

Application Number:	P/FUL/2022/00788		
Webpage:	https://planning.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/		
Site address:	Land at E 390615 N 109030 Hyde Farm Salisbury Road Pimperne		
Proposal:	Install eight rapid electric vehicle charging stations. Form new access road, entrance and road to access charging stations. Form eight EV charging bays, along with associated equipment.		
Applicant name:	InstaVolt Ltd		
Case Officer:	Simon Sharp		
Ward Member(s):	Cllr Jespersen		
Publicity expiry date:	16 January 2023	Officer site visit date:	Various – most recently 11 th November 2022
Decision due date:	31 January 2023	Ext(s) of time:	31 January 2023

1.0 Reason for referral to Committee

- 1.1 The application is being referred to members following an objection by the Parish Council.

2.0 Summary of recommendation

- 2.1 Grant permission subject to conditions.

3.0 Reason for the recommendation

- 3.1 This is a development that, on balance, is sustainable. There is a degree of conflict with some aspects of both the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 (2016) and the Pimperne Neighbourhood Plan First Review (2022) and accordance with others. The NPPF is a material consideration as is national government strategy on EV infrastructure. When considered against the development plan as a whole the benefits of the development are considered to outweigh the adverse impacts which are not considered, with the appropriate mitigation secured by conditions, to be significant.
- 3.2 The electric charge point network with its associated rapid charging infrastructure will be critical to meeting future demand, encouraging uptake of EVs as well as addressing concerns regarding charge point availability, reliability and ease of use. The Local Plan recognises the need for more sustainable forms of development that are adequately served by infrastructure (including transport solutions). The Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan also recognise the need to address the causes and effects of climate change.

3.3 Overall, this is a sustainable development.

4.0 **Key planning issues**

Issue	Conclusion
Principle of development	Both development plan documents (the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan First Review) are silent on EV charging infrastructure, but there is a clear need for such developments, there is a lack of rapid chargers in the locality and this location is on the primary road network. There is accordance with the wider principles of combatting climate change in the development plan and national planning policy.
Economic benefits	There are economic benefits to the rural economy from providing the needed EV charging infrastructure.
Design, impact on landscape and heritage assets.	There will be harm to the AONB's landscape character and setting of the lynchets.
Impact on amenity	No residential amenity issues subject to the imposition of conditions.
Access and Parking	No highway safety or highways impact subject to conditions securing the provision of the access, parking and manoeuvring areas prior to first occupancy and retention thereafter.
EIA	Falls within AONB but not EIA development.

5.0 **Description of Site**

- 5.1 The site is on the east side of the A354 Salisbury to Blandford Forum (and then Dorchester/Weymouth) road. It is within the parish of Pimperne. It extends to approximately 700m² and is part of a larger parcel of land in agricultural use, albeit not grazed at any time when the case officer visited. This larger area of land is dissected by an existing metalled access to the Archway Nursery and Pre-School, located to the north of the site. The site slopes gradually upwards from the A354's level and then more steeply eastward.
- 5.2 The site's road frontage boundary is marked by a field species hedge of approximately 1.7m in height. The other boundaries of the site are unmarked but the larger parcel of land's boundaries is also marked by hedges.
- 5.3 The A354 is two lanes wide, subject to a 30mph speed limit and flanked by segregated footways. There are no lighting columns. Beyond the road are four dwellings with windows serving habitable rooms facing the site: No. 2 and 3, Collingwood Close are bungalows, as is 13, Willow Park, whilst No. 14 Willow Park is a dormer bungalow. The latter are within 2m of the A354's footway. A further dwelling lies to the south of the site.

6.0 Description of Development

- 6.1 This is a full application for the erection of a public electric vehicle charging station. This will consist of eight 120kw rapid charges each offering an 80% charge in circa 20 minutes.
- 6.2 In addition to the chargers the station consists of metalled charging bays, the associated vehicular manoeuvring and accessway, a combined feeder pillar/meter box and a substation. The substation is proposed at the southern end of the site. This is essentially a box with a 2.8m by 2.8m footprint and a roof approximately 2.3m above ground level. The feeder pillar/meter box would extend to 550mm in width by 2.6m in length and 1.8m in height and would lie between the substation and the charging bays.
- 6.3 The charging station would be illuminated and open to the public 24 hours per day, 7 days per week (albeit the illumination is activated for only when the chargers are in use). No employees would be based on site, albeit it would be remotely monitored, serviced periodically and there would be remote assistance for customers.
- 6.4 No other ancillary or primary uses are proposed i.e. no shop or café is proposed, nor covered waiting area. The existing access from the A354 to the Archway Nursery and Pre-School would be used.
- 6.5 Additional documents were submitted during the processing of the application: -
 - a) Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA)
 - b) Archaeology Assessment
 - c) Noise Survey and Report
 - d) Lighting Strategy
 - e) Drainage Strategy.
 - f) Landscaping plan (amended to respond to the Council's Senior Landscaping Architect's comments).

7.0 Relevant Planning History

- 7.1 There is no relevant planning history.

8.0 Constraints

- 8.1 There are lynchets (ancient field terraces) visible immediately to the east of the site.
- 8.2 The site lies within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and an Internal Dark Sky Reserve (IDSR).
- 8.3 All of the site is within the JBA mapped area of groundwaters being within 0.025 and 0.5m of the surface with consequent risk of groundwater flooding.
- 8.4 The site is in flood zone 1 (lowest probability of fluvial flooding) and is also zoned as low risk of pluvial (surface water) flooding, albeit the A354 adjacent to the site's frontage is in flood zones 2 (medium probability) and 3 (high) for fluvial (river) flooding and at medium and high risk of pluvial (surface water) flooding.

