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## **DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT**

**Town and Country Planning Act 1990**

**Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004**

**Localism Act 2011**

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**Full planning application for a proposed battery energy storage site, substation compound, with associated infrastructure, fencing, access off Barleylands road, drainage and landscaping**

**Land at White's Farm, Barleylands Road, Basildon, SS15 4BG**

**On Behalf Of: Anglo ES White Farm Ltd**

**Prepared By:**

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**Date: 26 July 2022**

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**Date: 26 July 2022**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Design and Access Statement (**DAS**) has been prepared by Harris Lamb (HLPC) on behalf of Anglo Renewables (**the Applicants**) to accompany a full planning application for a new battery energy storage site (“BESS”) at land at White’s Farm, Barleylands Road, Basildon, SS15 4BG.

1.2 The application comprises:

- Existing single width vehicular access off Barleylands Road;
- Existing internal access road;
- 49.9MW battery storage facility, new compound, with associated infrastructure, fencing, SuDS, and landscaping; and,
- New landscaping and retention of existing vegetation.

1.3 The purpose of the Design and Access Statement is to:

- Demonstrate the steps taken to appraise the context of the development, summarise findings and illustrate how this assessment has informed development design;
- Explain the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the development;
- How issues relating to access to the development have been dealt with; and
- Explain how any specific policy issues which might affect design and access to development have been addressed.

1.4 This document achieves the above within the following sections:

Section 1: Introduction: outlines the purpose of the document.

Section 2: Site Description: the features of the site which are relevant to the design of the scheme and its layout are described.

Section 3: The Proposal: sets out the description of the proposal including the structures, landscaping and the access.

Section 4: Policy: sets out the policies which are relevant to the consideration of the application are identified.

Section 5: Site Assessment: considers the site and its surroundings in terms of the landscape, heritage, ecological, drainage or highway constraints which would otherwise preclude development potential with the site.

Section 6: Summary: this provides a summary of the overall design approach and outcomes.

- 1.5 This Statement should be read in conjunction with the full planning application and its accompanying documents including the Supporting Planning Statement, Landscape Assessment, Historic Statement, Flood Risk and Drainage Assessment, Highway Report, and Ecology Reports.

## **2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION**

### Immediate Site Context

- 2.1 White's Farm is located approximately 2 miles north of the centre of Basildon, 2.5 miles south of the town of Billericay and 4 miles west of the town of Wickford.
- 2.2 White's Farm comprises of farm buildings, a large stables building for 60 stables, indoor arena, ancillary buildings, outdoor menage and associated parking and grazing, and 9 container units all used for B1 and B8 Use.
- 2.3 Access to the proposed BESS site is via the existing access to White's Farm and the Equestrian Centre from a point off Barleylands Road. The access includes access to and within the site for vehicles. The access runs from the road in an easterly direction. The existing track is made of hard surfacing and runs from the road.
- 2.4 The area to the east and west of Barleylands Road is occupied by a variety of uses including recycling centre, equestrian use, football pitches and tourist camping.
- 2.5 The application site is approximately 1.61 hectares in area and is located to the east of Barleylands Road adjacent to the Barleylands equestrian centre. The surrounding area is characterised by flat fields, the adjacent land is an equestrian dominant landscape, the land on the opposite side of Barleylands Road is used to provide football pitches.
- 2.6 The fields are bordered in part by mature hedges and trees. The extensive subdivision of the fields by fences associated with extensive equine use (including fields shelters for horses) and football pitches changes the appearance of the land near the farmstead and equestrian buildings and facilities and erodes the rural character of the surrounding area.

