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COMMERCIAL PROPERTY ADVICE



SUPPORTING PLANNING STATEMENT

Town and Country Planning Act 1990
Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004
Localism Act 2011

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

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

On Behalf Of: Anglo ES White Farm Ltd

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SUPPORTING PLANNING STATEMENT

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Supporting Planning Statement (**'SPS'**) has been prepared by Harris Lamb Planning Consultancy (**'HLPC'**) on behalf of Anglo ES Whites Farm Ltd (**'the Applicants'**) to support a planning application for a new Battery Energy Storage Site (**'BESS'**) on land at White's Farm, Barleylands Road, Basildon (**'the site'**).

1.2 The Applicant is seeking full planning permission for:

"A battery energy storage site, substation compound, with associated infrastructure, fencing, existing access off Barleylands Road, drainage and landscaping" ("the Application").

1.3 A BESS is a means of regulating the storage of electricity that has been generated from various means, including from intermittent renewable sources, so that it can be stored and then exported back to the grid at times of high demand/low generation. As the electricity that is generated from renewable sources is subject to peaks and troughs, depending on climatic conditions, the BSF is able to store electricity when generation is high and then act as a typical battery cell to supply energy when less electricity is being generated or when there are additional demands on the grid.

1.4 In pursuit of climate change reduction targets and the transition to a more carbon neutral energy regime, BESS's are considered to play an important role in maximising the amount of energy both generated, and then used within the UK, through renewable sources. In order to deliver this benefit, BESS's need to be located close to an available grid connection or pylon in order to deliver maximum efficiencies. As such, the locations of BESS facilities are essentially driven by where a connection can be made to the National Grid.

1.5 Electricity comes from various sources of power generation including fossil fuel (including coal) and natural gas. With the UK and Europe phasing out

coal plants in recent years, and with increasing solar and wind output, this means demand for battery sites has increased.

- 1.6 The key recognition of the role of battery storage came in July 2020 when the Government issued a consultation on removing restrictions on the consent regime for battery storage. The Minister of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Rt Hon Kwasi Kwarteng MP stated:

“Electricity storage is a key technology in the transition to a smarter and more flexible energy system and will play an important role in helping to reduce emissions to net [1] zero by 2050. These changes will make it simpler for large scale storage facilities to seek planning permission, helping to bring forward larger projects supporting more efficient grid balancing and management of intermittent renewable energy.”

- 1.7 Enactment of this change came about in November 2020 by way of the Infrastructure Planning (Electricity Storage Facilities) Order 2020. It formally recognises that battery storage is an essential component of the renewable energy mix.

- 1.8 More recently the view of the Government towards battery storage is helpfully encapsulated in the draft replacement of the Draft overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) September 2021. It re-enforces the view that battery storage is part of renewable energy and reflects upon the importance of battery storage. Whilst the draft revisions carry as yet only limited weight, they do signal the direction of travel of Government advice. Sub-heading: The Role of Storage (3.3.24 to 3.3.29), states:

- *Para 3.3.24: Storage has a key role to play in achieving net zero and providing flexibility to the energy system, so that high volumes of low carbon power, heat and transport can be integrated. There is currently around 4GW of electricity storage operational in GB, around 3GW of which is pumped hydro storage and around 1GW is battery storage.*
- *Para 3.3.25: Storage is needed to reduce the costs of the electricity system and increase reliability by storing surplus electricity in times of*

low demand to provide electricity when demand is higher. Storage can provide various services, locally and at the national level. These include maximising the usable output from intermittent low carbon generation (e.g. solar and wind), reducing the total amount of generation capacity needed on the system; providing a range of balancing services to the NETSO and Distribution Network Operators (DNO's) to help operate the system; and reducing constraints on the networks, helping to defer or avoid the need for costly network upgrades as demand increases.

- *Para 3.3.26: Many of the storage facilities currently being deployed provide storage over a period of hours but cannot cost effectively cover prolonged periods of low output from wind and solar. There are a range of storage technologies that may be able to provide over a longer periods of low wind and solar output (e.g. days, weeks or months) but many of these technologies are not yet available at scale or have an upper limit on deployment due to geographical constraints.*
- *Para 3.3.27: We have launched a £68m innovation competition, to accelerate the commercialisation of first-of-a-kind longer duration energy storage technologies. The competition encompasses electrical storage, thermal storage and power-to-x technologies which can provide novel grid services and demonstrate cost reductions and improvement in technology performance.*
- *Para 3.3.28: Electricity storage is treated as a form of electricity generation under the Planning Act 2008. However, government has made legislation to amend the way that electricity storage is treated in the planning system. Applications for electricity storage facilities (except pumped hydro with a capacity above 50MW in England) of all sizes should be consented outside of the Planning Act 2008 process, unless the Secretary of State directs otherwise under section 35 of the Planning Act 2008.*

- *Para 3.3.29: Applications for adding electricity storage to an existing generation station which has consent under NSIP or under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 may also be consented outside the Planning Act 2008 process, unless the Secretary of State directs otherwise under section 35 of the Planning Act 2008.....*

- 1.9 Electricity storage is treated as a form of electricity generation under the Planning Act 2008; this means that the entire architecture of legal and policy support which encourages electricity generation is automatically read across to energy storage applications. Storing surplus electricity has a key role to play in achieving net zero and providing flexibility to the energy system, so that high volumes of low carbon power can be integrated. Storing surplus electricity is needed to reduce the costs of the electricity system and to increase reliability by storing surplus electricity when demand is higher, including maximising the usable output from intermittent low carbon energy (for example, solar and wind). The Government has launched a £68m innovation competition to accelerate storage technologies, including storing surplus electricity that may be able to provide electrical storage over long periods of low wind and solar output.
- 1.10 Electricity comes from various sources of power generation including fossil fuel (including coal) and natural gas. With the UK and Europe phasing out coal plants in recent years, and low solar and wind output, this means demand for battery sites has increased.
- 1.11 In light of the overriding national and international importance to tackle climate change and reduce CO₂ emissions, and the International Panel on Climate Change 2021 (IPCC) report, which is the most significant requirement for action, published recently, and which carries significant weight, we set out within this supporting planning statement and other supporting documents the case for the proposed development and how it accords with the policies of the Development Plan, National Planning Policy guidance and other material considerations.