9.0 Consultations

9.1 Pimperne Parish Council

Object: -

- a) This area is of historical value, the site on the A354 goes against our sites allocated for development in the 'made' Pimperne Neighbourhood Plan First Review.
- b) The already hazardous access road will create more problems on this site.
- c) This area is part of the AONB and as part of the dark skies initiative there should not be any form of lighting introduced here.
- d) We accept that there should be more charging points made but this is completely the wrong area for this to be introduced into a rural village.
- e) The belief is that this will create noise and light pollution in addition to traffic problems.
- f) The landscape plan shows how elevated the proposed development is and would be visible from the road and an intrusion to the view as well as the gabion wall which would not be in keeping with the surrounding land.
- g) We strongly object and fully support the comments made by the Cranborne Chase AONB.

9.2 Cranborne Chase and West Wilshire Downs AONB Officer

Object

- a) There would be quite a lot of basic industrial structures on site, excluding any signage. The applicant has not applied the AONB's guidance on colour in the landscape to mitigate the effects of this proposal.
- b) The application presumes that there is adequate power supply to the site and that there would be no operations to achieve that which would impact on the local landscape or the character of the area. Without precise information that seems to be too big a presumption to make.
- c) I note from the specification for the charging unit that the unit makes noise, and that the level anticipated is 65dB. This is quite a significant noise level and as I also read that there would be no time restrictions on the operation of the site, that indicates this could be a 24 hour operation along with the generation of that level of noise.
- d) Whilst this might appear, at a time when everyone is conscious of the need to reduce carbon emissions, to be a laudable project it does conflict with the Neighbourhood Plan and, equally worryingly, appears to be a new service station on a greenfield site. Clearly that conflicts with the purposes of AONB designation, namely conserving and enhancing natural beauty
- e) The AONB Partnership does, therefore, have severe reservations about the proposal and strongly advises that the application should be refused.

9.3 Dorset CPRE

Object: -

- a) Conflict with Neighbourhood Plan (outside of settlement limits in the countryside) - The plan to install eight electric vehicle charging stations is not considered appropriate in the countryside nor is there an overriding need for it to be located in the countryside.
- b) Archaeology - When considering where housing could be located (and this should apply also to non-housing developments), the main reasons given in the Neighbourhood Plan in rejecting the land south of Hyde Farm site as a potential housing option included the potential archaeological interest (Iron Age lynchets).
- c) Dark skies - The proposed development site is within the Cranborne Chase AONB. This is one of the darkest parts of the south of England. This aspect has been considered in the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan and guidance on lighting is set out in the Plan's Policy LC: Landscape Character, section e) which states that "Street lighting and flood lights should be avoided as generally inappropriate, having due regard to the significance of the expanse of dark night skies for the AONB. Where these cannot be avoided, they should be designed in accordance with the guidance set out in the Cranborne AONB Position Statement Number 1 on Light Pollution and Fact Sheet 7 - Good External Lighting". The application should demonstrate more clearly that this site will adhere to this guidance.
- d) Noise – The specification for the charging unit shows that the level of noise emanating from the unit is likely to be 65dB. It is not clear for how long this unit will operate throughout the day and night and as such could pose to be at an unacceptable level. According to WHO, long-term average exposure to levels above 55 dB can trigger elevated blood pressure and heart attacks.
- e) Appearance - In all possibility, a canopy for the site would probably need to be installed to give some protection to users from adverse weather when using the charging stations. This would give the appearance of being like a filling station and as such is incompatible with Pimperne's Neighbourhood Plan which requires that there is no further development on the eastern side of the A354.

9.4 Natural England

The development lies within the Cranborne Chase AONB. You should therefore consider seeking advice of the AONB Team in accordance with your agreed protocol. Their knowledge of the location and wider landscape setting of the development should help to confirm whether or not it would impact significantly on the purposes of the designation. They will also be able to advise whether the development accords with the aims and policies set out in the AONB management plan.

Natural England hold no further comment on the proposal.

9.5 DC Highways

No objection subject to conditions.

9.6 DC Senior Landscape Architect

- a) With regard to the proposed lighting scheme's impact on the International Dark Sky Reserve; and the DC Archaeologist with regard to the impact of the scheme on the adjacent historic assets I consider that the submitted AVRs and planting proposals (subject to the revisions proposed below) evidence that the proposed development could, subject to amendments:
- i. Conserve the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB (NPPF 176)
 - ii. Be visually attractive as a result of good layout and landscaping (NPPF 130 b))
 - iii. Be sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation and change (NPPF 130 c))
 - iv. Take opportunities to incorporate trees (NPPF 131)
 - v. mitigate its adverse landscape and visual impacts (NDLP Policy 4)
 - vi. incorporate important landscape features into the landscape scheme (NDLP Policy 4)
 - vii. use existing tree cover, hedgerows and new landscaping to minimise any remaining adverse impacts to an acceptable level (PNP Policy LC b))
 - viii. Incorporate suitable landscaping to avoid creating a hard and visually prominent edge (PNP LC f))
- b) The amendments were:-
- i. To provide an additional 2No. Maples trees (*Acer Campestre*) and 1No. Oak tree (*Quercus robur*)
 - ii. To adjust the position of trees so that they are centrally placed between the proposed lighting columns to minimise conflicts and the need for canopy reduction as the trees grow to maturity
 - iii. To provide a grade separated connection to the existing footpath on the east side of A354 Salisbury Road to aid safe pedestrian access to and from the proposed facility and avoid conflicts with cars accessing the site and the adjacent nursery
 - iv. To extend the proposed hedgerow along the eastern boundary of the site to aid containment and reduce its visual impact on those accessing the nursery site.
- c) These suggested amendments have now been made except for a grade separated connection to the existing footpath.

9.7 DC Planning Policy

- a) It is not in itself a 'renewable energy scheme', as there is no renewable energy generation proposed. Therefore, in the context of policy 20 of the Local Plan, consideration will need to be given as to whether it has been demonstrated that there is an 'overriding need' for the proposed development's location in the countryside. Such a justification could include a sequential assessment of potential sites, assessment of current EV facilities and EV facilities in the pipeline, and some market research to show that such a facility will be used.
- b) The case officer should also have regard to National Planning Policy, which emphasises the importance of low carbon energy projects (such as EV charging stations) in reducing carbon emissions. The potential benefits of the proposal in relation to its contribution towards reductions in greenhouse gas emissions should be weighed against any resulting adverse impacts, and the need for landscape and visual impacts to be either acceptable or made so.