- 2.7 The BESS buildings will be sited to the south, beyond the existing farm and equestrian buildings. There are a number of bunds in high in this area along with open vehicle storage.
- 2.8 The proposed site is well screened by established hedgerow along Barleylands Road to the west and Wash Road to the south. There is no vegetation within the proposed site other than grassland.
- 2.9 The battery storage site would go beyond the farm and equestrian buildings and facilities. However, in terms of visual impact, the wider views of the site would be seen within the overall complex as a backdrop or screened by it rather than an isolated development in the countryside. The visual impact would be minimal.
- 2.10 In closer views, the battery storage facility would also be seen as an extension to the existing complex. The effect of changes in near views would also be limited.
- 2.11 Having regard to existing character of the site and its surroundings, the siting of the BESS in the Green Belt would, with new landscaping, be assimilated in visual terms.
- 2.12 The main body of the proposal is approximately 250m away from the nearest residential properties on Wash Road. There is a pylon within the proposed site which is clearly visible from the PROW to the north of the proposed site. The pylon infrastructure is the connection point for the project.

### 3.0 THE PROPOSAL

3.1 The applicant seeks approval for a battery energy storage facility (“BESS”), substation compound, with associated infrastructure, fencing, existing access road off Barleylands Road, drainage and landscaping.

3.2 The BESS will consist of:

- An existing hard surfaced access, off Barleylands Road.
- 132kv Substation and transformer, consisting of:
  - 132/33kv transformer
  - DNO & Customer switch yards
  - Battery switch room
  - Battery control room
  - Palisade and timber noise attenuation fencing
- Battery compound, comprising of
  - 48? Battery storage containers
  - Battery Management/ Power Control System (transformer/inverters/monitoring system)
  - Palisade fencing
- Parking facilities for maintenance vehicles
- CCTV monitoring system.
- The land within the substation and battery compound will be laid to gravel.
- Drainage system made up of swales and filter drains.
- Landscaping consisting of (to be confirmed):
  - Native hedgerow planting



## 4.0 POLICY

### **Basildon District Council Local Plan (2007).**

- 4.1 'The Development Plan' comprises the Basildon District Council Local Plan adopted in 2007 ("BDCLP"). The Local Plan is out of date. The only saved policy which is applicable to the proposed battery site is Policy BAS GB1 (The definition of the Green Belt) which refers to the Green Belt boundaries as shown on the proposals map.

### **Withdrawn Basildon Borough Local Plan 2014-2034.**

- 4.2 On 3 March 2022, the Council resolved to withdraw the emerging Basildon Local Plan (2012-2034) from examination.
- 4.3 The Local Development Scheme (LDS) timetable for reviewing the Local Plan is due to be reported to Cabinet for approval on 8th September 2022.

#### Policy Relevant to Design.

- 4.4 Section 12 of the NPPF seeks to ensure that all new developments are of the highest quality design, and they should take account of local character and distinctiveness and history.
- 4.5 Paragraph 130 of the NPPF states, inter alia, that planning decisions should ensure that developments: c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting.

#### Policy Relevant to Highways and Access

- 4.6 Paras 110 NPPF (Considering Development Proposals) states development should ensure that safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users. Para 111 NPPF says planning permission should only be prevented if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impact of the development would be severe.

- 4.7 The test in the NPPF is one of 'severe' impact.

Policy Relevant to Landscaping

- 4.8 Para 174 (Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment) of the NPPF recognises the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. It is to be noted that the application site does not fall within a specific landscape designation, nor is it to be regarded as valued landscape.

Policy Relevant to Biodiversity

- 4.9 Para 174 (Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment) of the NPPF refers to protecting and enhancing the sites of biodiversity (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status and or identified quality in the development plan) and minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity.

Policy relevant to Heritage.

- 4.10 Section 16 of NPPF sets out the Governments current planning policy in relation to conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Paragraph 184 NPPF says heritage assets include sites of local historic significance. It is to be noted that the application site does not fall within a specific historic designation.

Policy relevant to Noise.

- 4.11 Paras 174 (Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment) and 185 (Pollution) of the Framework refer to avoiding new development from causing unacceptable noise impact.

