

Application Number:	P/FUL/2023/04657
Webpage:	https://planning.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/
Site address:	East Chickerell Court Farm, Chickerell, Weymouth
Proposal:	Development of a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) of up to 400MW, connected directly to the National Grid, with associated infrastructure including access, drainage and landscaping.
Applicant name:	Chickerell Storage Limited
Case Officer:	Matthew Pochin-Hawkes
Ward Member(s):	Cllr Dunseith & Cllr Worth (prior to May 2024 local elections) and Cllr Clifford & Cllr G Taylor (after May 2024 local elections)

1.0 Reason application is going to planning committee:

1.1 This application has been brought to Committee following a scheme of delegation consultation at the request of the Service Manager for Development Management and Enforcement.

2.0 Summary of recommendation:

A) Delegate authority to the Head of Planning or the Service Manager for Development Management and Enforcement to grant planning permission, subject to the completion of a legal agreement under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) in a form to be agreed by the Head of Legal Services to secure:

- Permissive footpath routes through the site as shown on Landscape Plan ref. 21-LP-01 Rev B and publicly accessible recreational space within Fields 5 and 6 for the lifetime of the development.

And subject to the planning conditions detailed at Section 17 of this report.

B) Refuse permission for the reasons set out at Section 17 of this report if the agreement is not completed by 29 January 2025 (6 months from the date of committee) or such extended time as agreed by the Head of Planning.

3.0 Reason for the recommendation:

3.1 As set out in Sections 16 and 17 of this report, in summary:

- Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compensation Act 2004 provides that determinations must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- Paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out that decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development where it accords with an up-to-date development plan.

- Large scale battery storage is identified at a national level as playing an essential role in our energy transition and ability to fully decarbonise the electricity grid by 2035 and achieve net zero by 2050.
- The proposal would make a significant contribution towards tackling climate change through the provision of battery storage.
- The built development focuses on non-best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land within the site. The limited temporary loss of BMV agricultural land is acceptable under Policy ENV8 given retention would be inconsistent with other policy and sustainability considerations.
- The proposed development would have limited and localised significant adverse landscape and visual impacts, would not harm the Dorset National Landscape (AONB) and would have a neutral effect on conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Dorset National Landscape (AONB). Appropriate mitigation would be secured via planning condition to minimise adverse impacts.
- Identified qualities of the designated area of Local Landscape Importance (LLLI) would be protected.
- Degradation of the Public Right of Way within the southern part of the site would be compensated for through the creation of a network of routes and publicly accessible informal recreational space within the site.
- Biodiversity net gains would be delivered on site.
- Adverse residential amenity impacts, including through increased noise and disturbance, would not cause significant adverse impacts.
- The site is sufficient distance from nearby residential properties.
- Matters of health and safety have been rigorously assessed via an independent peer review and would be appropriately managed and secured via planning conditions.
- The proposal is acceptable in respect of impacts on: highways; flood risk and drainage; archaeology; heritage; ground conditions; minerals safeguarding; and utilities.
- On balance, there are no material considerations which would warrant refusal of this application.

4.0 Key planning issues

Issue	Conclusion
Principle of development	Acceptable in principle.
Best and Most Versatile agricultural land	Limited temporary loss of BMV agricultural land is acceptable under Policy ENV8 given retention would be inconsistent with other policy and sustainability considerations.
Landscape visual impact	Significant adverse effects would be limited and localised to two viewpoints along footpath S16/21.

	Harm would reduce over time to a non-significant level 10 years after development when proposed landscaping establishes.
AONB	No harm to Dorset National Landscape (AONB) and neutral effect on the purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Dorset National Landscape.
Rights of way	Degradation of footpath S16/21 through development within its setting would be mitigated for through creation of new permissive routes through the site.
Noise and residential amenity	Noise from construction and operation would not have significant adverse effects on residential amenity. Increased noise levels would not significantly detract from the character or amenity of the area.
Biodiversity	Limited loss of some hedgerows within the site would be mitigated through new planting and the proposals would deliver a biodiversity net gain above policy requirements.
Highways	No objection from Highways Authority. Highway impacts would not be severe. No highway safety concerns.
Health and safety	Has been rigorously assessed via an independent peer review process and would be appropriately managed and secured via planning conditions.
Pollution	Acceptable subject to planning conditions.
Flood risk and drainage	Acceptable subject to planning conditions.
Other matters (archaeology, ground conditions, heritage, minerals safeguarding, overhead power lines/utilities, decommissioning, habitat regulations).	Acceptable subject to planning conditions.

5.0 Description of Site

5.1 The 29.7ha application site is located between Chickerell and the Southill area of Weymouth within the parish of Chickerell.

5.2 The site is 'F'-shaped. It consists of a group of six adjacent fields bounded to the north by Coldharbour Road, to the east by small holdings/horse paddocks, to the south by the National Grid Chickerell Electricity Substation, to the west by Chickerell Solar Farm and to the north west by industrial units.

5.3 For the purposes of this report, the fields are referred to as follows:

- Field 1: Northwestern field adjacent to Coldharbour Road.
- Field 2: Central-western field to the south of Field 1 and east of Chickerell Solar Farm.
- Field 3: Southern field to the south of Field 2 across which electricity pylons and Public Right of Way (PROW) S16/21 pass east to west.
- Field 4: Central-eastern field to the east of Field 2 with small holdings/horse paddocks to the north, east and south.
- Field 5: Eastern field to the south of Coldharbour and Field 6.
- Field 6: Northeastern field adjacent to Coldharbour Road.

5.4 Each field is separated by hedged field boundaries. Fields 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 are in arable agricultural use and Field 4 is currently used for bird rearing. There are no buildings on the site. A block of existing woodland sits between Fields 2, 3 and 4. There are occasional trees within the field boundaries.

5.5 Electricity pylons run east to west through the south west corner of Field 2 and through Field 3 from Chickerell Substation. Electricity pylons also run north to south through Fields 5 and 6 and adjacent to Field 3.

5.6 Gound levels undulate across the site. The high point of the site is found in the north west of Field 1 at approximately 54mAOD. Levels generally fall from this high point to east (down to 25mAOD at the eastern boundary of Field 6) and to south (24mAOD close to the Chickerell Substation within Field 3). Fields 2 and 4 both slope downwards from north to south. Fields 5 and 6 are more undulating. Within Fields 5 and 6, existing ground levels generally fall from approximately 34-38mAOD along the northern boundary with Coldharbour to 24mAOD along the eastern boundary of Field 5 before rising to approximately 48mAOD in the south east corner of Field 6.

5.7 Vehicular access to the site is provided via an 'L' shaped access track from Coldharbour which serves other small holdings and paddocks in the surrounding area.

5.8 The closest residential properties to the site are located on the north side of Coldharbour, to the north approximately 8m from the boundary of the site. Properties are generally two storey detached with rear gardens to the north. The closest residential properties within Chickerell are approximately 230m from the south west of Field 3 (Lower Putton Lane) and the closest residential properties within Southill are approximately 450m of Field 4 (Grafton Avenue).

5.9 Owing to the surrounding infrastructure (Chickerell Substation, electricity pylons and solar farm), adjacent small holdings and industrial use, the site has an urban fringe character.

6.0 Description of Development

6.1 In summary, the proposed Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) consists of three fenced compounds containing BESS containers, inverter buildings and transformers and a fenced electrical substation with an underground connection to the Chickerell sub-station together with extensive recontouring and areas of woodland planting and habitat creation and associated access and drainage works.

6.2 The elements of the proposal comprise:

- i. Revised vehicle access on Coldharbour to accommodate larger vehicles;
- ii. Groundworks to create four level platform areas (BESS Compounds 1-3 and the Customer Substation) and recontouring of the site through a cut and fill exercise by cutting into sloping ground and using the surplus spoil to create level platforms and screening. Ground levels are proposed to be increased to a maximum height of 54mAOD between BESS Compound 1 and Coldharbour and 50mAOD between BESS Compounds 1 and 2. Ground levels within Field 6 are also proposed to be recontoured to provide a maximum build-up of 42mAOD running east to west through the field. The platforms are proposed to be finished in a loose permeable gravel. Retaining walls constructed of interlocking sheet steel piles to the west of BESS Compound 1 and south east of BESS Compound 3 are proposed;
- iii. Installation of 600 BESS containers across the BESS compounds, each comprising a steel box of 6.35m length x 2.44m width x 2.6m height raised above 0.20m concrete foundations (total height 2.8m);
- iv. Installation of 30 steel framed inverter houses within the BESS compounds, each measuring 12.0m length x 9.5 width x 4.05m to ridge height / 3m to eaves. Inverter houses to be finished in green with folded metal roof with zinc finish;
- v. Installation of 60 transformers one either side of each inverter building, each measuring approximately 2.5m length x 2.5m width x 3.0m height;
- vi. Installation of six control room buildings, four within BESS Compound 1 and one each within BESS Compounds 2 and 3. Each measuring approximately 14m length x 3.9m width x 3.8m height raised above 0.2m concrete foundations (total height 4m);
- vii. Installation of four circular fire water tanks, two within BESS Compound 1 and one each within Bess Compounds 2 and 3. Each constructed of corrugated steel with a height of 3m and diameter of 5m;
- viii. Installation of two storage / welfare modules measuring approximately 12.2m length x 2.5m width x 2.6m height raised above 0.3m pads within BESS Compound 1;
- ix. CCTV cameras mounted on 4m high poles around the perimeters of the BESS Compounds;
- x. Internal vehicular access roads serving each BESS Compound and the customer substation.
- xi. Vehicle parking (10 spaces) within BESS Compound 1;
- xii. A customer substation, with internal equipment typically below 9m high but some elements up to 10.7m high;
- xiii. An underground electrical connection between the customer substation and Chickerell Substation (exact route to be determined);
- xiv. Boundary treatments, including a 2.4m high green weld mesh fence to the battery compounds and a 2.4m high galvanised steel palisade fence to the customer substation;

- xv. Extensive landscape and ecological works throughout the development, including: new hedgerow, woodland and tree planting; creation of a wildlife pond; bee bank; creation of green space with public access (Fields 5 and 6); creation of two new pedestrian accesses to the site from Coldharbour; creation of permissive paths across the site (east/west across the north of Fields 1 and 6 running parallel with Coldharbour, and north/south through the site from Coldharbour to existing Public Right of Way S16/21; and
- xvi. Sustainable urban drainage, including three attenuation ponds;

7.0 Relevant Planning History

7.1 Relevant planning history for the site comprises Environmental Impact Assessment screening and scoping responses together with pre-application advice in relation to the proposed development:

P/ESC/2022/08013 - Decision: EIA - Decision Date: 16/02/2023

Request for EIA Screening Opinion on Proposed battery storage facility

P/ESP/2023/01922 - Decision: RES - Decision Date: 04/05/2023

EIA Scoping request

P/PAP/2022/00826 - Decision: RES - Decision Date: 17/03/2023

Pre-Application Advice: Proposed Battery energy storage facility with associated infrastructure and landscaping.