- 1.12 The application is accompanied by a suite of planning application drawings and supporting documents, as comprising:
- Site Location, site layout, floorplans, elevation drawings and landscape plan
 - Design and Access Statement
 - Fire System Safety design
 - Site Selection Review
 - Statement of Community Involvement
 - Landscape and Visual Appraisal
 - Transport Assessment
 - Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Report
 - Ecology Appraisal
 - Historic Environmental Assessment
 - Review of International and National Renewable Energy Policies
 - Supporting Planning Statement
- 1.13 A set of plans of the proposed facility and associated infrastructure is submitted in support of the application which show the size and appearance of the proposed battery site and its relationship to the existing electricity pylon on site.
- 1.14 The Application site has no relevant planning history, but immediately adjoins the varied uses and buildings associated with Whites Farm, which is used for a variety of commercial and leisure projects.
- 1.15 The remainder of this statement describes in section 2, the site and its surroundings, in section 3 a description of what is proposed, a review of the relevant planning policies in section 4, whilst the case for the Applicant is set out in section 5, the planning balance in section 6, and conclusions in section 7.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

- 2.1 The application site is part of a much wider complex of commercial and leisure uses, which 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. There is a pylon which is located close to the proposed site with overhead powerline, which is clearly visible from the PROW to the north of the proposed site. The pylon infrastructure is the connection point for the project.
- 2.2 The site is approximately 1.61 hectares in size and is located to the east of Barleylands Road, adjacent to the Barleylands equestrian centre. The adjacent area is characterised by fields which consists of an equestrian dominated landscape; the land on the opposite side of Barleylands Road is used to provide football pitches. The landscape is flat.
- 2.3 White's Farm is located approximately 2 miles north of the centre of Basildon, 2.5 miles south of the town and Billericay and 4 miles west of the town of Wickford.
- 2.4 The wider 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 area. The extent of these various uses is easily appreciated when standing on the application site.
- 2.5 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 field 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 surroundings area.

- 2.6 The BESS buildings will be sited to the south beyond the existing farm and equestrian buildings. There are a number of bunds in this area, which are located close to the application site.
- 2.7 The proposal is screened from long distance views by established hedgerow along Barleylands Road to the west and Wash Road to the south.
- 2.8 The battery storage site adjoins the farm, commercial and equestrian buildings and facilities. 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 as an isolated development in the countryside. The presence of existing buildings is such that views directly south from the farm and equestrian buildings would be effectively screened. This matter is explained in more detail in the accompanying Landscape and Visual Appraisal. The visual impact would be minimal.
- 2.9 In closer views, the battery storage facility would also be seen as extension to the existing complex. The effect of changes in near views would also be limited.
- 2.10 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.
- 2.11 The main body of the proposal is approximately 250m away from the nearest residential properties on Wash Road.
- 2.12 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 runs from the road in an easterly direction. The existing track is made of hard surfacing and runs from the road.
- 2.13 There is no ecology designation on site or nearby. These matters are addressed in more detail in the accompanying Ecology Report.

- 2.14 The EA flood map shows that the site is FZ1.
- 2.15 The site is Grade 3 agricultural land. This matter is addressed in section 5 below.
- 2.16 There are no landscape, historic or environmental designations on site or nearby. These matters are addressed in more detail in the accompanying Landscape and Heritage Statements.
- 2.17 There is a nearby housing allocation for delivery of around 400 homes on the opposite side of Wash Road to the south of the site, close to the junction with Barleylands Road (Policy H10 Land East of Noak Bridge, Basildon).
- 2.18 In summary, the Application Site will be a site which forms part of a wider parcel of land with a variety of built and open storage uses and which is well used.

3.0 DESCRIPTION OF PLANNING APPLICATION PROPOSAL

3.1 The proposed development is a Battery Energy Storage Facility. The facility will use battery technology to offer network balancing and stabilisation services. This is achieved by: importing electricity from the UK Power Networks (UKPN) network at times of low demand and high production; converting the electricity from AC to DC through an inverter and charging the battery cells to store the energy; and, exporting this stored electricity back to the network via inverting the electricity back to AC and then on to the network at times of high demand.

3.2 The BESS will also offer services to National Grid and UKPN which help the operators manage the efficient operation of the network and maintain supplies.

3.3 The BESS will be connected to the WPD network via a connection to the 132K network which crosses close to the application site.

3.4 The BESS will consist of;

- An existing hard surfaced access from Barleylands Road, off Barleylands Road connected to the existing highway.
- 132kv Substation and transformer, consisting of:
 - 132/33kv transformer
 - DNO & Customer switch yards
 - Battery switch room
 - Battery control room
 - Palisade fencing
- Battery compound, comprising of
 - 24 banks Battery storage units
 - Battery Management/ Power Control System (transformer/inverters/monitoring system)
 - Palisade fencing/Wooden 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:
 - Native hedgerow planting.

Fire System Safety Design.