9.8 DC Archaeology

- a) It is good to see that the archaeological assessment report has been amended following the site meeting. I confirm that I agree that, if consent were granted, there would be no need for mitigation for impact on below-ground archaeology. This is referred to in paragraph 6.1.3 of the November version of the assessment report.
- b) However, I am still concerned about the visual impact of the scheme, including the proposed trees, on the large lynchet upslope from the site of the proposed development. In my view, the lynchet is quite an imposing sight when viewed from the adjacent road and pavement, and I would expect that the proposed trees in particular would interrupt this view.

9.9 DC Environmental Protection

No objection. Please apply the reporting of unexpected contamination to any permission which may be granted.

10.0 Other representations received

Total - Objections	Total - No Objections	Total - Comments
22	0	0

10.1 Objections were received on the following grounds: -

No need

- a) There is no need for this development in this countryside location.

Highway safety

- b) Will further endanger pedestrians and traffic on already busy road junction and traffic to nursery school.

Landscape character, heritage, visual impact and wildlife

- c) This development is out of character with a small rural village. It will be next to agricultural barns and a former farm house now a nursery. There is a distinctive group of older and primarily cob and thatched properties and is completely out of context with the look of the village.
- d) Development will inflict irreversible damage on wildlife and landscape in an area of outstanding natural beauty.

Dark Skies

- e) There will be significant light intrusion in this International Dark Sky Reserve and therefore should be refused.

Archaeology

- f) The site proposed is on a historical and sensitive site where there are Medieval Iron Strip Lynchets, requiring an archaeological survey.

Lack of supporting infrastructure

- g) There is little or no local infrastructure to support this application in the way of toilets, rest facilities etc. while drivers wait for their vehicles to charge.

Net adverse impact on environment and climate change

- h) The environmental damage that will be caused by destruction of countryside and the artificial light and noise pollution goes against the reason for installing charging stations and a greener planet.

11.0 Environmental Impact Assessment

- 11.1 The site is within a “sensitive area” as defined by the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. The development does not fall within Schedule 1 of these Regulations and neither is it one of the listed Energy developments in Schedule 2 (3). However, it could be considered to be an Urban Development Project under Schedule 2 (10) as it does involve the formation of a car park.
- 11.2 There are no thresholds for Schedule 2 development within “sensitive areas”. Therefore, the proposal was screened but it was concluded that it was not EIA development.

12.0 Relevant development plan policies

12.1 Saved Policies of the District Wide Local Plan (2003)

The site is outside of the saved settlement limits,

12.2 Adopted North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 (2016)

The site is in the countryside and within an AONB. The following policies are considered to be relevant to this proposal:

- Policy 1 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- Policy 2 - Core Spatial Strategy
- Policy 3 – Climate Change
- Policy 4 - The Natural Environment
- Policy 5 - The Historic Environment
- Policy 11 – The Economy
- Policy 12 – Retail, Commercial and Other Commercial Developments.
- Policy 20 – The Countryside
- Policy 22 – Renewable and Local Carbon Energy
- Policy 23 – Parking
- Policy 24 – Design
- Policy 25 – Amenity

12.3 Pimperne Neighbourhood Plan First Review (2022)

The site is in the countryside, outside of Pimperne's settlement limits in the Plan. The following policies are considered relevant: -

- Policy LC – Landscape Character
- Policy LDC – Locally Distinct Character.

13.0 Other material considerations

13.1 National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

Noting the following sections:-

- 1. Introduction
- 2. Achieving sustainable development
- 3. Plan-making
- 4. Decision-making
- 6. Building a strong and competitive economy
- 7. Ensuring the vitality of town centres.
- 8. Promoting healthy and safe communities
- 9. Promoting sustainable transport
- 11. Making effective use of land
- 12. Achieving well-designed places
- 14. Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
- 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- 16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

13.2 Cranborne Chase AONB Management Plan 2019 – 2024

The relevant sections are cited in the Assessment section of this report.

13.3 Cranborne Chase AONB Landscape Character Assessment 2003

The relevant sections are cited in the Assessment section of this report.

13.4 Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Position Statement Number 1 Light Pollution

The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty derives much of its beauty from its qualities of tranquillity, remoteness and cultural heritage. Light pollution has the potential to erode and destroy that tranquillity and sense of remoteness. It is, therefore, considered appropriate that all artificial external lighting within its borders, or within the setting of the AONB, should be muted, screened, and the minimum required. Complementary to this position statement and taken as a material consideration too is the Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Fact Sheet & Good Practice Notes 7 – External Lighting.

13.5 Taking charge: the electric vehicle infrastructure strategy (2022)

This is the Government's national strategy for the provision of EV charging infrastructure.

14.0 Human rights

14.1 Article 6 - Right to a fair trial.

Article 8 - Right to respect for private and family life and home.

The first protocol of Article 1 Protection of property.

This recommendation is based on adopted Development Plan policies, the application of which does not prejudice the Human Rights of the applicant or any third party.

15.0 Public Sector Equalities Duty

15.1 As set out in the Equalities Act 2010, all public bodies, in discharging their functions must have "due regard" to this duty. There are 3 main aims:-

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people
- Encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where participation is disproportionately low.

15.2 Whilst there is no absolute requirement to fully remove any disadvantage the Duty is to have “regard to” and remove or minimise disadvantage and in considering the merits of this planning application the planning authority has taken into consideration the requirements of the Public Sector Equalities Duty.

15.3 The site is intended to only be used by motorists. However, this obviously includes use by older people and/or the disabled. The layout and charging bays appear to be accessible for all i.e. the bays are 3m in width and metalled, and the charging holsters are accessible from, say, a wheelchair. However, the centre of the visual display panel is 1.5m above ground level. Part M of the Building Regulations requires “controls that need close vision” to be 1.2m to 1.4m above floor level. Whilst the Building Regulations are unlikely to apply to these installations, the height of the displays is noted and this matter has been considered in the overall assessment.