P/PAP/2023/00256 - Decision: RES - Decision Date: 09/06/2023

Pre-Application Advice: Proposed Battery energy storage facility with associated infrastructure and landscaping.

7.2 Land to the east of the site is in a variety of agricultural and equestrian uses. The following planning history is relevant:

P/FUL/2023/01289 - Decision: GRA - Decision Date: 09/05/2023

Erect all weather equestrian menage.

P/FUL/2023/07422 - Decision: GRA - Decision Date: 22/05/2024

Erect steel portal framed agricultural storage barn.

7.3 Approximately 100m to the east of the site a planning application for a 60MW BESS was refused planning permission in March 2024 on fire risk and pollution grounds:

P/FUL/2023/02446 - Decision: REF - Decision Date: 04/03/2024

Installation of a Battery Energy Storage System of up to 60MW, associated infrastructure and enclosing compound, together with access and landscaping works

7.4 To the south west of the site a hybrid planning application for mixed use development of land to the east of Chickerell (Allocation CHIC2) is pending determination:

WD/D/20/002569 - DECISION: N/A Decision Date: N/A
Outline application for 393 dwellings with full details supplied in respect of 186 dwellings (Phase A) including creation of new accesses onto School Hill and Chickerell Link Road (B3157), details of the internal spine road, landscaping, drainage, car parking, golf ball fencing of various heights up to 30m, public open space, associated works and diversion of three public right of ways and with all matters reserved in respect of 207 dwellings (Phases B and C) and a primary school, public open space, landscaping, drainage and associated works

7.5 The adjacent solar farm to the west of the site was granted planning permission in 2014:

WD/D/14/002675 - Decision: GRA - Decision Date: 17/12/2014

Construction of a Solar Photovoltaic Park with associated equipment including access track

WD/D/15/000573 - Decision: GRA - Decision Date: 31/03/2015

Amendment to planning permission WD/D/14/002675

WD/D/20/001559 - Decision: GRA - Decision Date: 10/07/2020

Amendment to planning permission WD/D/14/002675 - Provide additional security / CCTV coverage of the solar array.

7.6 The industrial space between the solar farm and Coldharbour, to the north east of the site, was granted planning permission for change of use to storage in 2023:

P/FUL/2022/07710 - Decision: GRA - Decision Date: 11/09/2023

Part full and part retrospective application for the change of use of land and buildings from agricultural use to storage (B8) and the siting of up to 43 storage containers.

8.0 List of Constraints

Land Outside Defined Development Boundary

Land of Local Landscape Importance; Land north and east of Chickerell

Landscape Character Type; Ridge and Vale; South Dorset Ridge and Vale

Public Right of Way: Footpath S16/21; within the site

Public Right of Way: Footpath S16/20; 13m to the north of the site across Coldharbour

National Grid Overhead Line AXMINSTER - CHICKERELL - MANNINGTON
Operating 400; Two lines crossing Fields 2 & 3 and Fields 5 & 6.

National Grid Substations (132kV & 400kV) and Grid Towers: within and adjacent to the site.

SGN - High pressure gas pipeline 150m or less from Regional High Pressure Pipelines (>7 bar); Under parts of Fields 3, 4 and 5.

Flood Zone 1

Risk of Surface Water Flooding Extent (1 in 30, 1 in 100 and 1 in 1000 year risks): southern and eastern parts of the site.

Risk of Groundwater Emergence; Groundwater levels are between 0.025m and 0.5m below the ground surface; Within this zone there is a risk of groundwater flooding to both surface and subsurface assets. There is the possibility of groundwater emerging at the surface locally; Southern part of site.

Existing ecological network and higher potential ecological network.

Chesil Beach & the Fleet RAMSAR and SAC; Distance: 1.9km.

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) impact risk zone.

Minerals and Waste Safeguarding Area (IDs: 6842, 7080, 7081 & 7082).

Minerals and Waste – Building Stone (IDs: 440, 1061, 1062 & 1069).

Office of Nuclear Regulation: within Portland 12km zone.

Radon: Class: Class 1: Less than 1%.

Contaminated Land: Within a small part of the site adjacent to existing woodland.

ONR portland_12km_zone - Distance: 0.

Dorset National Landscape Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty); 1.2km to the southwest and 2.8km to the north

9.0 Consultations

9.1 All consultee responses can be viewed in full on the website.

9.2 Over the course of determination there have been two formal rounds of consultation, one shortly after validation of the application during August/September 2023 and the second during January/February 2024. Iterative consultation with the Environment Agency, Fire and Rescue Service and other parties has taken place beyond the formal consultation deadlines.

Consultees

Natural England

9.4 Natural England raises no objection subject to the Biodiversity Plan and Landscape Ecological Management Plan being certified by the Council's Natural Environment Team and secured via planning condition. The response also notes that the site lies within the setting of the Dorset AONB and recommends that advice is sought from the Dorset AONB Team.

9.5 Generic advice is provided in respect of: landscape impacts; best and most versatile agricultural land and soils; protected species; local sites and priority habitats and species; environmental gains; green infrastructure; access and recreation; and Public Rights of Way. In respect of agricultural land, the generic advice states that Local Planning Authorities are responsible for ensuring that they have sufficient detailed agricultural land classification information to apply NPPF policies.

Historic England – Confirm they have no comments to make on the application.

Environment Agency

9.6 The EA has issued a series of consultation responses in relation to the proposals and updates provided by the applicant.

9.7 The final response (May 2024) confirms no objection subject to planning conditions related to: surface water drainage; an emergency pollution control method statement; verification plan; Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

9.8 The consultation provides advice to the Applicant that the developer should engage with the Fire and Rescue Service to develop a comprehensive risk management plan and an Emergency Response Plan as detailed within the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) document "Grid Scale Battery Energy Storage System Planning – Guidance for FRS". The EA advises the applicant should make sure that there is an adequate supply of fire fighting water for the maximum expected duration of a fire, and that the expected fire fighting water volumes used by the fire service are reflected within the volumes used in supporting drainage strategy.

9.9 The EA response advises the Local Planning Authority to consult with its Environmental Protection Team in relation to air quality matters resulting from a potential battery fire. It recommends that where planning controls are necessary, to consider impacts on controlled waters and human health.

Health and Safety Executive

9.10 HSE has been consulted due to a high-pressure gas main running through part of the site. Web App advice from the HSE confirms it does not advise against the granting of planning permission on safety grounds. Follow up correspondence from 9.11 HSE confirms HSE would treat battery storage as a workplace and therefore would not advise against the development.

Dept for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) – No comments received.

Active Travel England – Confirm they have no comments to make on the application.

National Planning Casework Unit – No comments received.

Landscape Officer

9.12 The Council's Senior Landscape Officer has provided two sets of comments on the proposals.

9.13 In summary, the first response of January 2024 concluded no objection subject to planning conditions. It advised that the proposals are compliant with national, local and neighbourhood planning policy relevant to landscape and visual considerations. The recommended conditions relate to the submission, approval, implementation and maintenance of detailed hard and soft landscape proposals.

9.14 Comments on the proposal noted:

1. Construction is likely to have significant adverse landscape and visual effects.
2. Adverse effects would be mitigated to a significant degree on completion of the proposed changes to the landform and the maturation of the extensive planting proposed, the later providing further mitigation in the medium to long term.
3. Submitted Accurate Visual Representations (AVRs) provide evidence that, on completion, the proposed earthworks would screen the development from viewpoints within the Dorset AONB to its north.
4. AVRs evidence that the growth of the extensive woodland planting would augment this screening and may have a minor beneficial effect on visual amenity on maturity by helping to screen existing development within the Granby Industrial Estate on the northern edge of Weymouth.
5. In views from the AONB to the west, the proposal would be seen in the context of existing industrial, residential and electrical infrastructure development and would play a relatively minor role. Cumulative effects would likely diminish over the lifetime of the development as the proposed woodland planting grows and matures.
6. The proposal would avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the Dorset AONB and its setting and would not harm its character, special qualities or natural beauty, including its characteristic landscape quality and diversity, uninterrupted panoramic views, individual landmarks and sense of tranquillity and remoteness.
7. Landforming and planting would form significant permanent features that would physically alter the landform of the site and would introduce extensive areas of woodland in a ridgeline location in views from the north and east that are not, at present, a characteristic feature of the existing landscape or the landscape character type in which the site is located. However, the AVRs suggest that while the development may initially detract from local landscape character, the change

in character resulting from the proposed mitigatory measures and water features would not have a significant adverse impact on landscape character in the longer term.

