PLANNING STATEMENT

BATTERY STORAGE DEVELOPMENT

LAND AT DITCHERS FARM, OFF SLACK LANE, WESTHOUGHTON

FOR

ASTRA VENTURES

JUNE 2017
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** ................................................................................................. I

1 **INTRODUCTION** ........................................................................................................... 1

1.1 Background ....................................................................................................................... 1

1.2 The Applicant .................................................................................................................... 1

1.3 Development Overview .................................................................................................... 1

1.4 The Development and the EIA Regulations (2017) ......................................................... 2

1.5 Need for the Development ............................................................................................... 2

1.5.1 Electricity Market Reform ............................................................................................ 2

1.5.2 The Capacity Market ................................................................................................... 3

1.5.3 Balancing the Network ............................................................................................... 3

1.6 Benefits of the Development ......................................................................................... 3

1.6.1 Clean, Efficient and Flexible Energy Source ................................................................. 3

1.6.2 Embedded Generation .................................................................................................. 3

1.6.3 Economic/ Employment Benefits ................................................................................ 4

1.7 Site Selection ................................................................................................................... 5

1.8 Design Evolution ............................................................................................................. 5

1.9 The Planning Application Submission .............................................................................. 5

2 **THE DEVELOPMENT** .................................................................................................. 7

2.1 Development Components ............................................................................................. 7

2.1.1 Physical Infrastructure ................................................................................................. 7

2.1.2 Technology .................................................................................................................. 8

2.2 Landscape Planting ......................................................................................................... 8

2.3 Access ............................................................................................................................. 8

2.4 Development Timeline – Construction, Operation and Decommissioning .......... 9

2.4.1 Construction ................................................................................................................ 9

2.4.2 Operation ................................................................................................................... 9

2.4.3 Decommissioning ....................................................................................................... 9

3 **SITE AND SURROUNDINGS** ......................................................................................... 10

3.1 Description of Site .......................................................................................................... 10

3.2 Land Use Surrounding Application Site ......................................................................... 10

3.3 Planning History of the Site ........................................................................................... 10
PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK AND ASSESSMENT

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Legislative Background

4.3 Planning Policy Framework

4.4 Assessment of the Development

4.4.1 Spatial Strategy and Site Specific Policies

4.4.2 Landscape and Visual Impact

4.4.3 Ecology and Habitat

4.4.4 Historic Environment

4.4.5 Noise

4.4.6 Hydrology and Flood Risk

4.4.7 Coal Mining Risk

4.4.8 Access, Transport and Traffic

4.4.9 Public Rights of Way

4.4.10 Agricultural Land Classification

4.4.11 Existing Infrastructure

RELEVANT MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 Energy Storage Drivers

5.2 National Planning Policy Framework

5.3 Assessment of Relevant Material Considerations

CONCLUSIONS

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Site Photographs (of Application Site and surrounding area)
Appendix 2 – Coal Authority Report
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Astra Ventures Ltd ("the Applicant") is proposing to develop a lithium-ion battery storage development to provide a backup supply to the National Grid ("the Development"). The Development is on land at Ditchers Farm, off Slack Lane, north of Westhoughton ("the Application Site"), in close proximity to the Electricity North West primary substation, located on Slack Lane to the south. The Application Site is currently vacant agricultural land used for grazing. An application for planning permission, accompanied by this Planning Statement ("the Statement"), is being made under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990\(^1\) to Bolton Council ("the Council").

The Development includes the construction of a battery storage compound within a secure 2.4 m high ‘Hit and Miss’ wooden fence. Within this fence will be the battery storage containers, inverter units, load banks, transformers, a smaller container housing high voltage infrastructure (switchroom/ control room), and a welfare unit and storage container. Outside of the main compound will be a DNO substation with its own separate access. The compound will be levelled and provided with a crushed stone finish upon which the Development will be laid out. The footprint of the main compound is irregular in shape but approximately 70 m by 78 m. The wider Application Site area is 0.92 ha which includes the access track to the public highway and the proposed planting areas.

There is a clear requirement to balance the peaks and troughs associated with electricity supply and demand to manage the strain on transmission and distribution networks and ensure there are no power blackouts. This is particularly important as coal generating plants are now being decommissioned and the replacement new nuclear generation remains in development with long timescales for the new generation coming on line. There has also been strong support for renewable energy generation resulting in the widespread distribution of onshore wind and solar, which is inherently intermittent creating peaks and troughs in supply. The Development is designed to smooth over the troughs in electricity supply, providing a critical service to the grid by being able to respond at short notice to requests from National Grid to generate electricity, such as periods when renewable sources are not generating or fossil fuel plants are unexpectedly offline.

This Statement is intended to provide the Council with sufficient information to allow determination of the planning application. The following subject areas are addressed in this Statement and the main findings summarised under the headings below:

- Consideration of the Principle of the Development;
- Landscape and visual;
- Historic Environment;
- Ecology and Habitat;
- Hydrology/Flood Risk;
- Coal Mining Risk;
- Noise;
- Access, Transport and Traffic;
- Public Rights of Way;
- Agricultural Land Classification; and
- Existing Infrastructure.

Each of these subject areas is assessed in light of the planning policy context. Other relevant material considerations are also summarised and assessed.

Key Findings

Following the above assessments, it has been determined that there are **no unacceptable effects on the environment** predicted as a result of the Development. A review of planning policy found the **Development to be both in compliance and supported by the Development Plan and relevant material considerations**.

It is therefore respectfully requested that the Council approve the planning application.
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

This Planning Statement (“the Statement”) has been prepared to accompany a planning application submitted to Bolton Council (“the Council”) by Arcus Consultancy Services Ltd (“Arcus”) on behalf of Astra Ventures Ltd (“the Applicant”) for the construction and operation of a lithium-ion battery storage development to provide a backup supply of electricity to the National Grid (“the Development”). The Development is located on land at Ditchers Farm, off Slack Lane, north of Westhoughton (“the Application Site”), in close proximity to the Electricity North West primary substation, located on Slack Lane to the south. The location of the Application Site and layout of the Development are shown on Drawings 001 and 002 respectively.

1.2 The Applicant

Astra Ventures is a low carbon and renewable energy infrastructure, developer and advisor with headquarters in London. Astra was founded to originate investments, advise and develop projects within the global energy and infrastructure sector.

Specialising in the development of distributed generation and renewable energy infrastructure projects, Astra has capabilities covering the whole value chain of development, including site selection, securing grid connection agreements, land rights and obtaining planning consents.

The Astra team has more than 15 years combined experience in the renewable energy sector and has collectively been involved in the successful development of more than 350MWp of solar photovoltaic projects in the UK and internationally. The team is now involved with developing a battery storage portfolio of 290MW, looking at utility scale plant as well as behind the meter applications.

1.3 Development Overview

The Applicant is seeking planning consent for the construction and operation of a battery storage development which has been deliberately sited close to the ENW primary substation off Slack Lane as this is one of the few places where such plants can connect efficiently to the network. The Application Site is currently vacant agricultural land used for grazing.

The Development is designed to provide rapid response electricity supply when requested by National Grid during periods of increased demand on the grid or where there are constraints on electricity generation; it will therefore serve an essential role in the balancing of the electricity network locally.

The Development will include the construction of a battery storage compound within a secure 2.4 m high ‘Hit and Miss’ wooden fence. Within this fence will be the battery storage containers, inverter units, load banks, transformers, a smaller container housing high voltage infrastructure (switchroom/ control room), and a welfare unit and storage container. Within the southeast corner of the compound will be a DNO substation with its own separate access. The compound will be levelled and provided with a crushed stone finish upon which the Development will be laid out. The wider Application Site area is 0.92 ha which includes the access track to the public highway and the proposed planting areas.

