined that the proposal was not an EIA development and submission of an Environmental Report is therefore not required.
- The applicant submitted a Proposal of Application Notice (230447/PAN) in April 2023, notifying the planning authority of their intention to submit a planning application for the proposed development and seeking confirmation of the public consultation required. The planning service confirmed that some further consultation would be required, in addition to that proposed by the applicant.

## **APPLICATION DESCRIPTION**

### **Description of Proposal**

The applicant intends to seek planning permission for the erection of a renewable battery energy storage system and associated infrastructure including access and landscaping.

## **MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Legislative Requirements**

Sections 25 and 37(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 require that where making any determination under the planning acts, regard is to be had to the provisions of the Development Plan; and, that any determination shall be made in accordance with the plan, so far as material to the application, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

### **Development Plan**

#### **National Planning Framework 4**

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) is the long-term spatial strategy for Scotland and contains a comprehensive set of national planning policies that form part of the statutory development plan. The relevant provisions of NPF4 that require consideration in terms of this application are –

- 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 6 (Forestry, Woodland and Trees)
- Policy 7 (Historic Assets and Places)
- Policy 9 (Brownfield, Vacant and Derelict Land and Empty Buildings)
- Policy 11 (Energy)
- Policy 12 (Zero Waste)
- Policy 13 (Sustainable Transport)
- Policy 14 (Design, Quality and Place)
- Policy 22 (Flood Risk and Water Management)
- Policy 23 (Health and Safety)

### Aberdeen Local Development Plan (2017)

Section 16 (1)(a)(ii) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 requires that, where there is a current local development plan, a proposed local development plan must be submitted to Scottish Ministers within five years after the date on which the current plan was approved. The ALDP is beyond this five-year period.

The following policies are relevant –

- Policy D1 (Quality Placemaking by Design)
- Policy D2 (Landscape)
- Policy D4 (Historic Environment)
- Policy NE1 (Green Space Network)
- Policy NE2 (Green Belt)
- Policy NE5 (Trees and Woodland)
- Policy NE6 (Flooding, Drainage and Water Quality)
- Policy T2 (Managing the Transport Impact of Development)
- Policy T5 (Noise)

### **Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan (2020)**

The Report of Examination on the Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2020 (PALDP) was received by the Council on 20 September 2022. All the recommendations within the Report have been accepted and the modifications made to the PALDP were agreed by Full Council on 14 December 2022. The PALDP constitutes the Council's settled view as to the content of the final adopted ALDP and is now a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The exact weight to be given to matters contained in the PALDP (including individual policies) in relation to specific applications will depend on the relevance of these matters to the application under consideration.

The following policies are relevant –

- Policy D1 (Quality Placemaking)
- Policy D2 (Amenity)
- Policy D4 Landscape
- Policy D5 (Landscape Design)
- Policy D6 (Historic Environment)
- Policy NE1 (Green Belt)
- Policy NE2 (Green and Blue Infrastructure)
- Policy NE3 (Natural Heritage)
- Policy NE5 (Trees and Woodland)

- Policy R7 (Renewable and Low Energy Developments)
- Policy WB3 (Noise)

## **POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Principle of Development**

Policy 11 (Energy) of National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) expresses support for all forms of renewable, low-carbon and zero emissions technologies, including battery energy storage systems. The Policy goes on to say that –

- *Development proposals will only be supported where they maximise net economic impact, including local and community socio-economic benefits such as employment, associated business and supply chain opportunities.*
- *In addition, project design and mitigation will demonstrate how the following impacts are addressed:*
  - *impacts on communities and individual dwellings, including, residential amenity, visual impact and noise;*
  - *significant landscape and visual impacts, recognising that such impacts are to be expected for some forms of renewable energy. Where impacts are localised and/ or appropriate design mitigation has been applied, they will generally be considered to be acceptable;*
  - *public access;*
  - *impacts on road traffic and on adjacent trunk roads, including during construction;*
  - *effects on hydrology, the water environment and flood risk;*
  - *biodiversity including impacts on birds;*
  - *impacts on trees, woods and forests;*
  - *proposals for the decommissioning of developments, including ancillary infrastructure, and site restoration;*
  - *the quality of site restoration plans including the measures in place to safeguard or guarantee availability of finances to effectively implement those plans; and*
  - *cumulative impacts.*

*In considering these impacts, significant weight will be placed on the contribution of the proposal to renewable energy generation targets and on greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets.*

Most of the matters above are covered by other LDP and NPF4 policies in more detail, some of which are highlighted later the report.