8. The proposals would retain and protect existing trees and hedgerows which form locally distinctive landscape features, and it would provide visual enhancements for existing development of poor quality.
9. The proposed development would not significantly adversely affect the character or visual quality of the local landscape. The proposal includes appropriate measures to moderate the adverse effects of the development on the landscape.
10. No harm to green infrastructure or reasons for the sites inclusion within it due the retention of existing green infrastructure and its significant enhancement.
11. Mitigatory planting, while out of keeping with the landscape character, would contribute positively to the enhancement of local identify and distinctiveness. Introduction of woodland would represent a managed change that would not be of significant detriment to landscape character or visual amenity.
12. While the proposals would reduce the extent of the green wedge between Chickerell and Southhill/Radipole the extensive woodland planting and habitat creation proposed would enhance the north/south wildlife corridor from Radipole Lake SSSI.

9.15 The Senior Landscape Officer's second set of comments were issued following review of an Addendum to the landscape and visual section of the Environmental Statement (ES). The Officer confirmed agreement with the conclusion of the ES Addendum that "the changes that have been made to the proposed development do not result in a change in the magnitude of landscape and visual effects as assessed by the ES" and concluded no objection subject to conditions. The Officer notes Ash should not be planted due to the impact of Ash die back disease.

Trees – No comments received.

Dorset AONB Team

9.16 The Dorset AONB Team advised in September 2023 that, overall, they are in agreement with the Senior Landscape Officer's comments that the proposed development would avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the Dorset AONB and its setting and that, as a consequence, it would not harm the character, special qualities or natural beauty of the Dorset AONB.

9.17 Visibility of the site is relatively limited, or over substantial distances. The landform alterations would screen the development in views from the north. Construction impacts would be discernible from the ANOB. However, it is foreseeable that operational effects on views from the north would be low and capable of mitigation through the proposed planting.

9.18 From the south and west, and taking account of the existing influence of housing, solar farm, Chickerell Substation, the development would not be considered to have a significant effect on key qualities and characteristics of the AONB.

9.19 Affected footpaths do not appear to afford notable views into the AONB.

9.20 Following amendments to the scheme, Dorset AONB Team advised in January 2024 that it had no further comments to make on the application,

Rights of Way Officer

9.21 The Rights of Way Officer has no objection to the development but advises that the full width of the public footpath must remain open and available to the public, with no materials or vehicles stored on the route. The officer queries whether there are any plans for maintenance of the public open space.

Natural Environment Team

9.22 Dorset Council's Natural Environment Team (NET) issued a Certificate of Approval certifying the Biodiversity Plan dated 24 April 2024. The response confirms the proposal adequately addresses impacts on biodiversity and impacts on designated wildlife sites, including European sites. The response recommends that Natural England is consulted in respect of potential impacts on SSSIs.

9.23 The NET also issued comments on the proposed public open space within the site and recommend that it is acceptable from an open space perspective. The response advises that the Dorset Council Public Open Space and Greenspaces Guidance Notes for Design and Management (2023) are referred to.

Highways

9.24 Following a response to initial queries raised by the Highways Authority in September 2023, Highways confirmed no objection subject to planning conditions in January 2024 concluding the development cannot be thought to give rise to severe highway impacts (NPPF 115).

9.25 The response notes the Highways Authority accepts the Transport Statement as appropriate and robust. The proposed improvements to the site access and swept path analysis demonstrate the proposed revised access and visibility splays for the junction can be achieved.

9.26 Highways note that construction is expected to take 18 months and 12 two-way HGVs are expected during the peak of construction. Limited vehicle movements are expected during operation. The Construction Traffic Management Plan includes an agreed route for all vehicles to avoid residential development and use the strategic highway network wherever possible.

9.27 Planning conditions are recommended in respect of: vehicle access construction; access works; turning/manoeuvring and parking construction; construction traffic management plan; and wheel washing facilities.

Highways Asset Manager – No response received.

Flood Risk Management (Lead Local Flood Authority)

9.28 The Council's Flood Risk Management Team (LLFA) has issued a series of consultation responses on the development as the surface water drainage has been refined as part of an iterative process in response to comments. Earlier comments raised queries in relation to discharge rates and whether the drainage system would be pumped.

9.29 The final consultation response confirms the LLFA has no objection subject to planning conditions related to details of a detailed surface water management scheme and details of its maintenance and management.

Environmental Protection

9.30 Preliminary feedback from the Council's Environmental Health Officer (EHO) in September and October 2023 raised concern with the noise results being close to the level of indication of adverse impact at receptors A and B (Coldharbour and planned development to the west of the site). The EHO advised that they were not entirely satisfied, in the absence of any mitigation not already factored in, as to whether or not an adverse effect is likely to occur or whether or not a good standard of amenity can be achieved.

9.31 The EHO notes it is essential that the planning authority has a good understanding of, and evaluates carefully, the applicant's BS4142 calculations and interpretation. This is a significant development, and in terms of noise we have the 'blank canvas' opportunity at this stage to ensure that we achieve an appropriate level of confidence that noise impacts will be acceptable whilst not making unnecessarily onerous requirements of the applicant. My view is that, in terms of noise, the planning authority cannot yet consider that it has a sufficiently high level of confidence, especially given the very narrow BS4142 margins seen set in a context of the significant levels of uncertainty which apply in this case.

9.32 As a way forward, the EHO suggested either: a suitable scheme of mitigation for receptors A and B, with updated noise calculations to show margins which are more acceptable given the scale of uncertainties outlined above; or controls via planning condition to have actual noise levels measured (during representative operation) once the development is completed and operational, to empirically establish levels and resultant BS4142 calculations and assessment, and identify and implement any need for mitigation.

9.33 In January 2024, following submission of an amended Noise Impact Assessment, the EHO advised no objection subject to planning conditions in respect of noise mitigation measures and testing during operation of development.

Building Control – Confirm they have no comments to make on the application.

Urban Design – Confirm they have no comments to make on the application.

Economic Development and Tourism – No response received.

Conservation

9.34 The proposals will not harm designated or non-designated heritage assets.

Environmental Assessment

9.35 The Council's Environmental Assessment Team reviewed the Environmental Statement submitted with the application and conclude it constitutes an ES for the purposes of the EIA Regulations. Initial queries were raised in relation to whether the BESS cabinets are appropriately spaced and whether the site is hydrologically connected to Radipole Lake.

9.36 The subsequent response of January 2024 notes the proposed 3m separation distance between BESS containers is subject to a series of mitigation measures. The response also confirms that the updated Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (Rev D) notes BESS compounds have been designed to contain any potential pollution run off. With the mitigation in place the Environmental Assessment Team confirm it is satisfied that initial concerns about potential contamination of Radipole SSSI have been addressed.

Planning Policy

9.37 The Planning Policy team identifies relevant policy and guidance and comments that battery energy storage systems are devices that enable energy to be stored at times of low demand and then released when the power is needed. This technology can help manage electricity generation by dealing with the peaks and troughs of energy supply and demand. In doing so, it can play an important role in supporting a transition from fossil fuels to energy from renewable sources, such as solar and wind, which generate electricity intermittently. So, while BESSs are not directly involved in the generation of renewable energy they might be appropriately viewed as supporting infrastructure, contributing to carbon reduction goals by allowing energy demands to be met by alternatives to fossil fuel.

9.38 The response notes that the Local Plan does not contain specific policies or allocations for energy storage systems but is supportive of the need to meet energy demand from renewable sources.

9.39 Dorset Council declared a climate and ecological emergency in 2019, and its Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy (NECES) sets a clear vision for the Council and wider Dorset to rapidly become carbon neutral, nature positive and resilient. The Council considers climate change is an important part of the planning balance in decision making and has consulted on interim guidance and a position statement on planning for climate change.

9.40 The proximity of a grid connection is a technical consideration that can affect the siting of renewable energy technologies as set out in the government's Planning Practice Guidance. Grid capacity can also be a consideration, and costs for forming connections where the electricity infrastructure is constrained can be very high. In assessing the suitability of the site and the availability of viable alternative options, it

would be appropriate to take into account the requirements of the technology as well as the potential impacts on the environment.

9.41 In respect of agricultural land, the Planning Policy Team note where an application affects the best and most versatile agricultural land, the need for the proposed location should be justified with a sequential approach taken in order to protect the best and most versatile land. It is also appropriate to reflect on the nature and potential lifetime of the development, how long the land may be removed from agricultural productivity and whether any such removal is complete. It is advised that in determining the application a temporary period for any permission granted should be considered, alongside any appropriate site restoration that may be required. The issue of the impact on agricultural land must be considered in the context of the proposed permanent aspects of the proposal as well as the duration of any temporary elements. In this context a longer period such as 40 years is a considerable amount of time, with impacts that would persist for the whole period, and therefore when coming to a decision you should consider giving less weight in the planning balance to the temporary nature of the development.

9.42 Weight can be given to the benefits of these proposals alongside any potential biodiversity enhancements. However, the responsibility to help increase the use and supply of green energy does not mean that the need for renewable energy automatically overrides environmental protections. Given the location of the proposed site, particular regard must be had for the protection of the countryside, environmental constraints, the potential loss of agricultural land and the likely effect of the development on its surroundings.

Minerals & Waste Policy

9.43 The proposed site lies within the Minerals Safeguarding Area (MSA) designated in Policy SG1 of the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Minerals Strategy 2014. The safeguarded mineral underlying the site is expected to be Cornbrash Forest Marble. The Mineral Planning Authority accepts that, although the mineral is safeguarded, the requirement to prior extract the building stone and then backfill/compact the void in advance of the proposed built development would cause an unreasonable delay in bringing forward the proposed built development. In addition, it is considered that there is a relatively low level of demand for this type of stone. Having taken these various factors into consideration, the MPA can confirm that in this case, the mineral safeguarding requirement is waived and no objection will be raised to this proposal on mineral safeguarding grounds.