Further detail on the Development is provided in Section 2.
1.4 **The Development and the EIA Regulations (2017)**

The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017² define EIA development as either:

- Schedule 1 development; or
- Schedule 2 development likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location.

Battery storage development is not listed in Schedule 1 of the regulations.

There is also no express threshold for battery storage developments to be considered as Schedule 2 development under the EIA Regulations. However, a development area threshold of 0.5 ha is applied to category 3 (a) industrial installations for the production of electricity. The Development exceeds the Schedule 2 area threshold of 0.5 hectares and, as such, whether the Development is EIA development or not depends on an assessment against the screening selection criteria, as set out in Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations, which comprise:

- Characteristics of the development;
- Location of the development; and
- Characteristics of the potential impact.

PPG paragraph 018, states that EIA will only apply to a small proportion of projects and only those which are likely to have significant effects.

The key question is whether or not the project would be likely to give rise to significant effects on the receiving environment, taking into account the selection criteria in Schedule 3. Whilst applications for battery storage developments have only been forthcoming recently, given their simplistic nature, small footprints, low vertical extents and limited noise effects they have not generally triggered EIA.

The anticipated effects arising from the Development, as detailed in this Planning Statement and the Landscape and Visual Appraisal, are not sufficient to trigger the requirement for an EIA and hence the planning application is not accompanied by an Environmental Statement (ES).

1.5 **Need for the Development**

1.5.1 **Electricity Market Reform**

It is estimated that over the next decade, the UK will need around £100 billion of capital investment in its electricity infrastructure to accommodate projected future increases in electricity demand and to replace ageing power stations and prevent electricity blackouts. The Development is proposed in response to the requirement for continuity of supply of electricity, particularly during periods of peak demand.

Electricity Market Reform (EMR) is a government policy designed to:

- Incentivise investment in secure, low-carbon electricity,
- Improve the security of Great Britain’s electricity supply, and
- Improve affordability for consumers.

The UK’s electricity grid has historically relied on large centralised power plants. However, old coal power plants are in the process of reducing capacity and closing as they no longer meet the required environmental and performance standards and existing nuclear power plants are reaching the end of their design lives with new nuclear plants being slow to be realised. In parallel there is widespread delivery of a greater amount of renewable energy, but these technologies (e.g. wind and solar generation) are

intermittent, only generating when the wind blows or sun shines. These different factors mean that demand and supply are more challenging to match.

Through the Energy Act 2013 the Capacity Market (CM) mechanism was introduced to ensure security of electricity supply at the least cost to the consumer. The Development will participate in the Capacity Market and a number of balancing mechanisms for the National Grid.

### 1.5.2 The Capacity Market

To deliver a supply of secure, sustainable and affordable electricity, the UK needs not only investment in new generation projects and innovative technologies but to get the best out of existing assets on the network. The Capacity Market aims to deal with both these issues by bringing forward new investment while maximising current generation capabilities.

The Capacity Market aims to balance the difference between demand and supply and to bring forward investment in new generation projects and innovative technologies, in parallel to maximising the utilisation of the existing generation capacity. The Capacity Market operates alongside the electricity market, which is where most participants will continue to earn the majority of their revenues.

The Capacity Market revenues are decided by auctions. In order to qualify for the auctions planning permissions need to be secured in advance of sites being entered into the auctions. Therefore the Applicant’s planning timetable is driven by auction deadlines and its desire to participate in the auction with this Development.

### 1.5.3 Balancing the Network

National Grid has a constant supply of ‘extra power’ available for use when the power required by customers is not equal to the power generated and a reserve supply. The Balancing Mechanism is used to ensure that the network is in balance and reserve power is then used when the network comes under ‘stress’.

When unforeseen demand is put on the network, such as when a large power station suddenly comes off line, then the National Grid control room need an alternative source of power. This is achieved from rapid responding generators such as that proposed by the Development.

### 1.6 Benefits of the Development

#### 1.6.1 Clean, Efficient and Flexible Energy Source

The lithium-ion battery array will provide a very flexible and rapid release of electricity to the grid without any emissions to air.

#### 1.6.2 Embedded Generation

The Development has been deliberately sited in close proximity to the ENW primary substation off Slack Lane, to which the Development will be connected via an underground cable. The Development constitutes Embedded Distributed Power (EDP) generation as it supplies power to the local distribution network at or near the point of use. By doing so it results in lower transmission losses which occur when power is transmitted over long distances.

It is an important local advantage of this application that in the event of power shortages in the future anyone whose power is supplied locally will not suffer from blackouts experienced elsewhere as the Development can be turned on to cover these shortages.
Local small-scale generation is less susceptible to widespread power failure because should a generating plant fail to operate, the net effect is that less generation is lost from an isolated small-scale plant failure because other similarly sized plants should remain operational. In contrast, when a large power station goes ‘off line’ and all of its output is lost, the effect is far greater.

However, local networks have many constraints and it can be difficult to identify suitable connection points with necessary capacity and ‘fault headroom’ for embedded generation. The Applicant has sought to locate the Development close to a primary substation, thereby placing less stress on the network.

The Applicant has assessed local distribution networks to identify sites close to DNO primary substations where the network could accept embedded generation. This has been done in consultation with the DNO. Not all substations are capable of accepting generation of the scale proposed by the Development. The Application Site meets the DNO’s technical requirements as there is sufficient fault level head room and connectivity to accept generation.

1.6.3 Economic/ Employment Benefits

The Development will result in contract opportunities for local and regional contractors both for construction activities themselves and throughout the supply chain. The investment in the Development has the potential to generate a range of economic opportunities for local businesses, most notably employment opportunities and local spending. In addition the Development will provide the landowner with a more diverse income, providing further economic benefits.

Potential social and economic effects can be divided into:

- Direct effects: for example, employment opportunities during construction and decommissioning of the Development.
- Indirect effects: such as employment opportunities created down the supply chain by those companies providing services to the Development during construction and decommissioning; and
- Induced effects: for instance employment created by the additional spend of wages into the local economy.

These effects are considered below for construction of the Development. Effects during decommissioning would be broadly similar. During the operational phase much of the maintenance will be undertaken remotely, although specialist jobs will be retained for the maintenance of this and other similar plants.

Construction contracts will be placed for services and materials and local sourcing will be preferred where possible, however this is subject to competitive tendering and constrained by the specialist nature of the equipment. Examples of direct opportunities for local contractors would include:

- Accommodation;
- Earth Excavation and ground works;
- Cabling;
- Fencing;
- Quarry Products and Ready Mixed Concrete;
- Security;
- Plant;
- Haulage;
- Landscape and Renovation;
- Civil Engineering;
- Surveying; and
- Mechanical, Electrical and Supervisory Services.
1.7 Site Selection

Generation sites are primarily chosen for their access to the local electricity distribution network, which should be capable of accepting their export at an acceptable cost and which could then provide valuable support to local customers in times of stress on the local, and wider, electricity network.

The Application Site was chosen for its proximity to the ENW primary substation, which provides access to the local network without having to travel large distances or cross major infrastructure, keeping connection costs to an acceptable level and minimising transmission losses.

The Application Site is agricultural land used for grazing, which reduces the impact on available land. There are also anthropogenic developments in close proximity, which include the M61 motorway, railway line, overhead transmission lines, the ENW primary substation and industrial units.

The Application Site is located in Flood Zone 1, as designated by the Environment Agency; this is the lowest flood risk zone. The Application Site achieves separation distances of 130 m from the closest residential properties to the southeast, beyond the railway line. Existing vegetation around the Application Site, in conjunction with the fencing design and planting proposed as part of the Development, would act with the limited vertical extent of the Development so as to limit the Development’s visual presence in the landscape.