- 3.5 The application is accompanied by a Fire System Safety Design produced by the Applicant which explains the hydrant process and fire suppression system.
- 3.6 BEES fire incidents are very few indeed. However, in the unlikely event that one should occur, the BESS is fitted with the most up-to-date fire detection and extinguishing system.
- 3.7 The battery room of every cabinet is equipped with an aerosol fire extinguishing system, composed of a smoke detector, a temperature detector and an aerosol fire extinguishing device. When both detectors are triggered, the fire extinguishing agent is released.
- 3.8 The extinguishing agent released by the aerosol fire extinguishing device is mainly composed of ultra-fine potassium salt particles and inert gas. Potassium salt is considered to be one of the most effective fire-extinguishing agents, and its fire-extinguishing mechanism is similar to Halong, which extinguishes fires by impeding the complex chemical chain reaction of combustion or explosion. The combustion chain reaction requires the participation of OH, H and O radicals, and ultrafine potassium salt particles can quickly consume these free radicals and prevent the combustion chain reaction from proceeding. A total flood fire extinguishing method is adopted. A certain concentration of fire extinguishing agent is sprayed and fills the entire protection area, which can extinguish any open flame in the protection area. It is effective for electrical fires, electrolyte fires and other combustibles fires (A/B/C fires).

- 3.9 When only a single detector is triggered, it is defined as first-level fire alarm. When both of the two detectors are triggered, it is defined as second-level fire alarm. At the same time, the aerosol fire extinguishing system interacts with the battery management system (BMS). When the BMS detects a first-level fire alarm, the alarm cabinet shuts down. When the BMS detects a second-level fire alarm, the aerosol of the alarm cabinet is released, with all of the electrical cabinets in the system out of operation.
- 3.10 The batteries are isolated and can be replaced. Operationally the BSF functions 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Maintenance visits are once or twice a week as required.

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 The Development Plan for the purposes of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (“the 2004 Act”) is the Basildon District Council Local Plan adopted in 2007 (“BDCLP”).

4.2 In this section we highlight the policies which are relevant to the determination of the Application Scheme. We have identified these together with the relevant and corresponding material policies of the NPPF, National Policy Statements regarding the need for Renewable Energy and BESS, in order to assist our analysis of the Applicant’s case in Section 5 below.

Basildon District Council Local Plan (2007).

4.3 ‘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. The policy does not reflect up to date policies of the Framework regarding the siting of renewable energy projects in the Green Belt.

4.4 The Local Plan pre-dates the NPPF and the approach to be taken to development in the Green Belt.

Withdrawn Basildon Borough Local Plan 2014-2034.

4.5 On 3 March 2022, the Council resolved to withdraw the emerging Basildon Local Plan (2012-2034) from examination.

4.6 The Local Development Scheme (LDS) timetable for reviewing the Local Plan is due to be reported to Cabinet for approval on 8th September 2022.

4.7 There were draft policies on renewable energy in the withdrawn emerging Local Plan, as per below.

4.8 Chapter 5 (vision & objectives), Strategic Objective SO3 (Minimise our Impact on the Environment), states:

“Promote the efficient use of resources by embracing sustainable patterns of development includes.....increasing the use of renewable energy technologies and minimising pollution including greenhouse gas emissions.”

4.9 Policy CC7 (Renewable Energy Infrastructure), states:

“Proposals for renewable and low carbon energy schemes will be positively considered provided they are in a sustainable and accessible location and comply with all other policies within the plan.”

Other Material Considerations.

The National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021)

4.10 The most recent version of the Framework was published in July 2021. It sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these should be applied.

4.11 The Framework is a material consideration in planning decisions.

Achieving Sustainable Development

4.12 Paragraph 7 confirms that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

4.13 Paragraph 8 identifies three overarching objectives to achieving sustainable development, which include:

- a) An economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

- b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being; and
- c) an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy (our emphasis)

The Presumption in favour of sustainable development

4.14 Paragraph 11 confirms that plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking this means:

- c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or
- d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date , granting permission unless:
 - i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
 - ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

Decision-making

- 4.15 Paragraph 38 states that local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way and should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.
- 4.16 Paragraph 47 confirms that applications for planning permission should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

- 4.17 Basildon DC has not declared a climate change emergency. However, Basildon Council Draft Climate and Action Plan (adopted July 2021) has set a 2030 zero carbon emissions target by 2030, and net zero emissions by 2050. The Council will be undertaking further consultation on their more detailed Action Plan. Clearly, the application scheme will help the Council to fulfil the objectives set out in the Action Plan. The Council's strategy to combat climate change is discussed more fully in Section 5, below.
- 4.18 Paragraph 152 states that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future and that it should help to shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience and support renewable (our emphasis) and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.
- 4.19 Paragraph 153 states that plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change and that policies should support appropriate measures to ensure the future resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts, such as providing space for physical protection measures, or making provision for the possible future relocation of vulnerable development and infrastructure.
- 4.20 Paragraph 158 states that when determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development local planning authorities should not

require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable and low carbon energy and approve applications if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable.

Promoting sustainable transport

- 4.21 Paragraph 110 states development should ensure that safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users whilst paragraph 111 states that planning permission should be allowed unless there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impact of the development would be severe.

Achieving well-designed place

- 4.22 Paragraph 126 confirms that the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve.
- 4.23 Para 130 sets out six criteria against which proposals should be judged. We assess these matters in more detail in Section 5, below.

Protecting Green Belt Land

- 4.24 Paragraph 137 confirms that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts.
- 4.25 Paragraph 147 confirms that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 148 goes on to state that:

“When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. ‘Very special circumstances’ will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting

from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.”

4.26 Paragraph 149 confirms that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate and lists the exceptions to this, whilst paragraph 150 goes on to list other forms of development in the Green Belt that are not inappropriate development.

4.27 Paragraph 151 states that:

“When located in the Green Belt, elements of many renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate development. In such cases developers will need to demonstrate very special circumstances if projects are to proceed. Such very special circumstances may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources.” (our emphasis)

Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

4.28 Paragraph 174 states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity. Paragraph 174(c) refers to protecting and enhancing valued landscape. However, the application site is not a valued landscape.