Sustainability Team

9.44 No objections in relation to council climate strategy and policy.

9.45 Provide comments on the strategic alignment of the project noting that the proposal is aligned with the Council's own local strategic ambitions for net zero – specifically:

1. Mission 1 of our Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy 2023, which includes an aim to boost deployment of energy flexibility measures such as energy storage.
2. The findings of the Scrutiny-led Grid Task and Finish Group (subsequently endorsed by Cabinet on 12 March 2023), including support for flexibility measures as a means of mitigating grid constraints.

9.46 The Sustainability Team recognise BESS as an important potential contributor to achieving a more stable, efficient, net zero energy network, and an important element in achieving a cleaner and more secure domestic energy system. For context, analysis by Regen has found that 80-100GW of flexibility capacity will be needed nationally by 2035, with 20-25GW provided by electricity storage. SSEN's Distributed Future Energy Scenarios 2023 analysis recognises the significant potential of battery storage capacity within our Southern England license area, forecasting its growth to 4.4GW in 2050 (from 266MW in 2023) according to its central scenario. This proposal would constitute a major contribution to these needs/projections.

9.47 The Sustainability Team recognises the value of the proposal to be that:

- a) it could facilitate the growth of renewable energy generation, and thus likely have a significant impact in facilitating emissions avoidance during the medium term – thereby making a significant contribution to staying within local and national carbon budgets;
- b) that it could play a locally and nationally significant balancing function to the energy system (supporting system resilience during periods of peak demand); and
- c) for each of those reasons, that it may consequently support the national ambition to decarbonise the grid by 2035, and as such could be a major contributor to local and national ambitions to reach net zero.

9.48 The Sustainability Team also comment on the submitted Environmental Statement, in summary:

- a) The assessment makes a reasonable and transparent claim that the facility's operation could facilitate significant beneficial emissions savings by mitigating renewable generation curtailment and enabling grid decarbonisation; and at a magnitude that is of national as well as local significance. The assessment reasonably notes that this could have a significant impact both on the national carbon budget (CB6) and the localised carbon budget.
- b) The reports focus on operational emissions reflects its judgement that emissions associated with construction and decommissioning of the development are likely significantly outweighed by the avoided Scope 2 emissions. That appears a reasonable conclusion, given its assessment of the magnitude of avoided emissions – but the developer ought nevertheless be encouraged to take steps to mitigate emissions within its CEMP and/or CTMP.
- c) Whilst the report omits reference to important net zero policy/strategy nationally (March 2023's Powering Up Britain publication) and locally (our March 2023 refreshed climate strategy), this may owe to the timing of its production and their omission does not undermine the methodology or conclusions of the report – and they may indeed have strengthened its strategic case.

Emergency Planning

9.49 The Council's Emergency Planning Team note the concerns raised by some residents and confirm that they would not have the expertise to comment on the technical aspects of the specific application and is therefore not in a position to either support or object to the application. Emergency Planning recommend consultation with the FRS, UK Health Security Agency, Dorset Environmental Health, UK Radiation, Chemical and Environmental Hazards and Environment Agency.

9.50 In the event of an emergency, Emergency Planning confirm that their role is to work with all other agencies under the banner of the Dorset Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and assist with emergency planning in line with the National Security Risk Assessment (NSRA) and its public-facing version, the National Risk Register (NRR). These risks are noted to be rather strategic in nature - with planning ensuring that Dorset has the right systems and resilience practices in place to manage these risks, should they arise.

9.51 Nonetheless, consistent with the Dorset LRF multiagency response framework, Emergency Planning can provide assurances to the local residents that it will support any response to an emergency at the proposed development site by facilitating access to all relevant local authority resources, to be used alongside other emergency responders' resources involved, in minimising the impacts of the emergency. This is the approach Emergency Planning take to any major incident across the area covered by Dorset Council.

9.52 As to the specific concerns raised in the event of a fire, should the need for an evacuation of the properties downwind be necessary, (as per the advice of UKHSA and Environmental Health at the time of incident) Emergency Planning would work together with the emergency services, volunteer organisations and Dorset Council Social Services to open a rest centre, organise transport to this centre, and ensure adequate staffing support for the duration the centre is open. The local authority has a detailed rest centre plan with many locations available across its boundaries, which can be opened in an emergency evacuation. Working with other agencies at the time of the incident to support air plume monitoring and understand its impacts, while warning and informing residents accordingly, would also be another critical role of Emergency Planning.

Archaeology

9.53 Following submission of the application the Council's Senior Archaeologist requested that trial trenching evaluation be undertaken prior to determination of the application. The scope of the trenching was agreed between the Senior Archaeologist and the applicant's archaeological consultant. The Senior Archaeologist subsequently confirmed that no further archaeological work is required in relation to the proposed development.

Public Health Dorset

9.54 Public Health Dorset confirms it has no objection subject to the developer complying with the advice from Environmental Health to engage with the Fire and Rescue Service to develop a workable and comprehensive risk management plan and an Emergency Response Plan.

National Grid Electricity Transmission

9.55 National Grid Electricity Transmission has no objection to the proposal provided its easements and the necessary clearances from overhead lines are maintained:

1. Clearance is 18 feet from the max swing/sag of the overhead line from any structure;
2. No trees/shrubs to be planted under or within 15 feet of the overhead line at max swing/ sag;
3. Ground level cannot come within 25 feet of the lowest conductor;
4. 15m stand off from our overhead towers from any building or permanent structure that may restrict access unless agreed; and
5. Necessary agreements are in place with NGET for connection into Chickerell substation and the use of NGET land.

Southern Gas Networks (SGN)

9.56 The March 2024 response from SNG confirms that a local engineer will be in contact separately and that SGN objects to the development until such time as detailed consultation has taken place.

9.57 The response notes there are pressure gas pipelines in the vicinity of the site which are protected by a 'Deed of Grant', which prohibits certain activities within the easement strip, no addition to or removal of surface level, no structures over or within the specified distance of the pipeline. The response raises a series of points, including:

1. Any intrusion with the safety zone will not be taken lightly and any intention to proceed should be accompanied by a risk assessment or provision of supporting evidence.
2. There is a wind turbine in the vicinity of the pipeline and that any turbine should be 1.5 times the fixed mast height.
3. No solar panels, equipment or buildings are to be installed within the SGN easement.
4. Any cable crossings should cross at 90 degrees, have a minimum clearance of 600mm from the pipeline and installed in non-metallic ducts which extend 3m from the pipeline. Any cables running adjacent must be kept greater than 3 metres from the pipeline. Further details are available if you require them.

5. No piling/boreholes will be allowed within 15 metres of a pipeline without an assessment of the vibration levels at the pipeline. The peak particle velocity at the pipeline should be limited to a maximum level of 75 mm/sec. Where the peak particle velocity is predicted to exceed 50 mm/sec, the ground vibration shall be monitored by you and a SGN technician must supervise on site.
6. Vehicle crossings over the pipeline must be kept to a minimum and must cross at 90 degrees.

9.58 At the time of writing a further response from SGN remains outstanding. However, SGN has advised that it could be resolved by implementing suitable planning conditions.

National Gas

9.59 Confirm there are no National Gas Transmission assets affected in this area.

Scottish and Southern Energy Sub-stations (SSEN)

9.60 Whilst SSEN was consulted at both stages, it provided late comments on 16 July 2024 following notification of the planning committee.

9.61 SSEN note the site includes electrical apparatus that includes a 33kv high voltage underground cable that runs north/south through the application site. The cable is covered by a Deed of Grant (dated 2 August 1967).

9.62 SSEN note the application seeks to divert the cable, as shown on the Proposed Landscape Plan and note the proposed diversion should have been explored well in advance of a planning application being submitted. SSEN strongly advise that all electrical equipment throughout the site is reviewed.

9.63 SSEN state that any diversion costs would come at the expense of the applicant who would additionally have to cover the legal fees of SSEN, all the while preserving SSENs present rights. SSEN state that the applicant should offer an alternative location for the cable which is acceptable and agreed with SSEN. Until this has been resolved and secured by planning condition SSEN holds an objection.

Dorset Wildlife Trust – No comments received.

Ramblers Association – No comments received.

WPA Consultants Ltd

9.64 WPA are the Council's consultants in respect of ground conditions and contaminated land. WPA concurs with the need to undertake a watching brief concerning unexpected and currently unknown issues with contamination.

Dorset and Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service

9.65 Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) has provided three consultation responses (all comments) over the course of determination.

9.66 The FRS' **first set of comments** of September 2023 confirms Dorset FRS does not object to the principle of development but recognises BESS developments pose some specific hazards in the event of fire.

9.67 The FRS note that any fire involving grid scale Lithium-Ion (Li-ion) battery storage would be treated as a hazardous materials incident and confirm the expectation that fire and rescue services would initiate an emergency response in the event of an incident, in conjunction with the site operator's own plans.

9.68 The FRS note the evolving technology and ongoing research into the most suitable methods of extinguishing a fire, with current guidance recommending significant volumes of water for a prolonged period.