This combination of factors means that the Application Site represents the best option for the Westhoughton area, helping to improve the security of electricity supply for local residents and businesses.

1.8 Design Evolution

The final design has been achieved following a number of key layout iterations, considering specific onsite constraints. Principally this has involved:

- Avoidance of the overhead power lines in accordance with Energy Networks Association Guidance, specifically the 33 kV overhead transmission line that passes southwest of the main compound;
- The use of sympathetic fencing, together with mitigation planting, has sought to minimise any landscape and visual effects; and
- Making use of existing access points and designing the access track route to be of shortest length and avoiding passing through the farmyard at Ditchers Farm.

Refinements to design were undertaken throughout the pre-application process as new information and feedback became available.

1.9 The Planning Application Submission

The following plans and drawings are submitted with the planning application:

- Drawing 001 - Site Location Plan;
- Drawing 002a - Site Layout (OS base map);
- Drawing 002b - Site Layout (aerial photograph); and
- Drawing 2732-DR-LAN-103 – Landscape Masterplan.

In addition the following elevation drawings are also submitted:

- Detailed Layout Plan of Main Compound;
- DNO Substation Elevation;
- Security Fence and CCTV Elevation;

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- Welfare Cabin Elevation;
- Storage Container Elevation;
- Transformer Elevation;
- Lithium Ion Battery Storage Container Elevation;
- Outdoor Inverter Elevation;
- Switchroom Foundation Elevation;
- Loadbank Elevation; and
- Access track cross section.

The following information is appended to this Planning Statement:

- Appendix 1 – Site Photographs (of the Application Site and surroundings); and
- Appendix 2 – Coal Authority Report.
2 THE DEVELOPMENT

An overview of the Development was provided in Section 1.3; further detail is provided below with descriptions of each component of the Development set out. Elevation drawings of the Development components are provided with the planning application alongside Drawing 001 (Site Location) and Drawing 002 (Site Layout). Planting proposals are detailed on the Landscape Masterplan (Drawing 2732-DR-LAN-103). A detailed plot showing the main compound is also provided.

2.1 Development Components

2.1.1 Physical Infrastructure

The proposal is to construct a battery storage compound within a secure 2.4 m high ‘Hit and Miss’ wooden fence. Within this fence will be the battery storage containers, inverter units, load banks, transformers, a smaller container housing high voltage infrastructure (switchroom/ control room), and a welfare unit and storage container. Within the southeast corner of the compound will be a DNO substation with its own separate access. The compound will be levelled and provided with a crushed stone finish upon which the Development will be laid out.

The storage units and containers housing the equipment are secure and designed to protect the contents from the elements. They are purpose built and designed. The site would be unmanned during operation, and would be operated remotely with only rare maintenance visits. Given the compound is unmanned there is no requirement for permanent lighting; the only lighting would be motion activate security lighting on 2.4 m columns located in the corners of the main compound. This avoids unnecessary light pollution.

- 1 x DNO Substation housing the switch room and metering room. This will be 2.94m in height and will sit atop a 100mm plinth. The building will be 3.64 m wide and 6.24 m long.
- A security fence will run along the perimeter of the main compound and entry will be provided by gates. The fencing will be wooden ‘Hit and Miss’ design as illustrated in the elevation drawing provided. The fence will be to a height of 2.4 m. CCTV cameras will be situated at the corners of the main compound and will sit atop of poles that are 2.4 m in height. Up to two security cameras will be situated at the top of each pole.
- 1 x welfare container unit. This will be 4.88 m in length, 3.05 m in width and 2.59 m in height.
- 1 x storage container. This will be 2.99 m in length, 2.44 m in width and 2.59 m in height.
- 10 x transformers. These will be 3.06 m tall with a footprint of approximately 3.11 m x 1.6 m and housed within an area 4.65 m x 4.95 m.
- 10 x Lithium ion battery storage containers, each will be 12.19 m in length, 2.5 m in width and 2.9 m in height. The height above ground level would increase to a maximum of 3.5 m including the height of concrete foundation pads upon which the containers will sit.
- 20 x outdoor inverter units, each will be 2.32 m in height, 2.78 m in length and 1.59 m in width and will be sat on a concrete plinth above the ground.
- 1 x high voltage switchroom and control room container, 12.1 m in length, 2.5 m in width and 2.9 m in height and will be sat on a 1 m high concrete plinth.
- 18 x Load Bank units, each will be 2.25 m in height, 4.15 m in length and 1 m in width.
• Access track within the compound, approximately 4 m in width. A new access road will be constructed to reach the main compound off Slack Lane, the minor road to the south.

Consent to construct and operate the grid connection does not form part of this application and will be subject to a separate application. Permission is sought within this application for the construction of the DNO switch room building and the cabling between the containerised units and the building.

2.1.2 Technology

The Development comprises a battery storage array of Lithium Ion batteries. The battery manufacturing industry is continuously evolving and designs continue to improve technically and economically. The most suitable technology can change with time and therefore a final choice for the Development would be made before construction.

The UK Government has identified energy storage as one of the eight great technologies in which the UK can become a global leader. In the United Kingdom in 2015 there were 23 electrical energy storage projects in all forms of development, or operational, with total capacity exceeding 25 MW, most of which were carried out by Distribution Network Operators under permitted development rights and many of the projects have been trials and demonstrations supported by Ofgem’s Low Carbon Network Fund.

The UK Government Postnote on energy storage suggests that if there is successful innovation a plausible future could be 9,000 MW of grid connected electricity storage by 2020, and 27,000 MW by 2050. This would cumulatively save the energy system (and consumers) £4 billion by 2050, with the UK industry contributing an estimated £11.5 billion to GDP over that time period. The Development would also make an important contribution to these requirements.

2.2 Landscape Planting

Around the perimeter of the Development there are proposals for planting of vegetative screening, including native trees and hedgerow species to complement the existing landscape. Proposed planting is illustrated on Drawing 2732-DR-LAN-103 and will be designed in consultation with the Council.

2.3 Access

A new access will be formed to reach the Application Site off Slack Lane, making use of an existing access point and passing over grazing land around the perimeter of fields. The track has been set back from trees and hedges so as to avoid any direct impact on trees.

The highway network will easily be able to accommodate the minor increase in vehicle movements associated with the short term construction phase of the Development, which is anticipated to last approximately 16-20 weeks. Construction traffic will consist of a small number of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs), light good vehicles (LGVs) and cars. During the operational phase of the Development traffic would be restricted to occasional maintenance visits. Further information of anticipated vehicle numbers is provided in Section 4.2.11.

The new access track will be formed using crushed stone with the design of the new access point to be agreed with the Highways Authority.

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4 Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (April 2015); Energy Storage, Postnote Number 492
5 http://www.energystorageexchange.org/
6 Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (April 2015); Energy Storage, Postnote Number 492
2.4 Development Timeline – Construction, Operation and Decommissioning

2.4.1 Construction

The construction process would consist of the following principal activities:

- Construct access track and site preparation/ laying of hardstanding;
- Delivery of containerised units;
- Construct DNO switchroom;
- Testing and commissioning; and,
- Site restoration.

Most of these operations would be carried out concurrently, although predominantly in the order identified, in order to minimise the overall length of the construction programme. Site restoration would be programmed and carried out to allow restoration of disturbed areas as early as possible and in a progressive manner.

2.4.2 Operation

Maintenance would be overseen by suitably qualified contractors who would visit the Development as required but typically less than twice per month.

Ongoing track maintenance would generally be undertaken in the summer months when tracks are dry. Safe access would be maintained all year round.

2.4.3 Decommissioning

Decommissioning will take account of the environmental legislation and technology available at the time of decommissioning. Notice will be given to the Council in advance of commencement of the decommissioning works, with all necessary licenses or permits being acquired. Decommissioning will be timed to minimise its environmental impact.