4.29 Paragraph 183 states planning decisions should ensure that a site is suitable for its proposed use taking account of ground conditions. Paragraph 185 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.

Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

- 4.30 Paragraph 194 states that in determining applications local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected. It goes on to state at paragraph 195 that local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal.
- 4.31 Paragraph 199 confirms that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be).
- 4.32 Paragraph 202 confirms that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

Other Relevant Planning Policy Guidance

- 4.33 Renewable Energy Directive 2009 sets out the objective for the UK to achieve 15% of its energy sources by 2020.
- 4.34 A separate report is submitted in support of the application that provides a more thorough review of the National Policy position in respect of the provision of renewable energy and specifically the need and justification for additional battery storage facilities within the grid. It is clear from the analysis set out in the document that the Government is focused on addressing climate change and has implemented a number of policy objectives in order to effect a change in energy consumption with a resulting reduction in climate change as a result. In fact, as recently as the 20th April 2021, the Government made a further announcement stating that it was going to cut carbon emissions by 78% by 2035, bringing forward the date by 15 years to do so by.

- 4.35 Furthermore, the Government has just hosted the COP26 in November 2022 in Glasgow, where the international community has explained the critical matter of climate change and the urgent need to control the adverse effects which are occurring.
- 4.36 The proposed BESS scheme will, therefore, make a significant contribution to the Government's clear objective of seeking to tackle climate change and redress global warming by creating new energy infrastructure that will assist with the storage and distribution of energy generated by renewable means.

5.0 CASE FOR THE APPLICANT

5.1 Having identified the relevant policy and development management policies in the preceding section of this planning statement, we now assess the extent to which the Application Scheme complies with them.

Section 38(6) Considerations

5.2 The Application Scheme must be determined in accordance with section 38(6) of the 2004 Act. Accordingly, we examine the policies of the Development Plan in order to determine whether the Application Scheme is in accordance with the Development Plan, when read as a whole, as well as examining the other material considerations (including the NPPF) which are also relevant to the determination of the application.

The Principle of Development.

5.3 The Development Plan comprises the Basildon District Council Local Plan adopted in 2007 ("BDCLP"). The only Saved policy applicable to the proposed battery site is BAS GB1 (The definition of the Green Belt) which refers to Green Belt boundaries as shown on the proposals map; the policy is out of date in the context of the approach to renewable energy projects.

5.4 There were draft policies on renewable energy in the withdrawn emerging Local Plan, as per below. These policies have considered the approach to renewable energy. Although these policies have been withdrawn, the approach to renewable energy was not a reason for withdrawal and so these policies indicate that the council intended to support proposals which can provide renewable energy.

5.5 Chapter 5 (vision & objectives), Strategic Objective SO3 (Minimise our Impact on the Environment) of the emerging (review) Basildon Borough Local Plan (BRPLP), states:

“Promote the efficient use of resources by embracing sustainable patterns of development includes.....increasing the use of renewable energy technologies and minimising pollution including greenhouse gas emissions.”

- 5.6 Policy CC7 (Renewable Energy Infrastructure), states:
“Proposals for renewable and low carbon energy schemes will be positively considered provided they are in a sustainable and accessible location and comply with all other policies within the plan.”
- 5.7 Paragraph 148 and 154 of NPPF are supportive of a variety of renewable energy technologies if its impacts on local amenities are acceptable. Strategic objective SO3 and policy and CC7 were consistent with the NPPF.
- 5.8 The application site is in the Green Belt. The location of the proposal is determined by the availability of the grid connection. Basildon District is 63% Green Belt and otherwise urban area (with the exception of some SSSI and wildlife sites). Since the network to which the BESS must connect to is in the Green Belt it is inevitable that a Green Belt location will need to be utilised if SO3 and CC7 objectives and those of the NPPF regarding renewable energy are to be met. In this context we consider below the BESS implications in respect of policy designation such as the Green Belt and other relevant factors.
- 5.9 Paragraph 151 of the Framework states that when located in the Green Belt many renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate development. It goes on to state that developers will need to demonstrate very special circumstances if projects are to proceed and states that very special circumstances may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources. We return to this point below but this approach supports the principle of development given the policy approach to the support of renewable energy schemes in the Local Plan.
- 5.10 The proposals are in accordance with regional, national and international objectives of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and seeking to address

and reduce global temperature as well as delivering a clean, reliable and efficient energy system for the UK, as explained below. So, in principle, there is support for the project both in terms of the NPPF and other national and international policy objectives which constitute material considerations. Although the proposal may be regarded as inappropriate development in the Green Belt, VSC, as demonstrated below, do exist, such that the grant of planning permission is justified.

- 5.11 Furthermore, as we demonstrate below there is no overriding conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt designation. Overall, for the reasons explained below, there is compliance with the planning policies of the development plan when considered overall. In addition, as discussed below, there are a wide variety of material benefits arising from the Application proposal, such that, if there is considered to be conflict with policies of the development plan, there are VSC which outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and any other harm resulting from the proposal.

National Need and Benefits

- 5.12 A separate report is submitted in support of the application that provides a more thorough review of the National Policy in respect of the provision of renewable energy and specifically the need and justification for additional battery storage facilities within the grid. What is clear is that there is an overriding need at both the national and international level to address climate change and to look at methods for generating and using energy from renewable energies. This need has most recently been endorsed earlier in November 2021 at the COP 26; at the conference it was confirmed that the Climate Change issue is an urgent matter.

Site Selection.

- 5.13 The selection of any site for energy generation and storage is dependent on capacity within the National Grid and UK Power Networks, and the availability of a grid connection determines whether or not a site is suitable.