9.69 The response includes the following detailed comments and recommendations:

1. The FRS acknowledge there has been early engagement with the FRS initiated by the applicant (Statera) and its fire risk adviser (Greston Associates)
2. The applicant should confirm the capacity of water tanks and mechanism for manual fire fighting. Access, space and hardstanding for a pumping appliance should be considered. Separation distances between water tanks and BESS containers should be 10m and cannot be confirmed on the current plans.
3. The provision of suitable turning space and appropriately sized footprint for hard standing to enable an effective firefighting response with multiple vehicles is essential.
4. The plans do not show an alternative access route.
5. Plans appear to show excessive single directional travel within the compounds. Single access routes to each compound up wind of the battery containers. This could impact firefighting access and choice of operational tactics.
6. The current proposal suggests a 3m separation distance between BESS containers. This falls below 6m minimum recommended in NFCC guidance but appears to meet the requirements of NFPA:855. The justification for this reduction should be included in the overall site risk assessment.
7. Drawing show in excess of 30 containers in some rows. Increasing spacing to divide the rows would reduce the risk of fire spread as an additional control measure.
8. Individual site location and design will mean that distances between BESS containers and site boundaries will vary. Proposed distances should consider risk and mitigation factors. Current guidance suggests a minimum distance of 25 metres prior to any mitigation.
9. The plans indicate new woodland which appears to conflict with the above guidance. Areas within 10 metres of BESS containers should be cleared of combustible materials and vegetation.

10. Automatic suppression systems which aim to prevent thermal run-away within cells are a feature of most systems however the effectiveness of these systems is variable. Alternative extinguishing media are not considered appropriate at this time. The Integrated Fire Risk Management Strategy should include the full technical detail of all fire protection systems.
11. Early detection of a potential fire situation is critical and fast response detection system linked to the battery management system is considered an essential component of the design. It is considered unlikely that fire service resources would be in attendance within the timeframe required to prevent a thermal run-away event once it has begun.
12. The inclusion of a premises information box and ongoing engagement with the Fire Liaison Framework is noted and welcomed.
13. Once thermal run-away has occurred, defensive firefighting tactics would be the preferred option to allow the cell or module involved in fire to burn out and to protect surrounding modules and infrastructure. This would be undertaken on advice and with agreement from the Environment Agency and technical support services.
14. The potential for contaminated fire water runoff is acknowledged as an area for further consideration, although the type and level of contamination is not easily quantifiable. Our default position is therefore one of containment where possible although this is very difficult to achieve for large volumes of water during a dynamic incident.
15. Consideration should also be given to engaging with the Environment Agency in relation to protection of water sources or aquifers in the event of fire water runoff and any pollution control measures as may be appropriate.
16. Airborne smoke and products of combustion would inevitably contain toxic effluents. Liaison with other agencies to support the air monitoring and warning and informing of local residents would form an essential part of the emergency response.
17. It is our experience that most site designers and operators are keen to engage with fire services to ensure that their operational plans are fit for purpose, and we have already undertaken site visits to the larger installations within our area to assist with operational planning.
18. We continue to engage with Statera at the application stage to ensure that changes in guidance are reflected in the final design.
19. We also recognise the concerns of residents in relation to the impact of these sites on the local environment and whilst we cannot provide assurance that we will not experience a fire in one of these sites, we are taking steps to ensure that the impacts are reduced as far as possible.

9.70 The FRS' **second response** of January 2024 note they have had further discussion with the applicant and note the amendments to the site design for fire fighting provision. The FRS welcome the inclusion of a planning condition and the ongoing communication through the Fire Liaison Framework.

9.71 On the basis that procurement of the battery containers includes an ongoing assessment of the suitability of the fire engineered solution regarding spacing of containers, the FRS confirm they are satisfied this achieves the objectives of NFPA 855.

9.72 The **third response** was provided in June 2024. It acknowledges Hydrock's (Dorset Council instructed consultant) peer summary of NFCC compliance dated 11 June 2024 and confirms that the FRS is satisfied at this stage that areas of non-compliance in line with NFCC guidance have been identified, assessed and/or highlighted to the applicant.

9.73 As highlighted in Hydrock's report, the fire resistant protection between battery cabinets should be assessed once the procurement of the battery containers has been confirmed. The FRS recognise that the Emergency Response Plan (ERP) requires further detail as this is contingent on the battery procurement and associated technical requirements. In the event that planning permission is granted further site specific operational planning will be undertaken.

Hydrock

9.74 Hydrock is a multidisciplinary consultancy with fire engineering experience of BESS developments. It was instructed by Dorset Council to provide an independent peer review of ES Volume 9: Fire Risk.

9.75 Hydrock provided a Peer Review on 27 March 2024. It sets out detailed considerations and identified applicant actions, a number of which are at the detailed design (post-planning) stage. In summary:

1. Detection and Battery Management System – Each battery cabinet will be equipped with heat detection, smoke detection and flammable gas detection. Exact design has not been confirmed. Each battery container would have its own battery management system. In the detailed design of the system, the consultant should detail the detection system specification and operation. This should include the specific operating parameters of the detectors, how they are monitored and the response to a detection event.
2. Fire protection barrier – The applicant should detail the specification/duration of the fire protection provided by partitions between battery cabinets and by the enclosure of the battery unit. This should include justification as to why the specification/duration of fire protection is appropriate for the risk.
3. Fire suppression system – Although the design specification has not been finalised, it is understood that each battery cabinet will be supplied with its own independent fire suppression system. In the detailed design of the system, the

consultant should provide details of the suppression system specification and operation.

4. Explosion prevention – Each battery cabinet will be equipped with: ventilation passive pressure relief valve; and active exhaust vents. Provided the venting within the containers is designed in accordance with NFPA 68 & 69, the reviewer agrees that this is appropriate at reducing deflagration and overpressure risks. In the detailed design of the system, the consultant should provide details of design methodology for the deflagration vents (NFPA68) and explosion prevention measures (NFPA69). This should include the location, size and operating pressures/methodology for each vent. In addition, the calculations made for the specification of each vent (following the relevant methodology in NFPA68/NFPA69) should be provided.
5. External radiative spread / separation distances within application site – The report has assessed fire spread between BESS containers. The calculated received radiation at an adjacent unit is 7.5kW/m^2 , against an acceptance criterion of 35kW/m^2 (the reference for failure of steel plate at 20- mins exposure). The reviewer agrees that the received radiation of 7kW/m^2 represents a low risk of fire spread between containers, and is a betterment over the standard criterion of the building regulations for building-to-building fire spread (12.6kW/m^2). Therefore, the reviewer agrees that the likelihood of BESS-to-BESS fire spread on site is low. Distances between containers of 3m aligns with NFPA 855 guidance. Minimum 60 mins thermal protection between BESS containers should be provided. Risk of spread to other infrastructure and planting should be considered.
6. External radiative spread / separation distances with neighbouring buildings – The radiative fire spread to neighbouring property to the site has been highlighted and included in the fire and plume study report. This addresses the impact of a battery fire to a neighbouring site and whether there is a risk of fire spread/damage to that property. The reviewer agrees that analysis for the neighbouring houses and skip hire site is overall appropriate. The computational fluid dynamic (CFD) modelling shows no risk to a building 12m away.
7. Fire service liaison and provisions – The consultant should set out details of deflagration and explosion protection systems (NFPA68 & NFPA69) to the fire service. The consultant should confirm details of the vehicle access path around the site in order to confirm that the dimensions of the road are suitable for fire tender vehicle access.
8. Results and impairment thresholds – The applicant should provide a reference for the failure rates stated in the assessments and what is the basis for the failure rates of BESS equipment specifically.

9. Checklist (Appendix B) of compliance against NFCC guidance provided, identifying areas of compliance/non-compliance and where further information is required.

9.76 Following further correspondence with, and information from, the applicant, including selection of a battery manufacture (BYD), Hydrock provided tables setting out responses on the applicant's response to actions and compliance with NFCC Guidance. The response confirms the majority of actions initially identified by Hydrock have been closed, with the exception of:

1. Fire protection barrier – There would be no fire resistant protection between BESS containers. Whilst fire protection it is recommended by NFPA 855, there would be no fire spread between containers as demonstrated by the UL9540A test. The test is only valid for the exact battery type proposed. Therefore, if the battery technology changes, the enclosures may require fire protection.
2. Results and impairment thresholds – Hydrock do not agree with the source referencing or assumption for failure rates of BESS. However, failure rates do not really have a material impact in this design as with BESS as it is designed for worst case failure (akin to building regulations method). The design methodology followed assumes that a fire scenario will occur, and recommends design measures to mitigate against the effects of the occurrence. Hence, an order of magnitude frequency is not required, provided the stated design safety mitigations are implemented that Hydrock have highlighted.

9.77 The response also confirms the majority of NFCC compliance matters are agreed subject to adherence to the further details that have been submitted (including battery specification and MC Cube ESS Fire Control Technology Plan).

Dorset Police Architectural Liaison Officer

9.78 The security measures being put in place appear to be proportionate for the development. However, the officer would like to know how many monitored CCTV cameras there are going to be across the site. The officer has liaised with colleagues and is not aware of any terrorism threats. If planning permission is granted issues around crime and security are likely during the construction phase. The Officer would be happy to meet with the developer in the early stages to ensure there are suitable security measures in place to prevent this from happening.

Chickerell Town Council

9.79 Chickerell Town Council's **first set of comments** of September 2023 recommend refusal of the application on the following grounds, in summary:

1. The area is not identified for any development in the Chickerell Neighbourhood Plan.

2. The site forms part of the approved wildlife corridor identified in the Chickerell Neighbourhood Plan meaning this proposal will block the corridor and have a significant effect on wildlife.
3. Health and safety concerns for the surrounding, very close, residential properties and proximity to schools and public open spaces.
4. There being no local policy for fire safety of battery containers.
5. Insufficient spacing between BESS containers.
6. Lack of a second access route for emergency vehicles, in conflict with National Fire Chief Council guidance.
7. Should a major fire occur, the toxic plume could cover very large areas of population dependant on wind direction.

9.80 The **second set of comments** of January 2024 add the following points of objection to their earlier response and maintain the recommendation for refusal:

1. Proposal does not fully comply with National Fire Chief Council guidance on the spacing of BESS containers.
2. Site is too close to existing residential properties and proposed housing developments.

Chickerell Ward Councillors

9.81 Cllr John Worth (ward member prior to the May 2024 local elections) requested that the application be considered by the Strategic Planning Committee as it represents one of the largest BESS applications in the UK and has raised considerable public interest and concern.