16.0 Financial benefits

What	Amount / value
Material Considerations	
Employment during construction	Support construction sector.
Employment during operational phase	Employment in the remote monitoring and customer assistance areas is unlikely to increase as a result of this single development. Negligible benefits.

17.0 Climate Implications

17.1 There will be embedded energy costs derived from the development phase.

17.2 Electric vehicles are considered to contribute to combatting climate change when assessed against their internal combustion engine equivalents. A local charging network decreases the need for travel to more distant charging stations.

18.0 Planning Assessment

Introduction

18.1 The development is considered to be a sui generis use falling outside of the classes defined within the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987. It is not a “Major” development for the purposes of assessment of proposals within the AONB.

Principle

18.2 Policy 20 of the Local Plan applies to countryside locations. It advises development will only be permitted if: -

- a) it is of a type appropriate in the countryside, as set out in the relevant policies of the Local Plan, summarised in Figure 8.5; or

- b) for any other type of development, it can be demonstrated that there is an 'overriding need' for it to be located in the countryside

18.3 Figure 8.5 includes a list of policies and development types. These include policy 3 – Climate Change and “renewable energy schemes”. Policy 3 is not limited to renewable energy schemes; it is much wider in scope and advises that “development proposals within the District (North Dorset) should seek to reduce greenhouse gas emissions including through appropriately sited renewable and low carbon energy developments.” It is silent on EV charging stations, but it is suggested that this is solely because such developments were not being proposed at the time of the Plan’s adoption.

18.4 Nevertheless, figure 8.5 is explicit in limiting the types of development to “renewable energy schemes” and an EV charging station cannot be considered to be such a development. There is, as a result, a degree of discordance with the development plan as the Neighbourhood Plan is also silent on such proposals for public charging (the policies only refer to charging points for new dwellings).

18.5 The EV Charging Station element would fill a regional ‘gap’ in charging infrastructure. Pimperne currently has no rapid chargers and Blandford Forum currently only has four rapid chargers according to Zap Map. There are rapid charging stations in Salisbury and Poole/Bournemouth, but it is clear that there is a lack of such facilities in the Blandford area especially close to the A354 and A350 corridors. The latest data for the Blandford to Salisbury stretch of the A354 indicates that it carries over 9,000 vehicles per day.

18.6 Government figures evidence that EV ownership is on an upward trajectory with many forecasters predicting exponential growth over the next two decades. 2021 saw the biggest annual increase in number of registrations, with more than 395,000 battery-electric cars registered, showing a growth of 92% on 2020. The data for 2022 has not yet been released but, as of the end of November 2022 there were more than 620,000 battery-electric cars.

18.7 The Committee on Climate Change has recommended that the market for EVs be 100% by 2035 at the latest to meet the new 2050 net zero target. In November 2020, the Government announced a ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars from 2030, ten years earlier than previously required. As EVs replace combustion engine vehicles as the main transportation solution for mass transit, a significant barrier to be addressed is the provision of a viable EV charging network including new EV charging infrastructure at appropriate sustainable locations along the national and regional highway network.

18.8 The increase in EV range and the use of home and workplace/destination chargers will temper the need for en-route charging stations. Nevertheless, it is estimated that the UK will need a minimum of 300,000 public charge points when the sale of new conventionally fuelled cars and vans is prohibited in 2030. As of April 2022, there were 32,000 (11% of that required). The government advises that the need could be up to 700,000 public charge points if people’s travel habits change, but 300,000 is a robust minimum requirement.

- 18.9 In light of the above, the electric charge point network with its associated charging infrastructure will be critical to meeting future demand, encouraging uptake of EVs as well as addressing concerns regarding charge point availability, reliability and ease of use.
- 18.10 Whilst policy 3 of the Local Plan is silent on EV charging infrastructure, the introductory chapter setting out the vision for North Dorset does state that, by 2031, the district will “have more sustainable forms of development that are adequately served by infrastructure (including transport solutions)...” The Local Plan also recognises that the need to address the causes and effects of climate change is a district-wide issue and that one of the challenges to address this would be to develop a more sustainable transport network.
- 18.11 This objective has consistency with the NPPF, paragraph 152, the leading statement of section 15, stating “the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate.....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 and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.” This is a material consideration afforded significant weight in the overall balance.
- 18.12 In this regard, the application site is situated along the A354 which is part of the Primary Route Network of England which “...designates roads between places of traffic importance across the UK, with the aim of providing easily identifiable routes to access the whole of the country.” Furthermore, research shows that unless charging facilities are provided in rural areas, rural communities will be left behind on EVs.
- 18.13 In terms of location, the Charging Station would be sited along a well-used and important main road, providing an accessible location for EV drivers using this route.
- 18.14 Such out of town locations provide accessibility for those people using the primary routes, especially in cases such as Blandford Forum where they bypass the town and current public charge points are limited to destinations such as superstores, hotels or community hospitals (as is the case with Blandford Forum). Indeed, the case officer noted that on random weekday and weekend occasions, there was only a maximum of 1 rapid charger available at any one time (the others being in need of maintenance or being used).
- 18.15 The A354 to the northeast and southwest of Blandford Forum is within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire, and Dorset AONBs respectively so most alternative sites, if they were available, would be in a sensitive area. No such sites have been made available and, in addition to another site southwest of Blandford Forum on the A354 (also in an AONB) the development proposed is the only dedicated charging station that has been proposed in Dorset between Dorchester and the County boundary with Wiltshire. Therefore, with the need demonstrated for rapid charging along this main route, it is difficult to locate the site outside of these designations. The exception is on the bypass, accessed off one of the existing roundabouts but no such land is available at this current time.