The Applicant will develop a decommissioning plan, and the works will be undertaken in accordance with a statement of operations, covering safety and environmental issues during decommissioning. It is assumed that the requirement for the decommissioning plan would be secured by an appropriately worded planning condition, attached to any planning consent that may be granted for the Development.
3 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

3.1 Description of Site

The landownership area extends to approximately 9.1 ha, as an irregular shaped parcel of land south of the M61 motorway and north of Westhoughton, measuring approximately 440 m by 310 m. A 33kV overhead electricity transmission line crosses the eastern part of the site in a southeast – northwest orientation.

Within the Application Site the main compound is irregular in shape, with dimensions of approximately 70 m along the northeast boundary, 62 m along the eastern boundary and 78 m along the western boundary. The Application Site is currently used for grazing and is generally flat, at an elevation of 112 m above ordnance datum (AOD).

There are no public rights of way (PRoW) or watercourses or water bodies within the Application Site although a watercourse/ drainage ditch forms the Application Sites, northern and eastern boundaries.

A series of photographs depicting the Application Site and surrounding area are presented in Appendix 1.

3.2 Land Use Surrounding Application Site

The Application Site is bounded by agricultural land in all directions with the M61 motorway beyond to the north (approx. 90 m) and a railway line to the southeast (approx. 80 m), with residential properties beyond the railway line at a distance of approx. 130 m. There is also an isolated residential property at Ditchers Farm (financially involved in the Development).

A substation, into which the Development would connect, is located approximately 140 m from a substation located off Slack Lane. Opposite the substation is a large industrial/commercial facility.

The closest PRoW is a footpath located approximately 160 m west, heading from Ditchers Farm towards the M61.

The surrounding landscape is considered a working landscape and one which has very much been altered by anthropogenic influences.

3.3 Planning History of the Site

A review of the Council’s online interactive planning website\(^7\) confirms that the Application Site has no planning history.

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\(^7\) https://www.planningpa.bolton.gov.uk/online-applications-17/search.do?action=simple&searchType=Application
4 PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK AND ASSESSMENT

4.1 Introduction

This section of the Planning Statement reviews the key Development Plan policies and guidance which cover the Application Site and relate specifically to the Development. The aim of this section is to establish the land use implications of the Development, consider its compliance with the Development Plan, and identify other material considerations to be taken into consideration during the determination process.

4.2 Legislative Background

The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 Section 70(2) states that:

“In dealing with such an application the authority shall have regard to the provisions of the Development Plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations.”

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 forms and amendment to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act states that:

“If regard is to be had to the Development Plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.”

The process for determining a planning application can be defined as:

- Identification and consideration of the key provisions within the Development Plan;
- Clarification of whether the Development is in accordance with the Development Plan;
- Identification and consideration of relevant material considerations; and
- Conclusions on whether planning permission is justified.

The Development Plan for the Application Site comprises:

- The Core Strategy (Adopted March 2011);
- The Allocations Plan (Adopted December 2014); and

A review of the Development Plan is set out below.

4.3 Planning Policy Framework

The Development Plan sets out the long-term development strategy for Bolton, encompassing a wide range of planning issues to guide development within the area up to 2026.

Under ‘a spatial vision for Bolton’ there is a target for Bolton to be a ‘sustainable community’ by 2026, with focus granted to the M61 corridor “for manufacturing and distribution development. In the area surrounding the M61, there is a high level of demand for employment sites, and there is good access for the movement of goods.”

Strategic Objectives (SO) are contained within the Development Plan, and those relevant to the Development are considered to include:

Under the heading ‘Prosperous Bolton’ SO3 aims "to take advantage of the economic opportunities presented by Bolton town centre and the M61 corridor, and ensure these opportunities benefit everybody in Bolton, including those living within the most deprived areas.”

Under ‘Cleaner and Greener Bolton’ SO10 states the aim “to minimise Bolton’s contribution to climate change and mitigate and adapt to its adverse effects.” SO11 aims
to “conserve and enhance the best of Bolton’s built heritage and landscapes, and improve the quality of open spaces and the design of new buildings.” SO12 aims to enhance biodiversity, whilst SO13 aims to reduce the likelihood of flooding occurring within Bolton, whilst managing impacts accordingly.

The following Development Plan Policies are deemed to be relevant to the Development:

**Policy P4** states that the Council will continue to identify sites, preferred areas, or areas of search for minerals including coal and clay. Areas known to contain resources of minerals will be safeguarded, alongside existing and planned infrastructure that supports mineral exploitation.

**Policy P5** requires development proposals to take into account a range of transport and accessibility criteria, dependant on the type of development proposed. These include accessibility by different types of transport, parking provision, and requirements for a transport assessment and travel plan (for major trip generating developments).

**Policy S1** advises the Council will promote road safety in the design of new development.

**Policy CG1** states that the Council will safeguard and enhance rural areas from development that adversely impacts biodiversity (including trees, woodland and hedgerows, geodiversity, landscape character, recreational and agricultural value, contribution to green infrastructure, flood risk and ability to combat climate change). The quality and connectivity of wildlife corridors and habitats, alongside green and open spaces, will be protected and enhanced where possible. Policy CG1 also seeks to reduce the risk of flooding within Bolton by minimising water run-off from new development. The Council will work towards minimising energy requirements, reducing reliance on fossil fuels and reducing carbon dioxide emissions. Furthermore the potential for renewable energy development is to be maximised and development proposals of this nature are to be encouraged by the Council.

**Policy CG2** requires all development proposals to contribute to the delivery of sustainable development, via location and design, to ensure any adverse effects arising from the proposed development are mitigate and climate change adaptation is suitably incorporated.

**Policy CG3** states that development proposals are required to facilitate innovative and sustainable designs, that contribute to good urban design, conserve and enhance local distinctiveness, whilst ensuring developments take into account the overall built character and landscape qualities of an area. In addition development proposals are expected to display compatibility with the surrounding areas, including in respect of scale, massing, design and architecture. Development proposals are expected to conserve and enhance heritage assets and areas, whilst maintaining and respecting the landscape character and distinctiveness of surrounding countryside. Developments are expected to be resilient to the impacts of climate change and demonstrate energy efficiency.

**Policy CG4** aims to ensure new development proposed is compatible with surrounding land uses, whilst protecting amenity, safety and security. Developments are not permitted to generate unacceptable nuisance, odours, fumes, noise or light pollution, and should not cause detrimental impacts on water, ground or air quality. Development proposed for land that is considered to be affected by contamination or ground instability requires to fully assess any extent of issues and possible risks.

**Policy OA3** sets out the Council’s objectives for Westhoughton, stating that existing Green Belt boundaries are to be maintained whilst Protected Open Land surrounding Westhoughton remains undeveloped.
Policy M7 states that the Council will ensure that the scale and massing of new development proposed along to M61 corridor respects the landscape qualities and relates sympathetically to the surrounding areas.

Allocations Plan Policy CG6AP: Other Protected Open Land states that the Council will permit development within defined areas of Protected Open Land (as defined by the Proposals Map) provided the proposed development falls within one or more categories, including:

- "The development represents limited infilling within an established industrial area, and its scale would not adversely affect its character or surroundings;
- The development requires a location outside the urban area but is inappropriate within the Green Belt, and providing it maintains the character and appearance of the countryside; or
- The development would be appropriate within the Green Belt."

New buildings are expected to be grouped with existing buildings where possible. Where this is not possible, buildings should be situated in locations that are well screened and offer minimal landscape impacts. Buildings proposed as part of a development are expected to be designed to a high standard that is compatible with the surrounding landscape.