9.82 Cllr Jean Dunseith (ward member prior to the May 2024 local elections) requested that the application be considered by the Strategic Planning Committee due to the scale of development.

9.83 Cllr Taylor objects to the development due to the proximity to existing and proposed houses and the lack of a strategic approach due to BESS' not being in the Local Plan. BESS developments should be plan-led rather than piecemeal.

9.84 Cllr Simon Clifford raises an objection to the proposal and requests that the Committee note his objection as he believes he is representing an overwhelming local view that the proposed development is the wrong project in the wrong place. There is alarm and concern about the proximity to current and planned housing and worry about fire risks.

Representations received

9.85 At the time of writing 159 representations have been received. Of these, 138 are objections, five make comments and 16 representations are in support of the application. The representations have been taken into account in assessing the proposal.

9.86 A petition signed via the Chickerell Action Group website objecting to the development on the following basis has been signed by 561 people:

“This proposal is wholly inappropriate adjacent to the homes of approximately 57,000 people, who could be affected by an exclusion zone in the event of a fire or explosion releasing highly toxic gases, as well as potentially

contaminated water courses from trying to manage such a fire. Planning permission should be denied on the grounds of potential impact on Health and Public Safety.”

9.87 In summary, the following responses have been received:

Chris Loder MP (former MP for West Dorset)

9.88 Objects to the development. Concerns raised in relation to the fire safety of Lithium-Ion batteries and proximity to developed residential areas. Also concerns with aesthetic impact on the surrounding countryside. Note the applicant has made clear their ambitions for a near three thousand acre solar farm in the immediate environs of the proposed site. It is clear that such a facility would be designed to serve a future solar park which has already caused immense concern amongst the local community.

Richard Drax MP (former MP for South Dorset)

9.89 Relays concerns from the FRS and requests that the application is considered very carefully.

Weymouth Town Council

9.90 Weymouth Town Council (WTC) provided comments in October 2023 in support of the principle of the development but insisting that comments from Dorset Fire and Rescue Service are fully addressed. Concerns are raised regarding Chickerell Neighbourhood Plan (CNP) Policies 4 (Chickerell Wildlife Corridor) and 10 (Locally Valued Landscape north and east of Chickerell Village). WTC note concerns related to noise which need to be mitigated. The size of the site needs to be assessed due to close proximity to Coldharbour Lane and the developer needs to look at better solutions that have less fire risk, e.g. vanadium.

9.91 Subsequent comments of January 2024 maintain the WTC’s previous comments and notes WTC would also like to reference the NFCC guidance.

Chesil Bank Parish Council

9.92 Neighbouring Parish Council, Chesil Bank, strongly object to the development on the grounds of public safety and environmental impact and raise wide-ranging concerns in relation to: highway safety; traffic impacts (including air pollution); noise pollution; adverse effects on the Dorset AONB; cabling would need to be underground; inadequate spacing between BESS containers; maintenance of rural roads due to inappropriate vehicles using roads for access; pollution in the event of a BESS fire; adverse impacts on Chesil and the Fleet; public safety concerns; evacuation within 3km of the site in the event of a fire.

Chickerell Action Group

9.93 The objections from Chickerell Action Group (CAG) are extensive and raise a number of concerns. In summary:

September 2023

1. Principle – Unacceptable due to location outside of a defined development boundary. Development is not a renewable energy scheme. Alternative sites have not been considered.

2. Viability – information has not been provided. Concerns development would fail to be competitive over the lifetime of the development. Li-on phosphate technology will soon be outdated.
3. Adverse landscape impact – development is quasi-industrial and the scale of development means it cannot be effectively mitigated.
4. Harm to green corridor.
5. Harm to local identity and distinctiveness.
6. Loss of best and most versatile agricultural land.
7. Pollution to watercourses – through contaminated fire water, including of Radipole Lake SSSI. Proposed ponds are not of sufficient capacity.
8. Public open space and community orchard – is contrary to Policy COM4 due to inadequate parking facilities and footpaths.
9. Harm to residential amenity – including: visual amenity; noise; vibration; traffic; and air quality. Particularly during the 18 month construction period. Validity of Noise Impact Assessment findings.
10. Fire safety and conflict with guidance from the FRS and NFCC – access points, BESS container spacing, water supply, conflict with proposed landscaping. Accident and disaster detail is lacking. Fire and Plume Study cannot be relied upon. Risks of thermal runaway.
11. Ecology – Objectives in LEMP and Biodiversity Plan cannot be achieved. Loss of trees. Impact of noise on animals.
12. Human rights – residents have a right to safety (physically and mentally).
13. Adverse cumulative impacts – does not consider existing adjacent solar farm.
14. Alternatives – Alternative technologies should be considered as part of the EIA.
15. Planning balance – National benefit does not outweigh local harm.

February 2024

In addition to earlier points:

16. Conflict with NFCC Guidance – container spacing and access (branching does not provide two accesses).
17. Inadequacies of proposed conditions and queries about the applicant.
18. Alternatives – viability of cabling from alternative site questioned.
19. Floodlighting – would have an adverse effect on residential amenity and wildlife.
20. Standards – Query what other standards the proposal adheres to, including secure IT systems being compliant with security standards.
21. Engagement with applicant – has been disappointing. Applicant has not responded to questions raised by CAG.

Weymouth Civic Society

9.94 Objected at both stages of public consultation on the following grounds:

1. Location – unsuitable and dangerous given proximity to residential areas.
2. Health and safety – dangers of fire, explosion and contamination.
3. Noise pollution – flawed methodology and 24/7 explore throughout year.
4. Agriculture, landscape and wildlife habitat – permanent damage and harm to Land of Local Landscape Importance. Loss of BMV agricultural land.
5. Highways – disruption, highway safety and flawed methodology.
6. Terrorism – risk of infrastructure being targeted by terrorists.

Dorset Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)

9.95 CPRE considers BESS would be a clear danger to the local population due to evidenced fires world-wide. Location and scale is not appropriate. Proposal would cause disruption during construction and would result in the loss of BMV agricultural land. It would be located on brownfield land. Proposal would harm the landscape and destroy the green area between Chickerell and Southill, and damage green corridors.

Comments from members of the public

9.96 Comments and objections received were wide-ranging, with the principal concern related to fire risk and associated impacts. In summary, the following key themes of the representations are as follows:

Topic	Comments
Location and principle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Too close to urban area, residential properties (including planned development east of Chickerell), holiday accommodation, schools, care home, workplaces, police station, football stadium and golf course. - Proposal doesn't need to be located at application site. - Site is not allocated for development. - Should be located on a brownfield site. - Should be located in a remote area. - Should be located within defined development boundary. - Locating development at the park & ride, Golf Course or football club would be more suitable. - Loss of best and most versatile agricultural land and harm to food security.
Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development is not required. - There are better alternatives, including residential batteries within homes.
Viability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Question whether the development is viable due to conversion between AC and DC.
Scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BESS is too large, one of the largest in the world.

Climate change, sustainability and whole lifecycle considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No guarantee stored electricity would be produced from sustainable sources. - Proposal would compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, particularly in terms of food production, provision of housing and protection of the environment. - Ineffective use of land and natural resources. - Carbon will be released during construction. - Adverse impacts of mining lithium which uses vast quantities of water and is mined mostly in Australia and South America and has an enormous carbon footprint. - Batteries are difficult to recycle. - Human rights concerns regarding mining of raw materials.
Landscape, visual impact and local character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proposals will change the character of the area. - Adverse landscape and visual impacts, including when looking north from Weymouth. - Site is located within the Dorset National Landscape (AONB). - Adverse impacts on the Dorset AONB, including views into and out of the AONB, including from the eastern end of Lanehouse Rocks Road. - Overdevelopment of Chickerell.
Landscaping and open space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No clear details of landscaping have been provided. - Public will not be allowed in close proximity to the site due to security. - Footpaths are not attractive because they do not lead anywhere. - Who would be responsible for management and maintenance of the 'Country Park'? - Should park be locked at night to discourage vandalism. - Conflict with Chickerell Neighbourhood Plan Policy CNP10: Locally Valued Landscape north and east of Chickerell.
Ecology and trees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proposals will have a detrimental effect on ecology, including wildlife and animals of nearby paddocks. - Queries about habitat loss and why protection of existing habitats is not always possible. - Maintenance of new habitats needs to be confirmed. - Loss of existing hedgerows. - Native plant and seed species should be used.
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No benefit to local economy or employment opportunities for locals. - Development would harm tourism in local area and associated spending in local economy.
Highways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concerns with construction impacts of vehicles in Chickerell and local highway network.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concerns with the transportation of oversized load (112 tonne transformer) from Portland Port, including damage to roads. - Road safety concerns with narrow roads for a range of road users, including cyclists and horse riders. - Additional traffic generated by park should be considered. - Question whether a car park should be provided. - Query whether double yellow lines are required along Coldharbour to prevent park users from parking on road. - Potential conflict with users of the access track from Coldharbour. - Need for parking to serve users of the open space. - Unsuitable access, including for emergency vehicles.
Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site has not been considered.
Pollution, noise and vibration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impacts of toxic emissions in the event of a fire. May include Hydrogen Cyanide, Hydrofluoric Acid, Carbon Monoxide. - Adverse impacts on human health and environment in the event of a fire, including livestock. - Pollution pathway to Radipole Lake SSSI in the event of a fire. - 27/7 noise will be unbearable. It will affect ability to sleep. - Validity of noise assessment. - Pollution of land, watercourses and sea in the event of fire. - Potential vibration impacts. - Smell would be an intrusion.
Disruption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disruption caused by relocation of telegraph pole at entrance, and query whether Open Reach has been consulted.
Flood risk and drainage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attenuation ponds do not show where contaminated water drains off to before being treated.
Precedent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approval of BESS would facilitate development of large solar farm within AONB. - BESS is only required to facilitate the solar farm.
Public benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There would be no direct benefit to the local community.
Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Statutory authorities must be consulted.
Private interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development is profit driven. - Loss of property value without compensation. - Will reduce the desirability of housing within the local area. - Proposal would increase insurance costs for nearby residents. - Reduces ability for nearby paddock owners to sell land or use it as they desire. - The proposal will not reduce energy costs.