18.16 In summary, the need is not one recognised by policy 20 of the Local Plan nor by the Neighbourhood Plan but is recognised in the Local Plan's objectives and the NPPF. This specific countryside location on the A354 within 2km of the junction with the A350, is acceptable in principle subject to balance of benefits not being outweighed by adverse impacts when considered against the development plan's development management policies.

Public Benefits

18.17 The benefits of providing rapid chargers in this location have already been documented in this report. It is noted that, unlike some of the smaller facilities based at supermarkets in town centres, the EV Charging Station would have the capacity to charge up to 8 EVs at any one time, including at up to 120Kw. All charging points would be rapid and configured for use by any type of modern, light-duty EV and they would not be restricted to one EV manufacturer.

18.18 EV charging infrastructure is inextricably linked to people's ability to drive EVs; a lack of accessible rapid charging points is a barrier to EV ownership. EVs with the UK's clean electricity mix today, is estimated to produce only a third of the greenhouse gas emissions of an equivalent petrol car on a lifecycle basis. Emissions savings compared to petrol could rise even further, to 76% by 2030 and 81% by 2050, through improvements in grid decarbonisation, battery technology, manufacturing, and end-of-life processing.

18.19 The facility would therefore provide a significant benefit in terms of meeting the Council's ambitious vision of improving sustainable transport infrastructure in the district and even wider county area.

Landscape, visual impact and heritage

18.20 Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations in the AONB. It is a Valued Landscape.

18.21 Policy 4 of the Local Plan states: "Where significant impact is likely to arise as a result of a development proposal, developers will be required to clearly demonstrate that the impact on the landscape has been mitigated and that important landscape features have been incorporated into the development scheme"

18.22 Policy LC of the Neighbourhood Plan First Review advises that all new development within the plan area must demonstrate that account has been taken of the relevant AONB Management Plan policies and must not detract from the special qualities of the Cranborne Chase and Dorset AONBs unless it is clearly in the public interest to permit the development.

18.23 The site, as with all of Pimperne, falls within the Southern Downland Belt (area 2B) as defined in the AONB's Landscape Character Assessment. The Assessment describes the area as essentially a large scale landscape of broad rolling hills mainly

under arable production with woodland occurring on steeper slopes and the settlements confined to the valleys. Pimperne is one such settlement, confined to the valley with broad sweeping downland around and within the village.

18.24 The site is important to the character of the village as it part of an undeveloped and prominent area of downland that extends to the main throughfare (the A354). This clearly provides an understanding of the settlement's downland context and undoubtedly contributes much to the overall character. The inclusion of the surfaced vehicular access to the children's nursery and pre-school does not diminish this character as it is similar if not identical to a main farm access in appearance, a point reinforced by the agricultural building located at the top of the slope. The nursery and pre-school are confined to the former farmstead and house and therefore have negligible adverse impact on the landscape character.

18.25 This landscape is sensitive to change. The sensitivity is compounded by the existence of the lynchets within the wider parcel of land within which the site is located, albeit the area in the vicinity of the site is rather dominated by the A354, its traffic, and the modern agricultural building is also prominent on the hillside. The sensitivity to change is therefore considered "moderate". Members will note that the Council's Archaeologist has advised of there being no direct, physical impact on this asset (following verification of the applicant's archaeologist's investigations). Nevertheless, the setting of the lynchets is an important characteristic of this part of the AONB, a point made by the Council's Archaeologist and the AONB officer.

18.26 The AONB Management Plan objectives relevant to this application are:

- a) To monitor development along the A354 to ensure planting and built form are both sympathetic and complementary to landscape character.
- b) To conserve the integrity of archaeological features and promote cultural value perhaps through interpretation for visitors. The latter is important due to the existence of the lynchets.

Criterion f of policy LC of the Neighbourhood Plan First Review also advises that, where development is appropriate on the edge of a settlement, it should incorporate suitable landscaping to avoid creating a hard and visually prominent edge. This responds to the AONB Management Plan's objectives.

18.27 Criterion e) of policy LC of the Neighbourhood Plan First Review advises that street lighting and flood lights should be avoided as generally inappropriate, having due regard to the significance of the expanse of dark night skies for the AONB. Where these cannot be avoided, they should be designed in accordance with the guidance set out in the Cranborne AONB Position Statement Number 1 on Light Pollution and Good Practice Note 7 - Good External Lighting and International Dark Sky Reserve criteria.

18.28 The development proposed, with its metalised charging bays, substation, feeder pillar/meter box, branded charging points and lighting will undoubtedly result in irrevocable and harmful change to this landscape. The introduction of such

incongruous and alien features to a currently undeveloped site in agricultural use cannot result in anything other than such harm.

18.29 A number of factors contribute to this harm:-

- a) The utilitarian and incongruous installations which, with their boxy shape and gloss white and red finish, will be unlike any others found in the part of the village (there is no petrol filling station or, indeed, any other modern, branded structures visible along the A354). For example, the Excelsior/Damory coach and bus depot at the southern end of the village is commercial in appearance but largely screened from view by a hedge. Pimperne Garage, towards the northern end of the village, is small and, although its used car display is prominent, it is devoid of permanent structures of incongruous appearance. It is also within an existing developed frontage.
- b) The lighting which, by the very nature of the use, will need to be on when vehicles are being charged, irrespective of the time of day or night. There is no street lighting in this location. The case officer observed that some of the dwellings have external lights but these are off for most times in the evening and night time. The site is within the International Dark Skies Reserve (IDSR).
- c) The change in the setting of the lynchets. The use of lynchets on the upper slopes would have been complemented by the farming of the lower slopes (the lynchets not being necessary on these shallower gradients next to the valley floor). In other words, as they are today, the lynchets are legible and can be interpreted as part of a larger area of farmed land. This context will be partly lost as a result of the proposal

18.30 Nevertheless, the case officer considers that, with the landscaping and lighting strategy proposed, the landscape harm is not determinative when balanced against the benefits afforded by the development. Members will also note that the Council's Senior Landscaping Architect's suggestions have all been incorporated into the proposal with the exception of the grade segregated footway.