Policy Relevant to Flood Risk and Drainage

4.12 Para 183 NPPF states planning decisions should ensure that a site is suitable for its proposed use taking account of ground conditions. Para 185 NPPF says planning decisions should ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely significant effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development.

## **5.0 ASSESSMENT**

5.1 This section provides an assessment of the site and its surroundings which have been undertaken, in terms of the design, landscape, ecology, highway, heritage and flood drainage issues which have been considered formulating the design solution.

5.2 We consider the main issue to be the effect of the proposed development (including layout, scale, its appearance and landscaping) on:

- the character and appearance of the site and surroundings.
- heritage assets
- ecology
- flood risk

### Design (Siting, Layout, Appearance and Height)

5.3 The application scheme contains structures which are designed in order to allow the facility to function having regard to operational and safety considerations, hence the spacing between the battery units. The structures although of functional appearance are of modest height and scale such that they will not be visually intrusive in the wider landscape.

5.4 The proposal is small scale and only 1.14 hectares is occupied by built form (battery storage area and new compound with associated infrastructure, and track). The site layout plan shows the physical the battery energy storage area and substation compound, with associated infrastructure and new highway access) and landscaping with native hedgerow planning along the

eastern edge of the site and additional native hedgerow along the southern edge of the site. It would be seen adjacent to the existing farm and equestrian buildings and pylons on site. The scale of buildings ranges from just over 4m in height, in terms of raised above the ground in the case of battery units to just over 3m in height.

5.5 The design is of a utilitarian appearance reflecting the nature, purposes and function of the application scheme and is designed with functionality in mind, which can be approved and implemented.

5.6 New development provides opportunities to:

- Integrate with the surrounding built form and landscape context. The BSF proposal is small scale. The key locational factor for this development has been the proximity to the pylon. The location of the proposed buildings has been clearly considered to minimise their impact on the surrounding landscape and the openness of the Green Belt. This includes the position of the BESS close to the existing farm buildings and equestrian buildings and facilities. This would help to mitigate the visual impact of the proposed development.
- Further minimise the impact of the development on the open countryside. The proposed scheme will retain and, where possible, enhance existing landscape features on the site. The introduction of native hedgerow planting close to the boundaries of the main site. Where possible native hedgerow planting to the south of the PROW. A Landscape Appraisal and planting plan has been provided with the application. This means that both landscape and visual effects can be contained to the site, conserving the rural character of and views within the wider landscape, and achieving bio-diversity net gain of ? %.

5.7 The BESS proposal is designed with functionality and purpose in mind and is small scale. The members of the consultancy team have provided inputs into the design process in respect of their individual disciplines. The exact siting of the BESS takes into account access arrangements, the landscape

treatment and planting regime and biodiversity offsetting, heritage and flood risk mitigation. These matters are discussed more fully in this assessment under the following sub-titles.

- 5.8 Overall, the development proposals will cause some landscape and visual harm, and mitigation provided by both the retention of the hedgerows and new hedges means that both landscape and visual effects can be contained to the site, conserving the rural character and views within the wider landscape.
- 5.9 A Public Right of Way (PROW) runs to the north of the proposed BESS site. It runs along the existing access to White's Farm and the Equestrian Centre, between the complex of buildings on-site, which obscures the view of the proposed BESS, and extends beyond the buildings towards White's Bridge to the east.

Landscape.

- 5.10 Landscape design is a key component for creating a successful development at the application site. The landscape and visual strategy for the site is founded on the following principles and objectives:
- Views into the site;
  - Conserve and enhance the surrounding landscape character;
  - Retain and make the best use of existing landscape elements and features on the site;
  - A need to respect amenity of existing residential development; and
  - Implement additional hedges planting taking into account visual containment and mitigation.
- 5.11 The BESS buildings will be sited to the south of the site, beyond the existing farmstead and equestrian buildings and facilities. However, in terms of visual impact, the wider views of the site would be seen within the overall complex as a backdrop or screened by it rather than an isolated development in the countryside.