- 5.14 It is standard energy industry practice that developers identify substations with appropriate grid connections with spare capacity, whether for flexible peaking plants, energy storage or intermittent solar/wind developments. The application is accompanied by a Site Selection Statement produced by the Applicant which explains the process they undertook in identifying the application site. The proposed development would deliver stored electricity directly into the regional grid via the existing network. Such generators outputting into the local distribution network are an important source of supply either at times of peak demand or when renewable generation is at a low level (e.g. reduced sunlight lows, calm weather), helping to increase security of supply in the local network and reduce the risk of blackouts.
- 5.15 Opportunities in the urban area are restricted by availability of land in general terms, land values are too high, problems of noise restrictions close to residential properties, and the existence of sites with grid connection potential. Since sites have to be close to grid connection it is necessary to utilise sites with appropriate connection opportunities and this means that locations outside of the urban area need to be used if climate change objectives are to be met. In the case of Basildon this also means sites in the Green Belt.
- 5.16 In this case, a local connection is available, and this explains why this site has been chosen.

Green Belt

- 5.17 The Application Site is located within the Green Belt. Policies of the NPPF support the delivery of such facilities, apply with equal weight both within and outside the Green Belt. The key locational factor for this development is the proximity to the pylon. Again, this point is cross referenced in the supporting Site Selection Statement.
- 5.18 Paragraphs 149 & 150 of the NPPF set out forms of development which are not inappropriate within the Green Belt. The proposed battery site is

inappropriate development within the Green Belt. Therefore, Very Special Circumstances (VSC), either individually or cumulatively, to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and any other harm caused by the inappropriate development must be demonstrated to justify the application's approval. We examine the issue of Green Belt land and VSC in more detail below.

- 5.19 Given that the district is in the Green Belt, any attempt to install renewable energy projects utilising grid connection will be situated in the Green Belt.

Openness of the Green Belt

- 5.20 The most important attribute of the Green Belt is its openness. Openness refers to not previously built on. The openness of the Green Belt has a *spatial aspect* as well as a *visual impact*.

- 5.21 The effect on openness is limited by the fact that 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 would be seen adjacent to the existing pylon on site. The battery units, customer control rooms, and DNO control buildings range between just over 4m in height (in terms of raised above the ground in the case of battery units) to just over 3m in height.

- 5.22 The immediate surrounding area is characterised as flat open fields. Views into the application site from Barleylands Road and Wash Road are well screened by established hedgerow. 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 BSF, and extends beyond the buildings towards White's Bridge to the east. The extent of the PROW that would be affected is a limited length 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 of the development. Landscaping is provided to mitigate views

glimpsed from the Roads to the west and south of the application site, as well the PROW. Views across the site are still achieved so the wider perception of openness is not lost. In this case, the harm to the *spatial aspect* of the openness of the Green Belt should be regarded as having 'limited weight.'

- 5.23 The application is accompanied by a Landscape Assessment. It considers that the landscape impact of the site is low and with no unacceptable impacts. The implications of this view of the battery units, customer control rooms, and DNO control buildings are analysed under sub heading landscaping in section 5, below. As stated above, a landscape planting plan has been provided with the application, and planting mitigation measures are proposed.

Five purposes of the Green Belt

- 5.24 In order to address the requirements of need for the BESS regarding the impact of development on national policy designations we have examined the five purposes of green belt and comment as follows:

- 1) To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas. The site is in open countryside. There is no physical connection with any settlement and this area is not a large built-up area. The land immediately adjacent to the application site comprises open fields, which is physically and visually unrelated to any settlement and has a strong affinity with the surrounding open countryside. The proposal would not constitute a form of urban sprawl of a large built up area that this purpose is seeking to constrain.
- 2) To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another; Similar to the previous point, the location of the application site prevents any issue of coalescence. The development would not result in a merging of towns. Extensive open tracts of Green Belt would remain.

- 3) To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; The proposed battery site is within open countryside. The proposal would result in a loss of a very small area of open countryside to the BESS. The proposed development would have only a 'limited effect' on the purpose of safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The proposed development is for a 40 year period only, after which the site will be restored to agricultural land. There would be no permanent loss. This purpose must be assessed in the context of the need for BESS which applies in both urban and rural areas.
- 4) To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; This is not an issue here and this purpose is not relevant to the case.
- 5) To assist in urban regeneration and other urban development; This development would prevent local power interruptions and would therefore contribute to the rural and urban economy by means of ensuring continuity of power supply and the creation of employment. It is a suitable site with a grid connection, which are not available in the urban area of Basildon, and so the application scheme could not take place in an urban area in any event.

5.25 For the reasons given above, it is considered that the BESS proposal would give rise to 'limited harm' by reason of loss of openness and from being contrary to one of the five Green Belt purposes of including land within the Green Belt. To the extent that harm relates to countryside (landscape), the issue is related to spatial matters only; there is no material harm to landscape.

5.26 The applicant considers there is no other harm caused by the inappropriate development.

Very Special Circumstances

5.27 Having established that the battery site is inappropriate development within the Green Belt, then the next step is to consider whether Very Special

Circumstances (VSC) can either individually or cumulatively outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and any other harm caused by the inappropriate development; in this context no other material harm has been identified.

5.28 The Very Special Circumstances (VSC) are:

- The extent of the significant climate change benefits of the proposed BESS
- Energy security and national need to support continued deployment of renewable energy.
- International, National and local policy support for renewable energy
- The locational requirements for the proposed BESS dictate that the site has to be in the open countryside; in the case of Basildon this necessitates a Green Belt location.
- Local Climate Strategy
- Investment and construction jobs; management and maintenance
- Biodiversity net gain

Extent of the climate change benefits of the proposed BSF

5.29 'Significant weight' is given to the extent of the climate change benefits of the proposed BESS. The need for such development demonstrates VSC and this weighs very heavily in the planning balance. As identified above, there is an urgent international/national/local need for more reliable, back up capacity. Both fossil fuel and old nuclear powers stations are closing, together with a high level of intermittent renewable energy coming onto the grid such as wind, solar and tidal which cannot be easily adjusted to meet short term fluctuations in demand and where supply can be affected by variations in sun and wind. Intermittent supply leads to a greater risk of power shortages at times of high demand and low output. BESS play a central role in the road to Net Zero, enabling the flexibility of supply that a renewables-led energy system needs.