Minerals Plan Policy 8: Prior Extraction of Mineral Resources states that proposals for non-mineral development within Mineral Safeguarding Areas, that do not allow for the prior extraction of minerals, will only be permitted in the following circumstances:

- "The need for the development outweighs the need to extract the mineral; or
- It can be clearly demonstrated that it is not environmentally acceptable or economically viable to extract the mineral prior to non-mineral development taking place; or
- It can be clearly demonstrated that the mineral is either not present or of no economic value or too deep to extract in relation to the proposed development; or
- The development is limited or temporary and would not prevent minerals extraction taking place in the future."

4.4 Assessment of the Development

4.4.1 Spatial Strategy and Site Specific Policies

There are no specific policies contained within the LDP related to battery storage installations, such as that proposed by the Development. The Local Plan Allocations Map designates the Application Site under the following allocations:

- Core Strategy Sub Area – Westhoughton (Policy OA3);
- Allocations Plan Policy CG6AP: Other Protected Open Land;

Whilst there are no specific policies in relation to battery storage, such as the Development proposed, it is clear that investment and improvement of the existing generating capacity within the region will support the wider strategic objectives and vision set out within the Development Plan. The Development will increase energy capacity within the region and consequently support economic investment, regeneration and growth, whilst contributing to reduction the impacts of climate change as per the SO’s and principles set out within the Development Plan.

The Development is situated within the Westhoughton core strategy sub-area, which aims to protect existing Green Belt boundaries and areas of Protected Open Land. The
Development is not located within the Green Belt, helping to ensure that the over-arching principles of the Green Belt remain protected. Furthermore owing to the uncontentious nature of the Development and the existing environment, which is dominated by the M61 motorway and railway line, no significant adverse impacts are anticipated to occur on the Protected Open Land as a result of the Development.

Whilst the Development is situated within an area defined as an area of Protected Open Land, it is considered that as the Development meets the criteria established by Policy CG6AP, the Development can be permitted in principle. It is considered that the Development consists of limited infilling at a reasonable scale, whilst maintaining the character and appearance of the countryside. Specific consideration has been given to the fence design and mitigation planting proposed such that the Development blends into the landscape where it is proposed.

Whilst the Application Site is safeguarded for mineral extraction (in respect of surface coal, brick and clay) the nature of the Development and its limited footprint will ensure that minerals extraction is not prohibited by the Development. Further information on Coal Mining is provided in section 4.4.7, and a Coal Authority Report is appended as Appendix 2 to this Planning Statement. The Coal Authority report states that historical coal deposits, last worked in 1924, are likely to be substantially beneath the site at depths of 50 – 110 m. With regards to future mining the Coal Authority report confirms that:

- The property is not in an area where the Coal Authority has plans to grant a licence to remove coal using underground methods.
- The property is not in an area where a licence has been granted to remove or otherwise work coal using underground methods.
- The property is not in an area likely to be affected from any planned future underground coal mining.

In addition to the above, the Application Site is partially situated within the M61 corridor as defined by policy M7. However the Development is not located within any designated employment or mixed-use designated area, and owing to the limited nature of the Development no adverse impacts are anticipated towards the proposed development corridor, and the massing and scale of the Development is considered limited.

A recent planning appeal decision\(^8\) involving a battery storage development offers support to battery storage developments proposed for areas outwith urban settlements, such as the Development. The appeal decision confirmed that whilst this type of development was "not specifically provided for by other policies in the Local Plan"; significant weight was granted to the "purpose of the development and the more recent policies with which it would accord." It was considered that "planning should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, and that decisions should recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions."

In addition, landscape effects arising from the proposed development were not considered to cause any harm to the immediate landscape setting or character, as a result of existing overhead power lines and electricity pylons in close proximity to the site. The inspector concluded that the benefits of the facility outweighed any conflict with local planning policy, owing to the economic, social and environmental contributions made by the proposed development in maintaining stable electricity supplies.

The Development is considered to meet the goals set out within the Development Plan, and the principle of the Development is considered to be supported.

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4.4.2 Landscape and Visual Impact

4.4.2.1 Landscape Considerations

The Application Site is not afforded any protection under statutory landscape designations, such as National Parks.

The Application Site is located within the Lancashire Coal Measures National Landscape Character Area\(^9\), and in the Agricultural Coal Measures Landscape Character Area in the Landscape Character Appraisal of Bolton\(^10\). The area is dominated by its industrial heritage, long associated with mining activity. The resulting landscape is a complex mosaic of farmland, scattered urban centres, industry, active mineral sites and derelict or reclaimed workings, giving this area a strong and distinctive identity.

The landscape character type is described as a fragmented landscape with scattered settlements and dissecting transport links. The pattern of settlement within the area has created a very linear landscape. It is further characterised by degraded agricultural land dissected by ribbons of development, which closely mirror the road network. Despite this, some of the largest remaining areas of open rural land in Bolton are located within this zone.

The Landscape Character Appraisal of Bolton concludes that the landscape is of variable quality and there is some potential for change within the character area.

The Development also avoids the key areas of interest identified in the Landscape Character Appraisal of Bolton, namely Hulton Park (east of Westhoughton), Copperas House (in Blackrod), Arley Hall/Abbey Farm and the Rope Works at Chequerbent.

With regards to future development it is noted that where new development is permitted, it should be ensured that landscape screening of industrial areas and farm structures strengthens and enhances the landscape character. Specifically with regards to planting it states that a strong emphasis is placed on the planting of locally native species which are suitable to local soil types.

The likely impacts on landscape character are considered to be extremely limited. This is due to the low vertical extent of the Development, existing vegetation and proposed planting around the Application Site, and landform. The presence of the railway line to the southeast and M61 to the north, alongside other industrial development result in an altered nature of the landscape. This industrial development in the landscape acts to limit broader impacts on landscape character.

4.4.2.2 Visual Considerations

Key potential visual receptors include:

- Residential properties; the closest of which are located approximately 130 m southeast, beyond the railway line. Given the distance, low vertical extent of the Development, intervening screening and landform no material impact on views from these properties is anticipated. It’s noted that the railway line is also present in close proximity to the properties, between the properties and the Development. It is noted that an isolated property is located approximately 200 m southwest, Ditchers Farm (which has a financial involvement in the Development). Views from the property to the Development are likely to be screened by other farm buildings in close proximity, thus reducing any visual effect.

- Settlements; the closest of which is Westhoughton (properties in the northern extent of which are described above). Other settlements in the vicinity of the Application

\(^9\) http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/8505003?category=587130
Site include Wingates, approximately 450 m west, Chew Moor, approximately 650 m northeast and Lostock, approximately 1.65 km northeast. Chew Moor and Lostock are both on the opposite side of the M61. Given the distance, low vertical extent of the Development, intervening screening and landform no material impact on views from these Settlements is anticipated.

- Public rights of way users; there is a network of public rights of way around the vicinity of the Application Site, including a footpath which runs parallel to the railway line, approximately 60 m southeast, one that runs parallel with the M61, approximately 60 m northeast and one that heads north from Ditchers Farm to the M61, approximately 160 m west. These footpaths pass through areas with open views towards the Development and areas which are afforded screening by existing vegetation. The greatest impact on users of the rights of way will be where the routes pass closest to the Development to the southeast and northeast. Any visual effects which may arise would be mitigated by landscaping and planting proposed as part of the embedded mitigation for the Development such that no material impact on views from public rights of way is anticipated.

- Other Recreational Users; Regents Park Golf Course is identified on the opposite side of the M61 and railway line, approximately 1.1 km north of the Application Site. Given the intervening distance, landform, transport infrastructure and screening and limited vertical extent of the Development, no material impact on users of the golf course is anticipated.