Policy R8 (Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Developments) of the ALDP 2017 advises that “the development of renewable and low carbon energy schemes where the technology can operate efficiently and the environmental and cumulative impacts can be satisfactorily addressed

will be supported in principle, if proposals: do not cause significant harm to the local environment, including landscape character and the character and appearance of listed buildings and conservation areas; do not negatively impact on air quality; do not negatively impact on tourism and do not have a significant adverse impact on the amenity of dwelling houses.”

Policy R7 (Renewable and Low Energy Developments) of the Proposed LDP states that *“renewable and low carbon energy schemes will be encouraged and supported in principle, where the technology can operate efficiently, and the environmental and cumulative impacts can be satisfactorily addressed.”* Of the relevant criteria that the policy contains, it goes on to explain that proposals are required *“to not –*

- *cause significant harm to the local environment, including landscape character and the character and appearance of listed buildings and conservation areas; or*
- *have a significant adverse impact on the amenity of dwelling houses.”*

Policy 1 (Climate and Nature Crises) of NPF4 requires decision makers to give significant weight to the global climate and nature crises when considering development proposals. Battery storage would support Scotland’s transition to renewable energy, a major part of addressing climate change.

Policy 2 (Climate mitigation and adaptation) of NPF4 requires development proposals to be designed and sited to minimise lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions as far as possible, and to adapt to current and future risks from climate change and Policy 3 (Biodiversity) of NPF4 requires proposals for local development *“to include appropriate measures to conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity, in accordance with national and local guidance. Measures should be proportionate to the nature and scale of development.”*

Policy 4 (Natural Places) advises *“Development proposals which by virtue of type, location or scale will have an unacceptable impact on the natural environment, will not be supported.”* Policy 5 (Soils) advises that: *“Development proposals will only be supported if they are designed and constructed: In accordance with the mitigation hierarchy by first avoiding and then minimising the amount of disturbance to soils on undeveloped land; and in a manner that protects soil from damage including from compaction and erosion, and that minimises soil sealing.”*

## **Land Use Zoning**

The site is zoned as Green Belt where NPF Policy 8 (Green Belts) applies and has the aim of encouraging, promoting and facilitating compact urban growth and use the land around our towns and cities sustainably. A small part of the site is currently zoned as Green Space Network, however this is not considered material to the proposals. More specifically, development proposals will only be supported if they fall into one or more of the categories listed and particular requirements are met. In the case of the proposal, it could fall into the category of *‘minerals operations and renewable energy developments’*.

The second element of Policy 8 requires the following to be demonstrated –

- why a green belt location is essential and why it cannot be located on an alternative site outwith the green belt;
- the purpose of the green belt at that location is not undermined;
- the proposal is compatible with the surrounding established countryside and landscape character;

- the proposal has been designed to ensure it is of an appropriate scale, massing and external appearance, and uses materials that minimise visual impact on the green belt as far as possible; and
- there will be no significant long-term impacts on the environmental quality of the green belt.

Policy NE1 (Green Belt) of the Proposed ALDP contains similar criteria as Policy 8 of NPF4, stating that *“development in areas defined as Green Belt on the Proposals Map will not be supported. Exceptions to this general presumption will only be supported where the proposal... is directly associated with essential infrastructure such as telecommunications, electricity grid connections, transport proposals identified in the Plan or roads planned through masterplanning of sites, if they cannot be accommodated anywhere other than the Green Belt”*.

Therefore, the applicant would be required to demonstrate how the site selection process was undertaken and why a green belt site is required. Given the brownfield nature of most of the site, the desirability of removing the derelict buildings and any improvement in the landscape character of the area that would deliver, should also be considered, subject to assessment of the visual impact of the proposal itself.

### **Layout, Siting and Design**

Policy 14 (Design, Quality and Place) of NPF4 requires development proposals to be designed to improve the quality of an area whether in urban or rural locations and regardless of scale. Development proposals that are poorly designed, detrimental to the amenity of the surrounding area or inconsistent with the six qualities of successful places, will not be supported.

The site is fairly prominent from the adjacent A92 Parkway, especially when travelling southbound towards the site, although from this view it does benefit from sitting lower than the field immediately to the north. When immediately adjacent to the site or when travelling northbound on the Parkway, it is fully exposed with small areas of scrub providing a small degree of screening in parts. In the wider context, the site is relatively well contained within the landscape, due to the topography and areas of woodland to the north (beyond the field), south and west.

The design details of equipment & buildings and screening of the site will be important considerations in ensuring any visual impact is minimised.