18.31 The site is screened to a large extent by the existing hedge. Whilst views are afforded of the upper slopes, including the lynchets, the area immediately behind the hedge which the site occupies, is largely out of view. This is due to the height of the hedge and its dense mesh of branches (this density effectively screening views through it, even in winter). The proposal includes lifting the land levels on the western side and excavating into the bank on the eastern side. The net result of these proposed engineering works is that the charging point apparatus will rise to a height of 1200mm above the top of the hedge at points approximately 3.5m back from the site side of this hedge.

18.32 The proximity of the hedge to the footway on the eastern side of the road (the site side) means that views of this apparatus will not be afforded from receptors along the footway's alignment where it is alongside the site. Similarly, passengers in Blandford Forum bound vehicles will not be afforded views into the site when passing alongside. The last views afforded to these passengers into the site will be as the vehicle passes the entrance and the view will be fleeting, even at the 30mph

speed limit. Pedestrians on the footway will have a longer time to view the site as they walk across the entrance but, again, this is transitory in nature.

18.33 There will be views of the chargers and cars in the bays when further north on the east side footway and on the southbound lane of the A354 in the vicinity of the southbound bus stop. However, the proposed landscaping which includes the planting of common oak and field maple trees, will soften and largely screen the cars and the chargers (despite the latter's gloss white and red finish).

18.34 The lynchets are prominent from these specific receptors; the downs form a backdrop as one drops towards the site from the vicinity of the bus stop. The lower area of land within which the proposed developed is to be located is currently screened by the roadside hedge. However, the engineering works proposed to provide a level plinth would result, in the absence of the proposed landscaping, in the cars at the charging bays and the apparatus being clearly visible. This would be harmful to the setting of the lynchets. The introduction of the landscaping provides appropriate screening but, it is acknowledged, this does change the openness of the hillside. There will be a distinct change in the landscape character from top to bottom whereas it is a single homogenous grassland parcel of land at the moment.

18.35 However, such planting is not out of character with the landscape and setting of other lynchets within the AONB. Indeed, trees on slopes is part of the character within this downland area identified in the AONB's Landscape Character Assessment. The case officer therefore disagrees with the comments of some of the consultees insofar as he considers that there is no harm to the lynchets, the setting of which will be preserved despite the changes proposed.

18.36 Passengers in northbound (Salisbury bound) vehicles on the A354 will start to be afforded views of the development as they pass the former Farquharson Arms public house. Near identical views will be afforded from receptors along the west side footway and from the dwellings nearest the site on Willow Park and Collingwood Close. The case officer has walked this footway and also driven northbound along the road at various times of the day and year. What is apparent is that the context of the A354 is always apparent and rather dominant in the landscape. The existing modern agricultural building further up the slope, adjacent to the pre-school and nursery's access, is also prominent and fails to assimilate into the landscape. These baseline conditions and the proposed landscaping result in the proposal's daytime impact from the receptors as being appropriately mitigated and not significant.

18.37 There will clearly be views of the development when one descends the slope when heading towards the A354 from the Archway Nursery and Pre-School. This is not a public view as such but one that is experienced daily by many drivers and passengers as children are taken and collected from this business. There is always the back drop of the village from this vantage point as well as the A354 visible through the access gap and the impact is tempered as a result.

18.38 The case officer noted that a view of the site is also afforded from the village's conservation area on Church Road and next to Fairfield House (a Grade II listed house dating from the very early C19th), the significance of which is largely derived from its architecture. The development therefore has the potential to harm the

significance of these designated heritage assets. However, the view is between C20th housing, along a part of Church Road that was widened and altered in the C20th and across the A354. In the field of vision from these receptors, it occupies a fraction of the view. With the proposed planting the setting of the conservation area and Fairfield House will be preserved (no harm).

18.39 There are no other public receptors within the area which would afford views of the site, intervening topography, buildings and vegetation ensuring this is the case.

18.40 The impact from receptors when night falls will be more pronounced as the illumination from the lighting and from car lights will be apparent; there is a large possibility that occupants of charging cars will remain inside during the charge and turn on the internal lights of their cars (the case officer has witnessed this regularly occurring at other charging stations).

18.41 The landscape is sensitive to change at night-time. This is an International Dark Skies Reserve (IDSR) and the dark skies are in an integral and important quality of the AONB's landscape character. It is also noted that there are no street lights in the vicinity of the site, nor are there permanent external lights to nearby dwellings (some have sensor activated lighting).

18.42 The AONB's Position Statement Number 1 Light Pollution advises that no external lights should be erected or installed in, or within the setting of, the AONB unless:

- a) They can be shown to be essential for security or safety, and the minimum necessary to achieve it;
- b) They are directed downwards and designed or shielded to prevent upward, sideways, and outward spillage;
- c) They give a light whose colour and intensity are appropriate for the wider setting;
- d) They do not highlight a structure or feature that would have an adverse visual impact on the surrounding landscape; and
- e) They utilize the most energy- and pollution-efficient equipment that is reasonably available.

18.43 In this context, the applicant has submitted a lighting strategy. It identifies the site as being within Environmental Zone E2 (Sparsely inhabited rural areas, village or relatively dark outer suburban locations) due to existing skyglow from Blandford Forum permeating the skies (reflected in the CPRE's sky glow mapping). However, given the proximity to E1 (Naturally intrinsically dark National Parks, AONBs and other Dark Sky Reserves) this has been robustly used for the baseline for the lighting strategy.

18.44 The case officer considers this the correct approach, albeit they too noticed Blandford Forum's skyglow permeating the darkness and that, between 5pm and 8pm on winter evenings, there is still a steady flow of traffic on the A354 and the headlights from these vehicles is a rather dominant landscape characteristic in the and around the site.