- Users of roads and other transport routes (e.g. railway line). The closest road is the M61 approximately 90 m north of the Application Site and the closest railway line is approximately 80 m southeast of the Application Site. Views from the M61 would be experienced from fast moving vehicles and less likely on northbound carriageway which benefits from some degree of vegetation screening. Views from the railway line will be restricted by landform (railway line is in a cutting to get beneath the M61) and rail side vegetation. Given the transient nature of the receptors, the limited vertical extent of the Development, and existing and proposed screening no material impact on views from roads and other transport routes is anticipated.

Overall the Development is not considered to cause to a material visual impact on any of the identified receptors in the vicinity of the Development.

4.4.2.3 Overview

The Development is expected to offer a limited visual impact on overall landscape character and visual amenity, and will create no significant impacts on designated areas or landscape character. The Development will not impact on views from protected features, and is considered an appropriate scale for the existing landscape. Furthermore, the Development includes sympathetic fencing design and mitigation planting to help blend the Development into the landscape where it is proposed. As such the Development is considered to comply with the Development Plan.

4.4.3 Ecology and Habitat

There are no internationally, nationally or locally designated ecological sites at or close to the Application Site; a review of the MAGIC website\(^\text{11}\) has identified the closest international or nationally designated site to be Red Moss Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), approximately 3 km to the northwest. The closest locally designated site is the Hall Lee Bank Park Local Nature Reserve located 800 m south. Given the nature of the Development, and the intervening distances, the Development is not considered likely to impact on ecologically designated sites.

\(^\text{11}\) http://www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk/
The habitat at the Application Site appears to be grassland used for grazing, with isolated trees forming field boundaries. A review of aerial photographs and OS maps has not identified any surface water ponds within the Application Site although a drainage ditch forms the north and east boundary of the Application Site.

A new access will be formed to reach the Application Site off Slack Lane, making use of an existing access point and passing over grazing land around the perimeter of fields. The track has been set back from trees and hedges so as to avoid any direct impact on trees. There is no tree or hedge removal required as a result of the Development.

The Development is not considered to adversely impact any ecological or biodiversity interests, and there will be no adverse impacts arising at designated ecological sites. The Development is therefore considered to fully comply with the Development, particularly in respect of the wider objectives established within the SO's and policy CG1.

4.4.4 Historic Environment

A review of the MAGIC website\(^\text{12}\) identified no archaeological or heritage assets within the Application Site. The absence of known archaeological assets within the Application Site means the potential for unidentified archaeological remains to exist is considered to be low. However, as the Application Site has not been previously developed the potential for undiscovered archaeological remains to be present cannot be discounted. Investigation of such potential could be adequately secured by the imposition of an appropriately worded planning condition, attached to any consent that may be granted.

The only designated heritage assets within 2 km are 1 listed building (Church of St John the Evangelist, located 640 m west in village of Wingates) and 1 Registered Park and Garden (Hulton Park, located 1.8 km southeast). Given the low vertical extent of the Development, intervening distance and intervening screening from topography, buildings and vegetation the potential for significant effects on these heritage assets is considered unlikely.

Given the limited vertical extent of the Development, its small footprint, and its setting, impacts occurring at heritage assets as a result of the Development are considered unlikely. Additionally existing vegetation and proposed planting is expected to offer a degree of screening for any views into the Application Site. The potential for heritage assets to exist within the developable area is considered limited, however best practice will be employed should the Development be permitted to manage any unknown archaeological features that may exist on-site.

The Development is therefore considered to fully comply with the Development Plan, including policy CG3.

4.4.5 Noise

The closest properties are located beyond the railway line, approximately 130 m southeast, and at Ditchers Farm (isolated farm house with outbuildings which has a financial involvement in the Development) which is approximately 200 m west. Beyond these there are further isolated properties (generally beyond the M61) and small settlements (Wingates, Chew Moor and Lostock).

The Application Site is located within 90 m of the M61 motorway and 80 m from a railway line. This transport infrastructure will likely result in an elevated background noise environment, when compared to other open countryside locations, which reduces the sensitivity of the receiving environment to the Development.

\(^{12}\) http://www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk/
Construction of the Development would be undertaken in accordance with best practice and any effects would be short term. Once operational the principal noise source would be the radiators and air conditioning units. Further noise attenuation will be provided in the form of existing vegetation, landform and proposed planting, which would all act to further reduce any noise immissions at receptors.

It is considered that noise effects of the Development will be fully assessed during the determination process to ensure that the Development introduces no unacceptable noise impacts on nearby receptors. The elevated background noise that currently exists at the Application Site is likely to result in a limited ability for noise receptors to receive a significant change in noise levels as a result of the Development, and where possible appropriate mitigation will be deployed to ensure that no significant changes occur to the baseline noise levels at nearby receptors.

As a result the Development is not expected to result in a significant shift from the existing baseline noise levels currently present at nearby receptors, and is considered to fully comply with the Development Plan, including policy CG4.

4.4.6 Hydrology and Flood Risk

Whilst there are no surface water courses or features within the Application Site, a surface water course/ drainage ditch is located immediately to the north and east of the Application Site, effectively forming the boundary to the Application Site.

The Application Site is located in Flood Zone 1, as designated by the Environment Agency; this is the lowest flood risk zone (less than 1 in 1,000 annual probability, <0.1%). As the planning application boundary for the Development does not exceed 1 ha a flood risk assessment is not required for the planning application.

It is noted that the Application Site is generally flat with an elevation of approximately 112 m above ordnance datum (AOD).

The Development would not impact on the integrity and water quality of existing aquatic ecosystems at the Application Site or elsewhere in the vicinity of the Application Site. Furthermore the Development is not located within a flood plain or an area at risk from flooding, and the Development will not increase flood risk elsewhere. As such, the Development is considered to comply with the Development Plan, including policies CG1 and CG4.

4.4.7 Coal Mining Risk

Much of the area around Bolton has been subject to historical coal mining. A review of the hazard risk map confirms that part of the Application Site is with an area classified as being high development risk, and as such a Coal Authority report has been commissioned and is presented in Appendix 2 to this Planning Statement.

It is considered that should the Council, having regard to the Coal Authority report submitted, require a detailed Coal Mining Risk Assessment then this could be secured by the imposition of an appropriately worded planning condition, attached to any consent that may be granted.

Whilst policy P4 seeks to safeguard areas for coal mining, and the Development is situated within a classified area, it is not considered that the Development will offer any long-term impact on the ability to extract coal or other minerals from the Application Site,
owing to the limited footprint of the Development. As such the Development is considered to comply with the Development Plan, including policy P4

### 4.4.8 Access, Transport and Traffic

The main impacts arising from access, transport and traffic would be during the construction period. The Application Site is readily accessible from the highway network, namely the M61 motorway by way of the A58, A6 and Slack Lane. Additional access track will be required off Slack Lane to access the Application Site but the existing access point to the public highway (Slack Lane/ A6 junction) will be utilised with no upgrades required. Given the access provisions, in terms of construction traffic requirements and plant delivery, no issues are anticipated.

The Development would generate the following vehicle movements over the entire construction period. The typically generated movements (to and from the Site) are as follows:

- Delivery of Batteries, Battery Racks and Battery Containers – 75 HGVs
- Delivery of Inverters – 24 HGVs
- Delivery of Transformers – 16 HGVs
- Delivery of Loadbanks – 16 HGVs
- Delivery of customer substation/ DNO substation and communication room – 18 HGVs
- Concrete and aggregate deliveries – 160 lorries
- Hi-ab/ concrete pump deliveries – 84 movements
- Crane 60t – 20 movements

No abnormal loads movements would be required although a crane, with a handling capacity of 60 tonnes, will be required to be delivered to site.