Fire risk and health & safety

Risk

- Proposals represent an unacceptable fire risk for local residents, including new houses and primary school to the east of Chickerell due to fire, smoke and explosion risk.
- Risks and the likelihood of a fire are greater than stated by the applicant.
- A BESS fire is likely to occur and there are examples of BESS fires around the world, including in Liverpool.
- There would be a risk to life.
- There is no guarantee fires will not occur.
- Technology is in its infancy and there are still too many unknowns.
- Applicant is inexperienced in operating BESS developments.
- Risk of lightning strikes and air accident.
- Concerns with 'hidden functionalities' of BESS software which could be weaponised and used in terrorism.
- Risks of cyber attack if facility can be remotely operated.
- Risks of vandalism.
- Concerns with validity of plume modelling.
- Query whether Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 2015 have been addressed.

Site Design

- Inadequate access for fire services. Two accesses should be provided.
- Spacing of containers is minimal.

Monitoring

- Monitoring of battery conditions and heat generation is inadequate.
- Constant monitoring is required.

Suppression

- Lack of fire suppression within the containers.
- Technical information on the type of Li-On batteries should be provided.
- Risk to firefighters in the event of a fire.

Emergency planning and response

- An Emergency Plan is required.
- Potential lockdowns in the event of fire due to prevailing winds. Queries how long it would take to evacuate properties within 500m and lockdown homes within 5km.
- Residential areas may need to be evacuated in the event of a BESS fire.
- Unacceptable risk to resident and tourist safety and well-being.
- Large scale evacuation would be necessary in the event of fire.
- Queries how local population would be protected and warned in the event of an emergency.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Queries how the FRS would respond and how long it would take for monitoring equipment to be put in place. - The Council has a Duty of Care for the public.
--	---

9.97 Comments in support raised the following points:

Topic	Comments
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BESS developments have to go somewhere. - Location is far enough away from most properties.
Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Many BESS sites are needed across the UK. - Existing electricity network is heavily constrained.
Energy security and climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development is sustainable. - BESS' are essential to transition from fossil fuels and the proposal would help to reduce reliance on fossil flues and support energy security. - Development would assist in smoothing out energy demands. - Development would reduce the need to build new power stations and for renewable energy to be shut down when electricity is oversupplied. - Development would provide a balancing function to demand at peak periods. - Proposal would reduce the risk of power cuts in future winters. - Benefits would assist Weymouth and the South of England.
Landscaping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Urban development within Weymouth has a worse impact on landscape than proposed development.
Health and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Health and safety concerns are overstated by objectors. - All development comes with risks. These should not prevent moving beyond fossil fuels.

10.0 Duties

10.1 s38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that the determination of planning applications must be in accordance with the development plan unless material circumstances indicate otherwise.

11.0 Relevant Policies

Development Plan

11.1 The following policies are considered to be relevant to this proposal:

- INT1 - Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development
- ENV1 - Landscape, seascape & sites of other geological interest
- ENV2 - Wildlife and habitats
- ENV3 - Green infrastructure network
- ENV4 - Heritage assets
- ENV5 - Flood risk
- ENV6 - Coastal erosion & land instability
- ENV8 - Agricultural land and farming resilience
- ENV9 - Pollution and contaminated land
- ENV10 - The landscape and townscape setting
- ENV 12 - The design and positioning of buildings
- ENV 16 - Amenity
- SUS2 - Distribution of development
- COM7 - Creating a safe & efficient transport network
- COM9 - Parking provision
- COM11 - Renewable energy development

Chickerell Neighbourhood Plan:

- CNP4 - Chickerell Wildlife Corridor
- CNP10 - Locally valued landscape north and east of Chickerell Village
- CNP11 - General design principles
- CNP12 - Enhancing biodiversity

Material Considerations

Emerging Local Plans:

11.2 Paragraph 48 of the NPPF provides that local planning authorities may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:

- the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);
- the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant plan policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and
- the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the NPPF (the closer the policies in the emerging plan are to the policies of the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

11.3 The Dorset Council Local Plan Options Consultation took place between January and March 2021. Being at a very early stage of preparation, the Draft Dorset Council Local Plan should be accorded very limited weight in decision making.

Supplementary Planning Document and Guidance

Dorset AONB Landscape Character Assessment

Dorset AONB Management Plan 2019-2024

Landscape Character Assessment February 2009 (West Dorset)

Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy, Dorset Council (15 July 2021)

Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy 2023-25 Refresh (March 2023)

Planning for Climate Change: Interim Guidance and Position Statement (December 2023)

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023):

11.4 Paragraph 11 sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Development plan proposals that accord with the development plan should be

11.5 approved without delay. Where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date then permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of approval would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the NPPF or specific policies in the NPPF indicate development should be restricted.

11.6 Relevant NPPF sections include:

- Section 4. Decision taking: Para 38 - Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available...and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.
- Section 12 'Achieving well designed places indicates that all development to be of a high quality in design, and the relationship and visual impact of it to be compatible with the surroundings. In particular, and amongst other things, Paragraphs 131 – 141 advise that:

The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people.

It is important to plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and wider area development schemes.

Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design.

- Section 14 'Meeting the challenges of climate change, flooding and coastal change'. Local planning authorities should not require applicants to

demonstrate the need for renewable or low carbon energy and should approve applications if impacts are (or can be made) acceptable (Para. 163).

- Section 15 'Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment' - Paragraphs 185-188 set out how biodiversity is to be protected and encourage net gains for biodiversity.

National Planning Practice Guidance

11.7 The NPPG acknowledges the benefits of BESS and provides guidance to applicants and Local Planning Authorities (034 Reference ID: 5-034-20230814 and 035 Reference ID: 5-035-20230814 respectively). It recommends consultation with the local fire service and consideration of proposals against guidance produced by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) (2023).

11.8 The associated Chief Planner Newsletter of 11 September 2023 notes that ensuring BESS developments are sited, installed, operated, maintained and decommissioned safely are priorities for the Government together with ensuring that potential risks to safety are duly assessed.

Grid Scale Energy Storage System Planning Guidance (2023)

11.9 This planning guidance was published by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) in 2023. It provides detailed guidance on the planning, design and management of BESS developments and references other guidance, comprising:

- National Fire Protection Authority (NFPA) (2023) – Standard for the Installation of Stationary Energy Storage Systems ('NFPA855')
- FM Global (2017) Property Loss Prevention Data Sheets: Electrical Energy Storage Systems

National Policy, Government Guidance and Strategy

- Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener (2021)
- British Energy Security Strategy (2022)
- Government Response: Facilitating the deployment of large-scale and long duration electrical storage (2022)
- Powering Up Britain (2023)
- Powering Up Britain Energy Security Plan (2023)
- Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) (2023)
- National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) (2023)
- UK Battery Strategy (2023)
- Health and Safety Guidance for Grid Scale Electrical Storage Systems (2024)

12.0 Human rights

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.

13.0 Public Sector Equalities Duty

13.1 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.

13.2 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 and it is not considered that the development would affect anyone with protected characteristics.

14.0 Financial benefits

14.1 Employment, particularly during the construction and decommissioning phases of the development (moderate benefit), as well as statutory and site operators during the lifetime of the development (limited benefit).

15.0 Environmental Implications and Context

15.1 At a national level the Government aims to reduce carbon emissions by 80% (compared to 1990 levels) by 2050 and fully decarbonise the electricity grid by 2035. The Government aims to achieve these targets in a number of ways, including through development of up to 50GW of offshore wind by 2030 and a fivefold increase in solar by 2035 (Powering Up Britain, 2023).

15.2 The Government’s Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener (October 2021) acknowledges that the path to net zero in 2050 will respond to the innovation and adoption of new technologies over time. Whilst the exact technology and energy mix in 2050 cannot be known now, the Government identifies a number of green technologies (including storage), which interact to meet demand across sectors.

15.3 Electricity storage complements the rapid necessary expansion of renewable technologies by providing a balancing function to support the intermittent energy

supply from renewable sources.

15.4 National Policy Statement EN-1 (2023) states that storage has a key role to play in achieving net zero and providing flexibility to the energy system. Storage is noted to support the usable output from intermittent low carbon generation, reducing the total amount of generation capacity needed on the energy system, thereby helping to reduce constraints on the network and helping to defer or avoid the need for costly network upgrades as demand increases. EN-1 confirms there is currently around 4GW of electricity storage operational in Great Britain, around 3GW of which is pumped hydro storage and around 1GW is battery storage.

15.5 National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) (2023) adds that as the electricity grid sees increasing levels of generation from variable renewable generators such as offshore wind, onshore wind and solar power, there will be an increasing need for storage infrastructure to balance electricity supply and demand.

15.6 The Government's British Energy Security Strategy (2022) sets out how the Government seeks to secure clean and affordable energy in the long term. The wide-ranging initiatives include encouraging all forms of flexibility with sufficient large-scale, long-duration electricity storage (LLES) to balance the overall system.

15.7 In August 2022, the Government issued a response on facilitating the deployment of LLES. The response states that "a smart and flexible energy system is essential for integrating high volumes of low carbon power, heat, and transport. The importance of flexibility for our energy security to ensure that we can efficiently match supply and demand and minimise waste was recognised in the British Energy Security Strategy. We anticipate that at least 30GW of low carbon flexible assets, which includes electricity storage, may be needed by 2030 to maintain energy security and cost-effectively integrate high levels of renewable generation."