5.30 There is significant support for the increase in renewable energy capacity in the NPPF Section 14 (Planning for Climate Change). Furthermore,

Paragraph 151 of NPPF states that VSC may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources.

- 5.31 Paragraph 148 of the NPPF indicates that any harm to the Green Belt should be given ‘substantial weight.’ However, in the planning balance, the weight given to any harm to the Green Belt will depend on the extent of the harm.
- 5.32 Energy security is concerned with providing a reliable and clean supply of energy to meet demand at an affordable price. Renewable energy and low carbon energy, energy efficiency, technological diversification of energy sources and less reliance on imported energy would result in significant economic, social and environmental benefits.

The Locational requirement for the proposed BSF

- 5.33 The locational requirements for such a development also demonstrate VSC. The nationwide and local review of potential BESS do explain the locational requirements for such development.
- 5.34 The application site is in the Green Belt. The location of the proposal is determined by the availability of the grid connection. Basildon District is 63% Green Belt and otherwise urban area (with the exception of some SSSI and wildlife sites). A key locational factor for this development is the proximity to the grid connection; this is the critical factor relating to the choice of the site. The 132Kv UKPN overhead electricity network mounted on metal pylons crosses the adjoining fields and this infrastructure is suitable both from the perspective that it has spare capacity to take on additional capacity at times of peak demand and from the fact that it supplies power directly to the regional network.
- 5.35 The Site Selection report submitted with the application details the limited opportunity for suitable and viable sites based on infrastructure which can accommodate the grid connections required. The proximity of the site to the

overhead cable, providing the point of connection, means that the requirement for a large electrical transmission cable is avoided. Thus, again, a Green Belt location is essential.

- 5.36 The critical factors in identifying a suitable site are the local and national demand for additional electricity supply as well as capacity within the local network to accommodate additional supply. A grid connection is key to the provider of a BESS. In addition, other important considerations for the site include its distance from sensitive receptors, including residential properties. The application site has been identified, following assessment of capacity at location's overhead electricity lines and pylon and then a review of potential sites, as the most suitable available for the proposed development without extensive reinforcement. These factors limit the search for suitable alternative sites outside the Green Belt (bearing in mind the district is largely in the Green Belt and with the remainder of the non-urban area are subject to environmental designations. If the Council seek to contribute to climate change it will be necessary to utilise locations in the Green Belt.
- 5.37 Although the proposed site is located within the Green Belt it is generally more suitable to locate BESS's away from urban areas, firstly, because such locations provide a viable opportunity to locate the facility and, secondly, to minimise the prevalence of noise and other amenity impacts.
- 5.38 Energy infrastructure is often located in rural and Green Belt areas. Power stations, overhead electricity lines and their towers (pylons), substations and above ground installations associated with pipelines, are situated in these locations in order to deliver reliable, secure electricity supplies to virtually all of the country. In this context, it is not surprising that a grid connection will be in rural location adjacent to centres of population which require the energy the infrastructure providers.
- 5.39 The Site Selection Statement accompanying the application demonstrates that after consideration of land proximate to the substations with capacity in

the vicinity of Basildon, that there are no more suitable alternative sites outside the Green Belt.

International, National and Local policy support for renewable energy

- 5.40 As referenced above, Chapter 5 (vision & objectives), Strategic Objective SO3 (Minimise our Impact on the Environment) of the emerging (review) Basildon Borough Local Plan (BRPLP) sought to promote the use of renewable energy technologies and minimising pollution including greenhouse gas emissions.
- 5.41 As referenced above, Policy CC7 (Renewable Energy Infrastructure) of the Emerging BRPLP sought to promote and support renewable and low carbon energy.
- 5.42 The emerging BRPLP on climate change and renewable energy is in line with national policy and moderate weight can be given to the policy given its consistency with national policy and the progress of the Local Plan.

Locally declared Climate Change Emergency

- 5.43 Basildon DC has not declared a climate change emergency. However, Basildon Council Draft Climate and Action Plan (adopted July 2021) has set a 2030 zero carbon emissions target by 2030, and net zero emissions by 2050. The Council will be undertaking further consultation on their more detailed Action Plan.
- 5.44 Clearly, the application scheme will help the Council to fulfil the objectives set out in the Action Plan. The Council's strategy to combat climate change refers to key areas of focus which include the provision of appropriate infrastructure to accommodate a change in energy generation and transformation.

- 5.45 BESS are appropriate infrastructure. BESS provide the means to store energy at peak production and release to match peak demand so as to maximise the benefits of renewable energy production.

Investment and construction jobs; management and maintenance

- 5.46 The development will generate new investment and construction jobs during the construction process. Similarly, once constructed and operational there will be a number of additional jobs created that will entail the ongoing management and maintenance of the facility. The economic benefits such as these are widely accepted as being attributed significant weight in the decision making process and are also part of the VSC.

Bio-diversity net gain.

- 5.47 The proposal will deliver biodiversity net gain and therefore, this is an additional environmental benefit over the current situation and should, therefore, be attributed weight in the decision making process of forms part of the VSC case. The accompanying Ecology report explains how this is delivered and the proposed landscaping has been developed to deliver bio-diversity benefits.

Summary of VSC case.

- 5.48 There are a variety of factors identified in the VSC case. These factors clearly demonstrate the environmental and climate change/renewable energy policy benefits which will be met by the application scheme. These policies overcome the Green Belt policy issues.

Design

- 5.49 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 make a positive contribution to the street scene. 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.