- 5.12 The land adjacent to the site is an equestrian dominant landscape. The extensive subdivision of the fields by fences associated with extensive equine use (including field shelters for horses) and football pitches changes the appearance of the land near the equestrian centre.
- 5.13 It is considered that the location, scale, and character of the proposal are acceptable in landscape and visual terms. It is to be noted that the application site does not fall within a specific landscape designation, and it is not to be regarded as valued landscape.
- 5.14 A Landscape Appraisal has been carried out by MHP Landscape Architects to accompany the full planning application and should be referred to for full details. A landscape planting plan has been provided with the application.
- 5.15 The landscape is considered to be a low to medium condition landscape with detractors and features in decline.
- 5.16 Landscaping is clearly important in ensuring the development is acceptable in visual and ecological terms. The proposed planting will achieve Biodiversity Net Gain.
- 5.17 Views into the application site from Barleylands Road and Wash Road are well screened by established hedgerow.
- 5.18 As stated above, the PROW runs along the existing access to White's Farm and the Equestrian Centre. The extent of the PROW that would be affected is a limited length of footpath that already focused on farm structures and equestrian activities. However, views will be diminished in time as mitigation planting establishes and a moderate adverse visual effect can be achieved for walkers using the PROW within the immediate proximity to the development.
- 5.19 The closest residential properties to the proposed BESS are located at:
- Wash Road, approximately 250m south.

5.20 It should also be noted that the proposed development is for a period of 35 years, and therefore its lack of permanence would ensure that the development does not act as a permanent feature in the landscape.

5.21 The LVA concludes that:

*“Overall, the development proposals will cause some landscape and visual harm, but this will be contained and limited. In the context of the undesignated landscape this harm will fall below the threshold of substantial harm with the establishment of mitigation hedge planting. Harm will be very localised and generally limited to be experienced by users of the PROW close to the application site. Potential effects on landscape receptors has been identified to be low and fall below the threshold of unacceptable harm when considered in the context of national and local landscape policy that seeks to conserve distinctiveness of the local landscape character, in accordance with Para 174 of the NPPF.”*

5.22 It is considered that landscaping could be resolved by imposing appropriate conditions, in accordance with Paragraph 174 of the NPPF.

#### Biodiversity.

5.23 The exact siting of BSF and landscaping takes account the known biological records of protected species and habitats within 2km of the site:

- It is sensitive to not disturbing the biodiversity of the area.
- The development provides opportunities to create valuable biodiversity enrichments.

5.24 A preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the site has been carried out by Harris Lamb Ltd. This assessment has been informed by a review of data collected.

5.25 Paragraph 6.1.1 of the report demonstrates that:

*“The proposed development anticipated impacts to the species and habitats identified within the report could be avoided or mitigated and enhanced.”*

- 5.26 The biodiversity enhancements have been designed in conjunction with the landscaping scheme.
- 5.27 It is considered that these matters could be resolved by imposing appropriate conditions, in accordance with Paragraph 174 of the NPPF.

Heritage.

- 5.28 A Historic Environmental Desk-Top Based Assessment (HEDBA) Report has been prepared by Ecus Ltd to review the archaeological, built heritage, and historic landscape implications of the proposed BSF.
- 5.29 This assessment has been informed by a review of available data and historic mapping.
- 5.30 In relation to archaeology, paragraph 6.1.3 of the report demonstrates that:  
*“No heritage assets of any considerable archaeological significance have been identified within the site as part of the assessment.”*
- 5.31 It is considered that archaeological monitoring matter could be ensured by imposing appropriate conditions.
- 5.32 With regards to built heritage and historic landscape character, paragraph 6.1.6 and 6.1.7 of the report conclude that:  
*“Whilst the proposal would result in a change within the site, it would not result in harm to the significance of the designated heritage assets in the vicinity of the site. The proposals are considered to accord with the Town and Country Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Paragraphs 16 and 184 of the NPPF.”*

Highways and Access.