The operational phase of the Development would generate an extremely low number of vehicle movements, predicted to be less than 2 per month, related to intermittent maintenance visits. These vehicles would also be 4x4’s or vans and would not be HGVs.

The local road network can readily accept this level of traffic without highways safety or capacity issues.

The decommissioning phase will generate slightly higher volumes than the construction phase, as materials cannot be as concisely moved as when during construction. Nevertheless, the local road network can readily accept this level of traffic without highways safety or capacity issues.

The Development would not adversely affect the existing transport network or outdoor access routes, with any increase in traffic volumes as a result of the Development being contained to limited periods during the construction period. Furthermore the Development is considered accessible in a safe and sustainable manner. The Development is therefore considered to fully comply with the Development Plan, including policies P5 and S1.

### 4.4.9 Public Rights of Way

There are no public rights of way on the Application Site; but as noted in Section 4.2.3.1 there is a network of public rights of way around the vicinity of the Application Site, including a footpath which runs parallel to the railway line, approximately 60 m southeast, one that runs parallel with the M61, approximately 60 m northeast and one that heads north from Ditchers Farm to the M61, approximately 160 m west. These footpaths pass through areas with open views towards the Development and areas which are afforded screening by existing vegetation. The greatest impact on users of the rights of way will be where the routes pass closest to the Development to the southeast and...
northeast. Any visual effects which may arise would be mitigated by landscaping and planting proposed as part of the embedded mitigation for the Development such that no material impact on views from public rights of way is anticipated.

The Development will not result in any significant detrimental impacts on outdoor access, including interests associated with promoting Green Infrastructure, and is therefore considered to fully comply with the Development Plan.

4.4.10 Agricultural Land Classification

The Application Site is categorised as Grade 3 agricultural land. Given this, and the small footprint of the Development, no significant impacts on agricultural land are anticipated.

4.4.11 Existing Infrastructure

The closest low voltage (33kV) overhead electricity transmission lines pass across the Application Site through the southwest corner in a southeast/northwest orientation. This was a key consideration during the design of the Development.

A Linesearchbeforeudig search\textsuperscript{15} was undertaken which confirmed that two of their registered asset owners (Electricity North West and National Grid) has infrastructure at or in the vicinity of the Application Site. It is assumed that the ENW infrastructure is the 33kV overhead electricity transmission line which crosses the Application Site. Further correspondence from National Grid had not been received at the time of writing.

The Development is not anticipated to impact the function or safety of the existing infrastructure present within the Application Site, and appropriate consultation is expected to occur during the determination period for the application. As such, the Development is considered to comply with the Development Plan in respect of existing infrastructure.

\textsuperscript{15} Online search undertaken on 17/05/2017
5 RELEVANT MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The need for the Development has been detailed in Section 1.4 and through the Capacity Market the government has set up a framework for the delivery of projects such as the one proposed. There is a clear requirement to balance the peaks and troughs associated with electricity supply and demand to manage the strain on distribution networks and ensure there are no power blackouts. This is particularly important as coal generating plants get decommissioned and given the time it takes to develop new nuclear generation. There has been strong support for renewable energy generation, such as onshore wind and solar which is inherently intermittent. The Development is designed to smooth over the troughs in electricity supply, being able to respond at short notice to requests from National Grid to generate, such as periods when renewable sources are not generating or fossil fuel plants are unexpectedly offline.

5.1 Energy Storage Drivers

There is a focus at International, European and national level on how the UK can deliver secure, clean and affordable electricity to consumers. The UK is legally bound through the Climate Change Act (2008) to reduce carbon emissions and through Renewable Energy Directive 2009/28/EC to increase electricity consumption from renewable resources. Energy storage facilities, such as the Development, will play an important role in achieving this.

Users of the UK electricity system have historically been:

- Generators (producers of electricity);
- Consumers (users of electricity); or
- Interconnectors (transfer electricity between the UK system and other countries).

Energy storage does not fit within the three categories above. It imports electricity, stores it for a period of time, and then exports it.

Following on from a number of successful trials and demonstration projects, advances in the technology and reductions in the cost of batteries have seen battery storage projects become viable in the UK. There are a number of benefits of battery storage which deliver an overarching purpose of increasing grid stability and providing a secure supply of electricity. Energy storage does not receive or require consumer subsidies to make projects economically viable.

The need for the Development has been detailed in Section 1.4 and through the Capacity Market the government has set up a framework for the delivery of projects such as the one proposed. There is a clear requirement to balance the peaks and troughs associated with electricity supply and demand to manage the strain on distribution networks and ensure there are no power blackouts. This is particularly important as coal generating plants get decommissioned and given the time it takes to develop new nuclear generation. There has been strong support for renewable energy generation, such as onshore wind and solar, which is inherently intermittent. The Development is designed to smooth over the troughs in electricity supply, being able to respond at short notice to requests from National Grid to generate, such as periods when renewable sources are not generating or fossil fuel plants are unexpectedly offline.

The use of energy storage can avoid costly grid infrastructure upgrades or reinforcement works. It was reported in the Committee on Climate Change Report\(^\text{16}\) that significant cost savings for consumers will be delivered by the deployment of energy storage.

A report by the National Infrastructure Commission\(^\text{17}\) (in 2016) estimates that smart power systems in the UK, which include energy storage "could save consumers up to £8 billion a year by 2030, help the UK meet its 2050 carbon targets and secure the UK's energy supply for generations."

Another report produced for the Committee on Climate Change\(^\text{18}\) in 2015 finds that technologies which provide flexible solutions, such as energy storage, "will be essential for managing the costs associated with integrating low carbon plant onto the power system and achieving high levels of decarbonisation."

5.2 National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) recognises that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to achieving sustainable development (economic, social and environmental).

Paragraph 17 sets out a number of core land use planning principles. Of particular relevance to the Development are:

- "proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the [...] infrastructure that the country needs."
- "support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change, and encourage the reuse of existing resources, including conversion of existing buildings, and encourage the use of renewable resources (for example, by the development of renewable energy)."

Section 10 of the NPPF, 'Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change', recognises that planning plays a key role in helping to shape places to secure radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimising vulnerability and providing resilience to the impacts of climate change, and supporting the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure. This is considered central to economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development (paragraph 93).

Paragraph 97 states that to help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy, local planning authorities should recognise the responsibility on all communities to contribute to energy generation from renewable or low carbon sources, which involves having a positive strategy to promote energy from renewable and low carbon sources.

In addition, paragraph 98 specifies that when determining planning applications local planning authorities should recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions; and should approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable.

5.3 Assessment of Relevant Material Considerations

The material considerations are considered to provide weight in favour of the Development.

The NPPF is clear that the planning system has a fundamental role in ensuring that Government objectives for energy and climate change policy are fulfilled. The effects from the Development are modest and are clearly outweighed by the benefits of the Development, which will make a valid contribution to a varied, localised grid infrastructure network.


6 CONCLUSIONS

There is a clear requirement to balance the peaks and troughs associated with electricity supply and demand to manage the strain on transmission and distribution networks and ensure there are no power blackouts. The Development is designed to smooth over the troughs in electricity supply caused by intermittent generation such as that from wind and solar, providing a critical service to the grid by being able to respond at short notice to requests from National Grid to generate electricity.

Considerable care has been taken in both the location and design of the Development. It is sited on vacant agricultural land off the M61, in close proximity to the ENW primary substation off Slack Lane and other industrial uses (railway line, overhead low voltage electricity transmission lines and industrial units). The design of the Development avoids unacceptable environmental and amenity effects, whilst ensuring that the Development can make a contribution to embedded generation and a more stable grid network. The Application Site will be well screened by existing vegetation and proposed planting.