5.50 The design of the proposed buildings and associated infrastructure is designed with functionality and purpose in mind and is small scale and would be seen adjacent to the existing Farm and Equestrian Centre. The content of the scheme is no more than is required to deliver the storage. The design has been influenced by wider environmental objectives including landscaping, drainage and biodiversity and therefore the policy objectives are met.

Heritage.

5.51 A Historic Environment Design Based Assessment (HEDBA) accompanies the application. 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.

5.52 The HEDBA Report refers to the archaeological, built heritage, and historic landscape character.

Archaeology.

5.53 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 this assessment.”

5.54 Paragraph 6.1.4 of the report recommends that:

“Archaeological monitoring be undertaken during the construction phase of the BESS.” This scope and methodology will need to be undertaken during the construction phase of the BESS. This scope and methodology will need to be agreed with the archaeological advisor to the LPA before any work is undertaken and can be secured by condition.”

Built heritage.

5.55 Paragraphs 6.1.6 to 6.1.7 of the report demonstrates 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 therefore considered to accord with the Town and Country Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and comply with the NPPF and Policy HE1 of the emerging BRPLP.”

Heritage Landscape Character.

- 5.56 Paragraph 6.1.8 of the report demonstrates that:
“Although the proposals would result in a change within the function of the site, it would result in a minor and limited localised change to a field considered to be of negligible to low heritage significance. The legibility of the wider landscape would be retained.”
- 5.57 As such the Application Scheme has no impact on the heritage.

Landscaping

- 5.58 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 and is not subject to the policy text of paragraph 174 a) of the NPPF. The threshold for significant harm is therefore set high. The application site is located such that it lies within an equestrian extensive landscape and its use for the Application Scheme would have no material impact on the existing landscape and character. The application is accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA). A landscape planting plan has been provided with the application.
- 5.59 The topography of the site and surrounding area is flat. The immediate area is characterised by fields which consists of an equestrian dominated landscape, the land on the opposite side of Barleylands Road is used to provide football pitches. The landscape is flat.

- 5.60 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 farmstead and equestrian buildings and facilities and erodes the rural character of the surroundings area.
- 5.61 The wider locality consists of a recycling centre on the opposite side of the road to the proposed BESS to the north-west of the site, and a large housing estate to the south of the site. The closest dwellings are approximately 275m from the body of the application site.
- 5.62 The immediate surrounding area is characterised as flat open fields. Views into the application site from Barleylands Road and Wash Road are well screened by established hedgerow.
- 5.63 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.
- 5.64 Landscaping is provided to mitigate views glimpsed from the Roads to the west and south of the application site, as well the PROW. Views across the site are still achieved so the wider perception of openness is not lost.
- 5.65 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.”

Biodiversity.

5.66 The application is accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. Para 174 (Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment) 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.

5.67 Paragraph 6.1.1 of the report demonstrates that:
“Based on the data collected and information provided about the proposed development, it is anticipated that impacts to species and habitats identified within this report could be avoided or mitigated and enhanced. This can be secured through appropriately worded planning conditions.”

5.68 Paragraph 6.1.2 of the report concludes that:
“There are no insurmountable constraints to development from an ecology or biodiversity perspective and the proposals, therefore, would accord with paragraph 174 of the NPPF and Policy NE4 of the emerging BRPLP.

Impact Upon Agricultural Land

5.69 Para 174 (Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment) of the Framework refers to the loss of the most versatile agricultural land.

5.70 The development would take place on existing Grade 3 agricultural land. Grade 3 agricultural land is defined as ‘good to moderate quality agricultural land.’ It is not clear whether the application site falls into 3a or 3b agricultural land. 3a is the better of the two sub-classifications. The land is not significant in size and is not physically developed. It is not actively farmed at present.

- 5.71 The proposal would not result in the permanent loss of a significant amount of most versatile agricultural land. The proposals, therefore, accord with Para 174 of the NPPF.
- 5.72 The proposed development is for a 40 year period only, after which the site will be restored for agricultural use. The proposed development will be designed to ensure that the land remains suitable for agricultural use until it is restored as such and control of the site returned to the agricultural landowner.

Highway and Access

- 5.73 Para 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 refused if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impact of the development would be severe.
- 5.74 The planning application is accompanied by a Transport Statement (TS) to review the transport implications of the proposed BESS. The application site would be accessed from the existing access to White's Farm and the Equestrian Centre, off Barleylands Road.
- 5.75 Paragraph 5.4 of the TS demonstrates that:
"The vehicle access is suitable during construction and once the site is operational."
- 5.76 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."

- 5.77 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

- 5.78 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.

- 5.79 The planning application is accompanied by a site-specific FRA.

- 5.80 Paragraph 5.3 of the FRA demonstrates that:
“The proposed BSF is at an acceptable level of flood risk, subject to the recommended flood mitigation strategies being implemented.”

- 5.81 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.

Sustainable Development

- 5.82 Paragraph 2 of the Framework refers to the presumption in favour of sustainable development with regards to the three dimensions of sustainability, namely economic, social, and environmental.

5.83 It is considered that the Application Scheme contributes to the three dimensions of sustainability by virtue of the following:

- a) Economic role: This development would prevent local and national power interruptions and would therefore contribute to the rural and urban economy by means of electricity storage and creating employment. The development will also facilitate greater volumes of renewable energy to be connected to the grid network providing economic and employment benefits to the wider renewable energy sector and supporting the move to a prosperous green economy. In doing so it will create jobs, again an important aspect of the economic role of sustainability. The scheme accords with Para 81 of the NPPF which states that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business need and wider opportunities for development.
- b) Social role: Reducing pollution through enabling of renewable energy development and creation of jobs clearly helps to fulfil the social role of sustainability.
- c) Environmental role: Significant environmental gain of reducing carbon emissions and reversing climate change would be achieved without causing a detrimental impact on the environment, and 10% bio-diversity net gain.