- 5.33 A Transport Statement (TS) has been prepared by David Tucker Associates to review the transport implications of the proposed BESS.



5.34 Access to the proposed BESS site is via the existing access to White's Farm and the Equestrian Centre from a point off Barleylands Road. The access includes access to and within the site for vehicles. Paragraph 5.4 of the TS demonstrates that:

*"The vehicle access is suitable during construction and once the site is operational."*

5.35 Paragraph 5.5 of the TS demonstrates that:

*"The likely traffic generation resulting from the development proposals during construction of the site and once the site is operational will not be significant and consequently there would be no material impact on the operation or capacity of the local highway network."*

5.36 Overall, Paragraph 5.6 of the report demonstrates that:

*"The proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on the highway safety, nor would there be severe residual cumulative impact on the road network. The proposal, therefore, accords with Paragraphs 110 and 111 NPPF.*

#### Flood Risk and Drainage

5.37 A site-specific Flood Risk and Drainage Assessment has been produced by BWB Consulting which accompanies the application and should be read in conjunction with this Statement.

5.38 The proposed BSF is entirely located in FZ1, and the development flood risk vulnerability classification is Essential Infrastructure (see, Annex 3 of the NPPF). Therefore, the BSF flood risk vulnerability classification and flood zone compatibility is 'appropriate' development.

5.39 Paragraph 5.4 of this assessment demonstrates that:

*"The proposed development is not at risk of significant flood risk and the development will not increase flood risk to the wider catchment area, subject to recommended flood mitigation strategies being implemented."* The proposals, therefore, accord with Paragraphs 183 and 185 of the NPPF.

## 6.0 SUMMARY

### Opportunities and constraints.

- 6.1 The findings of the various surveys, appraisal and technical work completed to date have established that the site is a suitable location for a battery site which could be brought forward without giving rise to significant environmental effects.
- 6.2 The environment affects include the appearance of the BESS, the surrounding land character, heritage, residential amenity, wildlife value, and landscaping is clearly important in ensuring the development is acceptable in visual and ecological terms.
- 6.3 The surveys, appraisal and technical work to date have established that there is no on-site significant landscape, heritage, ecological, residential amenity, noise, flooding or highway constraints which would otherwise preclude development potential within the site.
- 6.4 The exact siting of the BESS takes into account flood risk, visual containment, biological records of protected species and habitats within 2km of the site, and mitigation.
- 6.5 The Ecology report concludes there are no unsurmountable constraints to development from an ecology or biodiversity perspective.
- 6.6 It is considered that there are no significant constraints associated with providing access to the site.
- 6.7 The HEDBA Report has identified no overriding historic environmental constraints to the principle of development.
- 6.8 a) Summary of opportunities:
- Utilising existing access into the site;

- Topography; the site is flat and the development can be easily laid out.
- Create a sustainable development;
- Addresses residential amenity;
- Provide landscaping in consideration of the (PROW) and Barleylands Road and Wash Road in terms of the effect of changes in near views, and wider landscape context and longer distance views; and
- Net bio-diversity gains which assists biodiversity and habitat creation.

6.9 b) Design response:

- The structures are kept to a minimum dimension.
- The colour palette of the structures is subdued.
- The existing landscaping will be maintained, together with the introduction of new native hedgerow planting.
- Net ecological enhancement.
- Impermeable surface kept to a minimum.
- Lighting only for emergencies.
- Residential amenity is not affected.

Summary of design response.

- Access point to meet standards.
- Access servicing to complement the character of the area and existing track.
- Structures designed to minimise height and visual appearance and minimum scale required to provide battery storage requirement.
- No material impact on PROW.
- Use of permeable surfaces.
- Emergency only lighting.
- Location away from residential receptors.
- Co-ordinated landscape and net ecological enhancement.

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