The Development has been considered against all the relevant Development Plan policies set out in the Local Plan. The Application Site represents the best option for the Westhoughton area, helping to improve the security of electricity supply for local residents and businesses. The potential minor landscape and visual impacts are clearly outweighed by other considerations in this case, including employment and economic benefits and substantial benefit to the local electricity grid network, such that circumstances exist to enable the Development to proceed.

The Development does not lie in or close to a national landscape designation. Any effects on local landscape character and visual amenity would be localised and modest. Any effects would be further reduced by planting proposed as part of the Development.

The Development is also considered acceptable with regards to ecology and habitat; the historic environment; hydrology and flood risk; coal mining risk; noise; and access, transport and traffic. The Development is considered to accord with Development Plan policies which concern these environmental and amenity matters.

It is integral to planning decision-making that a balancing exercise has to occur in respect of considering the benefits of development against the impacts. In this case, there are clear benefits which arise from the energy generation credentials of the Development which clearly outweigh the modest impacts.

The material considerations, principally the NPPF, also weigh in favour of the Development. The UK is legally bound through the Climate Change Act (2008) to reduce carbon emissions and through Renewable Energy Directive 2009/28/EC to increase electricity consumption from renewable resources. The connection of such intermittent generation to the distribution network can introduce significant strain on the network which the Development can offset by responding rapidly to short term supply requirements from National Grid. The Development would contribute towards meeting these requirements, and would also be fully supported by energy policy because it would contribute to increased domestic energy security, assist in replacing outdated energy infrastructure and provide decentralised or embedded generation.

Taking into account all policies relevant to the Development, and material considerations, the Development is in compliance with these policies and considerations, and planning permission should therefore be granted. It is therefore respectfully requested that the Council approve this planning application.
APPENDIX 1
Site Photographs (of Application Site and surrounding area)
Plate 1: View from Site to southeast looking at nearest properties with visibility.

Plate 2: View from western part of Site towards motorway.

Plate 3: View from western part of Site towards motorway.

Plate 4: View from western part of Site towards motorway.
Plate 5: View south from PRoW that runs east-west to the north of Site.

Plate 6: Elevated view from top of steps at eastern end of PRoW that runs east-west to north of Site. View is taken where the PRoW joins the farm access track.
APPENDIX 2
Coal Authority Report
CON29M
Non-Residential Mining Report

SITE AT 366170, 407310
GREATER MANCHESTER

Date of enquiry: 24 May 2017
Date enquiry received: 24 May 2017
Issue date: 24 May 2017

Our reference: 51001474116001
Your reference: 126087785_1
This report is based on, and limited to, the records held by the Coal Authority and the Cheshire Brine Subsidence Compensation Board's records, at the time we answer the search.

Client name
LANDMARK INFORMATION GROUP LIMITED

Enquiry address
SITE AT 366170, 407310, GREATER MANCHESTER

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Twitter: /coalauthority

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Ordnance Survey Licence number: 100020315
### Has the search report highlighted evidence or potential of

|   | Past underground coal mining |   | Present underground coal mining |   | Future underground coal mining |   | Mine entries |   | Coal mining geology |   | Past opencast coal mining |   | Present opencast coal mining |   | Future opencast coal mining |   | Coal mining subsidence |   | Mine gas |   | Hazards related to coal mining |   | Withdrawal of support |   | Working facilities order |   | Payments to owners of former copyhold land |   | Information from the Cheshire Brine Subsidence Compensation Board |   |
|---|-----------------------------|---|---------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|---|---------------------|---|-------------------------|---|------------------------|---|--------------------------|---|------------------------|---|------------------------|---|-----------------------|---|------------------------|---|------------------------|---|
| 1 | Yes                         |   | No                              |   | Yes                              |   | Yes                        |   | No                  |   | No                     |   | No                     |   | No                      |   | No                     |   | No                    |   | No                     |   | No                     |   | No                     |   | No                     |   | No                     |   |

**For detailed findings, please go to page 4.**
Detailed findings

1. Past underground coal mining
The property is in a surface area that could be affected by underground mining in 3 seams of coal at 50m to 110m depth, and last worked in 1924.

Any movement in the ground due to coal mining activity should have stopped.

In addition the property is in an area where the Coal Authority believe there is coal at or close to the surface. This coal may have been worked at some time in the past. The potential presence of coal workings at or close to the surface should be considered prior to any site works or future development activity. Your attention is drawn to the Comments on the Coal Authority information section of the report.

2. Present underground coal mining
The property is not within a surface area that could be affected by present underground mining.

3. Future underground coal mining
The property is not in an area where the Coal Authority has plans to grant a licence to remove coal using underground methods.

The property is not in an area where a licence has been granted to remove or otherwise work coal using underground methods.

The property is not in an area likely to be affected from any planned future underground coal mining.

However, reserves of coal exist in the local area which could be worked at some time in the future.

No notices have been given, under section 46 of the Coal Mining Subsidence Act 1991, stating that the land is at risk of subsidence.

4. Mine entries
There are no known coal mine entries within, or within 20 metres of, the boundary of the property.

There may however be mine entries/additional mine entries in the local area which the Coal Authority has no knowledge of.
5. Coal mining geology
The Coal Authority is not aware of any damage due to geological faults or other lines of weakness
that have been affected by coal mining.

6. Past opencast coal mining
The property is not within the boundary of an opencast site from which coal has been removed by
opencast methods.

7. Present opencast coal mining
The property does not lie within 200 metres of the boundary of an opencast site from which coal is
being removed by opencast methods.

8. Future opencast coal mining
There are no licence requests outstanding to remove coal by opencast methods within 800 metres
of the boundary.

The property is not within 800 metres of the boundary of an opencast site for which a licence to
remove coal by opencast methods has been granted.

9. Coal mining subsidence
The Coal Authority has not received a damage notice or claim for the subject property, or any
property within 50 metres, since 31 October 1994.

There is no current Stop Notice delaying the start of remedial works or repairs to the property.

The Coal Authority is not aware of any request having been made to carry out preventive works
before coal is worked under section 33 of the Coal Mining Subsidence Act 1991.

10. Mine gas
The Coal Authority has no record of a mine gas emission requiring action.

11. Hazards related to coal mining
The property has not been subject to remedial works, by or on behalf of the Authority, under its
Emergency Surface Hazard Call Out procedures.

12. Withdrawal of support
The property is not in an area where a notice to withdraw support has been given.

The property is not in an area where a notice has been given under section 41 of the Coal Industry
Act 1994, cancelling the entitlement to withdraw support.
13. Working facilities order
The property is not in an area where an order has been made, under the provisions of the Mines (Working Facilities and Support) Acts 1923 and 1966 or any statutory modification or amendment thereof.

14. Payments to owners of former copyhold land
The property is not in an area where a relevant notice has been published under the Coal Industry Act 1975/Coal Industry Act 1994.

15. Information from the Cheshire Brine Subsidence Compensation Board
The property lies outside the Cheshire Brine Compensation District.
Comments on the Coal Authority information

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In view of the mining circumstances a prudent developer would seek appropriate technical advice before any works are undertaken.

Therefore if development proposals are being considered, technical advice relating to both the investigation of coal and former coal mines and their treatment should be obtained before beginning work on site. All proposals should apply good engineering practice developed for mining areas. No development should be undertaken that intersects, disturbs or interferes with any coal or mines of coal without the permission of the Coal Authority. Developers should be aware that the investigation of coal seams/former mines of coal may have the potential to generate and/or displace underground gases and these risks both under and adjacent to the development should be fully considered in developing any proposals. The need for effective measures to prevent gases entering into public properties either during investigation or after development also needs to be assessed and properly addressed. This is necessary due to the public safety implications of any development in these circumstances.

Additional remarks

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