- 18.45 It is logical to assume, and there is evidence from the case officer's own experience, that usage of the site will be closely related to traffic flows on the road. As such, as traffic flows drop later in the evening and into the night (as they do on the A354), the patronage of the chargers will fall significantly as well. Indeed, it is opined that the decrease in use will be more marked than the decrease in traffic flows on the A354 as it will be more local traffic, less likely to use the chargers than those travellers in the daytime on longer journeys.
- 18.46 The lighting strategy submitted responds appropriately to the context. Lighting is considered essential for this use, not least for safety reasons. Lighting will be controlled so that it is only provided when required. This will be achieved by using Passive Infra-red Motion Sensors combined with wireless controls. This will allow for lighting to be activated by the presence of people and vehicles while ensuring it is only activated during the hours of darkness.
- 18.47 The lighting will be the minimum level required within British Standards for the tasks being performed within the site by proposing luminaires that have a 0% ULOR (Upward Light Output) i.e the light spill is downwards and outwards not upwards, by specifying a Correlated Colour Temperature of 2700K and by specifying luminaire back lighting shields for all proposed luminaires. The extent of the light spill and has been calculated as not extending further westwards than the A354, further northwards than the access, further eastwards than the retaining wall on the east side of the site and further south than the proposed sub-station. The strategy will require more detail, but this can be the subject of a condition.
- 18.48 Overall, the development is going to result in noticeable change with consequent harm to the landscape character and adverse visual impact. The proposed landscaping will mitigate much of this impact, but it will, even if Heavy Standard trees were planted, take time. Therefore, in the first 5-10 years or so the impact will be moderate given the sensitivity of this landscape to change. With the number, spacing and species of trees proposed (common oak and field maple) and use of a minimum of heavy stock, as well as the appropriate management, the landscaping will reduce the landscape and visual impact to low. The strategy is that the crowns of each tree will spread to provide continuous frontage cover to a height of approximately 3.5m above the charging bays level and 4.5m above the A354's footways. There will also be a noticeable change at night time but the impact can be appropriately mitigated by the implementation of a lighting scheme in accordance with the applicant's lighting strategy. The landscaping and lighting will, overall, ensure that the landscape harm is moderate initially and low when the trees are established.

Residential amenity

- 18.49 The lighting proposed not only had the potential to impact on the visual amenity and landscape, but also the residential amenity of nearby occupiers, notably on Willow Park, Collingwood Close and Salisbury Road. These occupiers could also potentially be affected by noise and disturbance from emissions from the apparatus on site, cars manoeuvring (tyre noise, electric motor noise and internal combustion engine noise from plug-in hybrid vehicles) and customers of the site conversing outside of their vehicles.

18.50 Policy 25 of the Local Plan advises that, when external lighting is proposed, development will be permitted provided that: -

- a) The scheme is the minimum necessary to achieve its purpose; and
- b) Light scatter, spillage and glare are minimised through the control of light direction and intensity; and
- c) The quality and intensity of the light and the daytime appearance of any light fittings and cables would not have a detrimental impact on local amenity or the character of the surrounding area.

18.51 The Lighting Strategy proposed by the applicant (and detailed in the preceding sub-section of this report) sets out how the lighting will respond appropriately to the residential receptors. The light spill will not extend to the gardens or dwellings, nor will there be lighting pointed towards them. Headlight glare is calculated to be below the top of the frontage hedge, although a condition will be necessary to ensure that this hedge is not felled to below its current height.

18.52 Turning to noise and disturbance, the applicant has submitted a noise assessment. This included surveying daytime and night-time. British Standards (BS8233:2014) and World Health Organisation (WHO) guidance states that noise levels should not exceed 35 dB (LAeq(i6hr)) within living rooms during the daytime, and 30 dB LAeq(8hr) within night-time rooms. The measured data recorded a typical day time background sound level of 53 dB and the night-time background of 20 dB.

18.53 The proposed noise emissions were calculated from recording the use of the same cumulative specific sound level at the worst-case receptor and is projected to be 49 dB LAeq(ihour) with no correction or context factors applied.

18.54 In terms of corrections that need to be applied, the noise emitted is not considered to be tonal or impulsive but, whilst the intermittency is not distinguishable over residual noise during the daytime, it does have the potential to be so during the night. For context considerations it is noted that the internal noise levels experienced within a dwelling are not less than 15dB quieter than those outside, even allowing for a partially open window.

18.55 Having applied the corrections and context factors, it is noted that both daytime and night-time noise levels generated by the development at all the residential receptors will be lower than the maximums specified in the guidance.

18.56 The separation distances between the site and residential receptors and the intervening A354 ensures no loss of amenity by reason of overlooking. The proposed structures are small (a maximum of 2.3m in height) and the considerable distances to dwellings and their gardens ensure no overshadowing.

18.57 Overall, there is considered to be no significant loss of amenity to adjoining residents and certainly not to the extent that it is a determinative material consideration.

Access and Highway safety

- 18.58 The vehicular access is proposed to be shared with the children's nursery and pre-school. It affords direct access onto the A354 within a 30mph zone. The nature of the use would mean that the site can be accessed 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.
- 18.59 The existing access is metalled and includes a splay at the point of access onto the A354 as well as the requisite dropped kerb.
- 18.60 The Highways Officer has advised that the proposed access arrangements are acceptable subject to conditions securing the implementation of the access, parking and manoeuvring areas before first use of any of the chargers and retention thereafter for the lifetime of the development.

Biodiversity

- 18.61 The site, despite being greenfield, is species poor and comprises of semi-improved grassland. The existing frontage hedge will remain in-situ, albeit a condition is required to maintain its length and height for biodiversity reasons as well as for landscape and visual impact as well as residential amenity reasons.
- 18.62 The lighting strategy responds to the potential for bats to be using this area for foraging and commuting.
- 18.63 Net gain is secured through the planting of the new trees, again to be secured by condition.