It is also relevant that the existing derelict site adversely affects the character and amenity of the area, so through suitable design and landscaping, the introduction of the proposed use has the potential to actually enhance the visual appearance and character of the area. In this regard, Policy 9 (Brownfield, Vacant and Derelict Land and Empty Buildings) of NPF4 is relevant, which aims to encourage, promote and facilitate the reuse of brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings, and to help reduce the need for greenfield development.

Policy D4 (Landscape) outlines that new developments will have a strong landscape framework that improves and enhances the setting and visual impact of the development, unifies urban form, provides shelter, creates local identity, and promotes biodiversity. To secure high quality development, new development should include a landscape strategy and management plan incorporating hard and soft landscaping design specifications. The level of detail required will be appropriate to the scale of development.

## **Noise**

Policy 23 (Health and Safety) of NPF4 indicates that “*Development proposals that are likely to raise unacceptable noise issues will not be supported. The agent of change principle applies to noise sensitive development. A Noise Impact Assessment may be required where the nature of the proposal or its location suggests that significant effects are likely.*”

Policy WB3 (Noise) of the Proposed LDP requires that there will be a presumption against noise generating developments, being located close to noise sensitive developments, such as existing or proposed housing, without suitable mitigation measures in place to reduce the impact of noise to an acceptable level.

There is the potential for noise to be generated at the site from the proposed equipment. Therefore, the planning application would require to be supported by a site-specific noise impact assessment to consider the potential noise levels and any mitigation measures required. Any measures which are required, such as acoustic fencing or bunding, would need to be carefully considered for the impact they themselves may have, for example visually or upon trees.

## **Health and Safety**

Policy 23 (Health and Safety) of NPF4 aims to protect people and places from environmental harm and mitigate risks arising from safety hazards. The Planning Service is aware of concern surrounding battery storage and their associated fire risk, as well as recent incidents with such facilities in the UK and abroad. Therefore, as part of any planning application the applicant has been asked to submit details of the measures which would be employed to mitigate such a risk.

## **Flooding and Drainage**

Policy 22 (Flood Risk and Water Management) of NPF4 and Policy NE4 (Our Water Environment) of the Proposed LDP relate surface water drainage and in summary require all new developments to incorporate sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) to manage surface water; presume no surface water connection to the combined sewer; and to minimise the area of impermeable surface.

Any application would therefore need to include a drainage impact assessment which explains how surface water drainage would be addressed, with details of any drainage features provided.

The site is not identified as being at any risk from flooding on the SEPA Flood Maps. However, the adjacent field to the north does have a noticeable slope towards the site so there is the potential for surface water from the field to be directed into the site. The applicant has been asked to explore this as part of the drainage proposals to ensure that the site is not adversely affected during heavy rain.

## **Other matters**

The Council's archaeology advisor has considered the proposal and does not envisage any complicated archaeological mitigation requirements being required, in this instance. The buildings to be demolished are 20th century in date and therefore it is requested that a photographic survey (exterior elevations only) be taken of all structures prior to their demolition in order to ensure there is a record of them for the future.

## **PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION**

The applicant has sent the proposal of application notice to Danestone Community Council, who have also been invited to the public event and offered a separate meeting with the project team should they wish.

The applicant proposes to hold two public consultations at Danestone Congregational Church on Fairview Street on Thursday 11th and Thursday 25th May between 3pm and 7pm. Newspaper notices will be published at least seven days before the events and leaflets will be distributed in the local community.

The planning service also required that –

- Councillors in the Dyce/Bucksburn/Danestone ward and the adjacent Bridge of Don ward are sent the proposal of application notice and invited to the public events.
- MSPs for the Aberdeen Donside constituency and the MP for the Gordon constituency are notified on the proposal of application notice and invited to the public event.
- the list of streets and properties to be notified by leaflets to be agreed with the planning service prior to the leaflets being distributed.

The results of the pre-application consultation will be included in the Pre-Application Consultation Report, which will form part of the planning application submission.

## **NECESSARY INFORMATION TO SUPPORT ANY FUTURE APPLICATION**

As part of any application, the applicant has been advised that the following information would need to accompany the formal submission –

- Arboricultural Survey and Assessment
- Design and Access Statement (statutory requirement)
- Drainage Assessment
- Noise Assessment
- Phase 1 Ecological Survey
- Planning Statement
- Pre-Application Consultation Report (statutory requirement)

The applicant has also indicated they are likely to submit –

- Cultural Heritage Assessment
- Earthworks Strategy
- Landscape and Visual Assessment
- Outline Battery Safety Management Plan
- Phase 1 Contaminated Land Assessment
- Transport and Access Statement

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It is 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 applicants to consider and address in any future application.