5.84 Accordingly, it is considered that, overall, the Application Scheme can achieve sustainable development.

6.0 PLANNING BALANCE EXERCISE

- 6.1 Following our assessment of the Application Scheme and its relationship with the policies of the Development Plan and the NPPF, we are now able to carry out a planning balance exercise.
- 6.2 The Development Plan for the purposes of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2014 (“the 2014 Act”) is the Basildon District Council Local Plan adopted in 2007 (“BDCLP”).
- 6.3 There is an urgent national need for more reliable grid balancing capacity to increase deployment of renewable energy; this is discussed in the additional report to this statement. There is too an identified local need for additional security of electricity supply to support essential infrastructure for major local electricity consumers, including large businesses and community facilities within the area, including neighbouring authority areas. Significant weight is attached to this issue, which forms part of the VSC justifying the grant of planning permission in the Green Belt.
- 6.4 Harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness must be given substantial weight. The proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Paragraph 151 of NPPF says VSC may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources. The applicant considers that the climate change benefits of the proposed battery site should be afforded significant weight and are considered to be sufficient justification, providing the appropriate VSC to grant planning permission.
- 6.5 Renewable energy policy applies equally both in and outside the Green Belt.
- 6.6 The locational requirements for such a development also demonstrate VSC. The key locational factor for this development has been the proximity to the grid connection.

- 6.7 Paragraph 148 of the NPPF indicates that any harm to the Green Belt should be given 'substantial weight'.
- 6.8 For the reasons given in section 6 of this statement, it is considered that the proposal would give rise to 'limited harm' by reason of loss of openness and from being contrary to one of the five Green Belt purposes of including land within the Green Belt. Only a very small portion of land is affected and this is adjoining the mixed commercial and leisure use. There would be no perceptible loss of openness. The LVA concluded that the development proposals will cause some landscape and visual harm, but this will be contained and limited.
- 6.9 The applicant has considered the effect on landscape, ecology, highway safety, living conditions, flood risk and drainage and heritage assets. Subject to conditions and appropriate mitigation, there would be no negative effects arising from the proposal in respect of these matters. Consequently, enhancement is achieved. Therefore, the Applicant considers there is no other harm caused by the inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- 6.10 The Applicant considers that the climate change benefits of the proposed BESS site demonstrate VSC and weighs heavily in favour of the scheme, the fact that any other harm caused by the inappropriate development can be made acceptable, the locational requirements for such development and the absence of alternatives demonstrate VSC and should be afforded significant weight, and the environmental, economic and social benefits of the BESS are sufficient to outweigh the substantial harm to the Green Belt.
- 6.11 For the reasons given in section 6 of this statement, it is considered that Very Special Circumstances outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and any other harm caused by the inappropriate development. If the Council want to contribute to climate change they will have to use Green Belt.
- 6.12 Accordingly, the planning balance exercise which is set out in Appendix 1 to the Planning Statement, demonstrates that the application scheme is in accordance with the development plan as a whole and, therefore, in

accordance with the requirements of s.38(6) of the 2004 Act, planning permission should be granted, unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.

- 6.13 There are no other material considerations that tell against the scheme.
- 6.14 The Development Plan is out of date in the context of the Framework; the Green Belt policy only defines the boundaries of the policy and does not include the reference to renewable energy set out in the Framework. Presumption in favour of sustainable development means approving development proposals that accord with the relevant policies of the up-to-date local plan taken as a whole.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 Planning law requires that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan as a whole unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

7.2 The proposal is in accord with energy policies of the NPPF. Development plan policy allows for planning permission to be granted in the Green Belt if Very Special Circumstances (VSC) are demonstrated.

7.3 In this context, it is considered that other VSC also exist. The VSC are:

- The extent of the climate change benefits of the proposed BESS
- Energy Security
- Locational requirements for the proposed BESS and the absence of alternatives outside of the Green Belt
- International and National policy support for renewable energy
- Local Climate Change Action Plan
- Investment and construction jobs; management and maintenance
- Net ecological enhancement

7.4 The VSC clearly outweigh the harm that is caused by the inappropriateness of the development in the Green Belt.

7.5 Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that planning permission be granted subject to appropriate conditions.

Appendix 1 – Planning Balance Exercise

Issue	Commentary	Weight
S.36(6) of the 2014 Act	The Development Plan is out-of-date. The Local Plan doesn't reflect the NPPF on renewables in the Green Belt (GB) and it simply defines the GB boundaries and therefore the Local Plan is out-of-date.	Planning permission can be granted if VSC are proven (VSC outweigh the harm to the GB and any other harm caused by the inappropriate development).
Green Belt	The impact of the design and layout on openness and one of the five purposes of including land in the Green Belt	Limited adverse impact on openness and one of the five purposes; limited weight given to harm to the Green Belt caused by the inappropriate development but this is limited to a very small area of the overall Green Belt and is in the context of a range of mixed uses.
Locational requirement	National and local alternative site search	Significant VSC
Energy	The application would contribute to urgent national/local need for more reliable, back up capacity	Significant VSC
Landscaping	The application has had regard to the need to provide adequate landscaping.	Neutral
Highways and access	The Highways Report	No material impact

	confirms that the proposal would not harm the safety and access.	
Biodiversity	The Ecology Report confirms that the proposal will provide net ecological enhancement.	Moderate weight
Drainage	The Drainage Report confirms that the proposal is at an acceptable levels of flood risk, subject to the recommended flood risk strategies being implemented.	Neutral
Heritage	Ni impact on identified heritage assets	Neutral
Sustainable development	3 aspects	Significant
Economic	Economic benefit during construction. Benefit in helping to maintain supply at peak times	Moderate weight

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