Flood risk and drainage

- 18.64 Members may recall from the Constraints section of this report that the site is in flood zone 1 (lowest probability of fluvial flooding) and is also zoned as low risk of pluvial (surface water) flooding, albeit the A354 adjacent to the site's frontage is in flood zones 2 (medium probability) and 3 (high) for fluvial flooding and at medium and high risk of pluvial (surface water flooding).
- 18.65 There is a need that, despite the development being above the road levels and clear of its associated risk of flooding, to ensure it does not increase the risk of flooding off site. There is potential for this to occur due to the increase in the extent of the impermeable areas within the site which are currently confined to the metalled access.
- 18.66 In response to this risk, the applicant has submitted a drainage plan that includes capture and attenuation of surface waters on site with discharge controlled at a rate and character as existing (with an acceptable allowance for climate change).

Contamination

- 18.67 The Council's Environmental Protection Officer has advised that there could be contaminants within the soil due to past farming activities. The probabilities and extent of these are such that a pre-determination or pre-commencement investigation is not required. Nevertheless, a condition is required to trigger

assessment, reporting and mitigation in the event that contamination is found during the construction phase, especially given the engineering operations proposed to regrade the site.

Other matters

- 18.68 The Dorset CPRE raise a concern that there will be a probability of covered waiting areas being desired/required and such structures will have further detrimental harm to the landscape's qualities and adverse visual impacts. It is true to state that many such facilities include covered areas and other facilities such as a coffee shop. These tend to be larger facilities and, with the smaller developments, such as that proposed here, it is not uncommon for the development to be devoid of any ancillary welfare/amenity/café structures. The development must be considered as per the submitted particulars.
- 18.69 The site lies adjacent to the A354 and there is potential for an appropriate power cable connection to be made to the substation without any effect on the archaeology or any landscape harm.

19.0 Conclusion

- 19.1 This is a development that, on balance, is sustainable and, therefore, acceptable. There is a degree of conflict with some aspects of both the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 (2016) and the Pimperne Neighbourhood Plan First Review (2022) and accordance with others. The NPPF is a material consideration as is national government strategy on EV infrastructure.
- 19.2 When considered against the development plan as a whole the benefits of the development are considered to outweigh the adverse impacts which are not considered, with the appropriate mitigation secured by conditions, to be significant. It is acknowledged that the benefits are tempered by the relatively small scale of the proposal (8 rapid chargers). Nevertheless, the development would contribute to a meaningful supply of such rapid chargers where there is currently a lack in the locality. The benefit is therefore still considered to be afforded significant and, in this case, determinative weight in the overall balance.
- 19.3 Were the chargers to fall into disuse, the benefits afforded by them towards combatting climate change would fall away. The development would then become unacceptable. It is therefore necessary that, should the use cease, the operational development associated with it should be removed and the site restored to its pre-development state as greenfield pasture. This needs to be secured by condition.

20.0 Recommendation

20.1 Grant permission subject to the following conditions:

1. The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason: This condition is required to be imposed by Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

- Location Plan 10458-0002_02
- Block Plan 10456-0002_03
- Softworks Plan Section 22084 – LHC – 00 -XX – DR – L – 0101 Rev P5
- Drainage Strategy Layout – 020.5725.501
- Gabion Basket Construction Detail – 020.5725.751a
- BYD 120kW Charger – 001_19
- Feeder Pillar and COP Metering Box 001_20
- Substation – TR7 001_10

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3. Prior to the first use of any of the EV chargers hereby permitted external lighting for the development shall be installed in accordance with details that shall have been previously submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The details shall be in accordance with the Lighting Strategy prepared by DFL dated 29/7/2022 (reference 2545-DFL-ELG-XX-PP-EO-13001). There shall be no other lighting other than that approved by the local planning authority. The lighting shall be retained for the lifetime of the development.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety, biodiversity, residential amenity and landscape and visual impact.

4. Prior to the first use of any of the EV chargers hereby approved, all hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved Softworks Plan and Section (drawing ref 22084 – LHC – 00 -XX – DR – L – 0101 Rev P5). The field maple and common oak trees that form part of this landscaping shall be planted as heavy stock size. Thereafter, the soft landscaping shall be maintained and managed in accordance with the management plan as required by condition 5.

Reason: In the interests of biodiversity, residential amenity and landscape and visual impact.

5. Prior to the first use of any of the EV chargers hereby approved a landscaping Management Plan for the management and maintenance of the landscaping detailed in the Softworks Plan and Section (drawing ref 22084 – LHC – 00 -XX – DR – L – 0101 Rev P5) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The said Management Plan shall be implemented for the lifetime of the development and it shall include an undertaking that any trees or plants that within these timescales, die, or become, in the opinion of the Local Planning Authority, seriously damaged or defective will be replaced within the next planting season with others of the same species, size and number as originally approved, the trees being planted as heavy stock.

Reason: In the interests of biodiversity, residential amenity and landscape and visual impact.

6. The hedge between the operational development hereby approved and Salisbury Road (A354) shall be maintained at a height of not less than 1.7m for the lifetime of the development.

Reason: In the interests of residential amenity and landscape and visual impact.

7. With the exception of the shared access to the Archway Nursery and Pre-School, all of the operational development hereby approved shall be removed entirely from the site and the land restored to its former condition as agricultural grassland within 6 months of the cessation of the use hereby approved, such a cessation being defined as the point of time at the end of a period of 6 months when none of the chargers have at any time been in use.

Reason: The development is only acceptable with the benefits afforded by the EV chargers given the landscape sensitivity of the site and its environs.

8. Prior to the first use of any of the EV chargers hereby approved the charging bays, manoeuvring and accessways shall be completed in accordance with Softworks Plan Section 22084 – LHC – 00 -XX – DR – L – 0101 Rev P5. The said areas shall be retained for the lifetime of the development.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety.

Informative Notes:

1. In accordance with paragraph 38 of the NPPF the council, as local planning authority, takes a positive approach to development proposals and is focused on providing sustainable development.

The council works with applicants/agents in a positive and proactive manner by:

- offering a pre-application advice service, and
- as appropriate updating applications/agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application and where possible suggesting solutions.

In this case:

- The applicant/agent was updated of any issues and provided with the opportunity to address issues identified by the case officer.