15.8 The document notes that battery developments have an important role to play in achieving net zero, helping to integrate renewables, maximising their use, contributing to supply, and helping manage constraints in certain areas. The response further recognises that electricity storage developments provide low carbon flexibility, replacing some unabated gas generation and diversifying our technology mix to help meet energy targets.

15.9 More recently, the Government's Powering Up Britain: Energy Security Plan (2023) explains the Government is facilitating the deployment of electrical storage at all scales and is working to ensure an appropriate, robust and future-proofed health and safety framework is sustained as electrical storage deployment increases.

15.10 In November 2023 the Government published the UK Battery Strategy. It reiterates that batteries will play an essential role in our energy transition and our ability to achieve net zero by 2050. In respect of battery safety, the Strategy notes

the UK has a strong health and safety and regulatory framework covering the breadth of different batteries noting work is continuing to improve battery safety. It confirms the Government will continue to prioritise cross-departmental work into the ongoing safety of industrial-scale batteries.

15.11 The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero's (DESNZ) January 2024 consultation on Long Duration Electricity Storage identifies that there is a pipeline of at least 35GW of Lithium-Ion BESS across the UK with either a planning application submitted, planning application accepted or currently under construction.

15.12 In April 2024 DESNZ published Health and Safety Guidance for Grid Scale Electrical Energy Storage Systems (March 2024). This document highlights the rapid growth of grid-scale electrical energy storage systems (EESS) connecting to our electricity system which play an essential role in our energy transition and our ability to achieve net zero targets. This document highlights the existing legislation, regulations, standards and other industry guidance is intended as a good practice guidance to EESS project developers to help navigate the Health and Safety (H&S) landscape and ensure relevant aspects of H&S are integrated into their process(es).

15.13 The NPPF (Para. 163) sets out 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 energy and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to significant cutting of greenhouse gas emissions. It also sets out that applications should be approved if the impacts are (or can be made) acceptable. On 8 July 2024, the Government withdrew the footnotes to Para. 163. This change removes the previous requirement for wind turbines to be within an area identified as suitable for wind energy development in a Development Plan or Supplementary Planning Document and for impacts identified by the local community to have been appropriately addressed and the proposal to have community support.

15.14 Dorset Council accepts that energy needs to be produced from renewable sources and the Council must aim to provide this within its administrative area. The Council recognised this by declaring a climate emergency in May 2019, with the aim of taking a lead as an authority in tackling climate change. In November 2019 this was escalated to a Climate and Ecological Emergency. On 28 July 2024 Dorset Council declared a Nature Emergency.

15.15 Dorset Council's Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy (2023) includes a number of missions to support the strategy. 'Mission 1: Renewable Generation' identifies the deployment of renewables and storage to support the overarching mission of decarbonising the grid by 2035. Dorset Council published the Climate Change: Interim Guidance and Position Statement in December 2023. The Statement confirms battery storage infrastructure as forming a component of standalone renewable energy generation schemes. It notes climate change will be

given significant weight as a material consideration in the balance when determining applications, in line with the legislative and national policy context.

15.16 The proposed BESS has a power of 400MW and capacity of 2,400MWh (i.e. six hour duration). The applicant estimates that, based on a conservative three hour discharge am and pm (one cycle a day on a six hour system), the BESS would provide 2,400MWh/day (2.4mKWh/day). Whilst electricity discharged by the BESS would not all be consumed locally, based on 2021 census data, and for comparison purposes, the proposed BESS has potential to serve the electricity needs of approximately 233,937 households or 138% of households in Dorset¹ based on mean domestic consumption of 3,744.6kWh/year for the average Dorset household in 2022². According to Ofgem³, the average British household uses 2,700kWh of electricity and 11,500kWh of gas. Based on this lower average figure, the proposed BESS has the potential to serve the electricity needs of approximately 324,444 households based on average British household electricity usage. It would help to support local, national and international targets through the provision of renewable energy supporting infrastructure, thereby reducing carbon emissions and helping to decarbonise the grid. The location, in close proximity to the Chickerell Substation, would reduce electricity losses compared to transmission of electricity over longer distances.

15.17 Volume 5 of the Environmental Statement (ES) includes a Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions Assessment which considers the GHG emissions that would be avoided through the proposed development and the renewable energy production that could be supported by reducing the need for curtailment (i.e. stopping wind and solar electricity generation in times of surplus). The ES estimates that the proposed development would result in a positive GHG impact in the order of approximately 1,559,957 tCO₂e savings by 2037, the end of the UK's Sixth Carbon Budget period. This represents a significant benefit in the context of Dorset Council's Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy 2023-25 Refresh (March 2023) which states "we must achieve a carbon neutral Dorset by 2050 and a carbon neutral council by 2040." Compared to Dorset Council's emissions, which were 24,326 tCO₂e in 2023⁴, the carbon savings of the BESS is sufficient to neutralise the Council's own emissions for the next 64 years based on 2023 emission levels. As a county, Dorset's emissions were 2.27 MtCO₂e/year⁵ in 2023. For comparison, the

¹ Census (2021) confirms Dorset has a total of 169,261 households.

² Government 'Sub-national electricity consumption statistics 2005 to 2022' – updated 25th January 2024) for 'mean domestic consumption kWh per household' in Dorset during 2022:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65b024e0160765000d18f73c/Subnational_electricity_consumption_statistics_2005-2022.xlsx

³ Ofgem: <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/average-gas-and-electricity-usage>

⁴ Page 11 DC's Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy 2023-25 Refresh (March 2023)

⁵ Page 10 DC's Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy 2023-25 Refresh (March 2023)

proposed development is estimated to save 350,000 tCO₂e in its first year representing approximately 15% of current total county-wide emissions. The proportion saved would reduce over time as more renewable energy is deployed and the grid is decarbonised.

15.18 It is understood that the Applicant has secured a grid connection date in 2028 subject to planning permission. The proposal therefore has potential to make an early positive contribution towards the above objectives. Given the connection date of 2028 and the complexity of the development, a longer implementation period of 5 years is considered reasonable in this instance should Members resolve to grant planning permission.

15.19 The environmental benefits have to be balanced against the environmental impacts of the development, including: embodied carbon in construction materials; associated transport emissions during construction and operation; and the partial development of a greenfield site with associated landscaping. Whilst specific assessment of emissions from activities related to the construction and decommissioning of the development were scoped out of the ES, Volume 5 of the ES notes that such emissions are expected to be very minor relative to the GHG reduction benefits of the proposed development. This conclusion is considered reasonable by the Council's Sustainability Team.

16.0 Planning Assessment

Principle of Development

Principle of BESS development

16.1 Local Plan policy SUS2 imposes strong restrictions over development in the countryside outside of defined development boundaries, it states that having regard to the need for the protection of the countryside and environmental constraints development will be restricted, inter alia to "proposals for the generation of renewable energy or other utility infrastructure".

16.2 Policy COM11 provides specific support for proposals for generating heat or electricity from *renewable* energy sources noting such proposals will be allowed wherever possible providing that the benefits of the development significantly outweigh any harm. It further requires that:

1. "any adverse impacts on the local landscape, townscape or areas of historical interest can be satisfactorily assimilated;
2. the proposal minimises harm to residential amenity by virtue of noise, vibration, overshadowing, flicker, or other detrimental emissions, during construction, its operation and decommissioning;
3. adverse impacts upon designated wildlife sites, nature conservation interests, and biodiversity are satisfactorily mitigated."

16.3 These detailed matters are assessed in subsequent sections of this report.

16.4 Although not generating renewable energy the proposal would assist in managing supply and demand for renewable energy across the grid. Policy COM11 should be considered in conjunction with the Council's Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy which recognises electricity will need to be generated from renewable energy, and that therefore, inter alia, it is also essential to be able to store energy locally and manage supply and demand. Whilst not all electricity stored by the BESS would be generated from renewable sources, the proportion from renewable sources would increase over the lifetime of the development given the targeted decarbonisation of the grid by 2035. It is noted that The Energy Act (2023) amends the Electricity Act (1989) to provide that generating electricity from stored energy is included as a definitive subset of generation.

16.5 Para. 157 of the NPPF specifically states that the planning system should support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure. Para. 162 notes that local planning authorities should not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions and that such applications should be approved if the impacts are (or can be made) acceptable.

16.6 There are three Grid Supply Points (GSPs) that supply Dorset with electricity. The GSPs act as the bridge between the high voltage electricity transmission system, operated by National Grid, and the distribution system operated by the district network operators. It is noted that the GSPs that supply electricity to Dorset also supply electricity to neighbouring areas within the south west. The GSPs supplying Dorset with electricity are: Axminster, Chickerell and Mannington. BESS developments have been proposed close to each GPS.

16.7 As infrastructure that will support renewable energy generation, the principle of development is consistent with the aims and objectives of relevant Local Plan policies and provisions of the NPPF summarised above subject to need for the protection of the countryside and environmental constraints.

Principle of informal recreational space

16.8 The proposals include informal recreational space together with sustainable urban drainage (SUDS) features linked to the BESS drainage strategy within Fields 5 and 6.

16.9 The principle of part of the application site being used for informal recreational use is supported in accordance with Chickerell Neighbourhood Plan Policy CNP10, which promotes opportunities to enhance informal recreational use of the designated Land of Local Landscape Importance (LLLI) which the application site forms part of.

Best and most versatile agricultural land

16.10 The Local Plan recognises that agricultural land is an important resource for

current and future populations. Policy ENV8 seeks to steer built development towards areas of poorer quality land where it is available. The NPPF (Para. 180) notes decisions should enhance the natural and local environment, including by recognising the wider benefits from natural capital, including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural (BMV) land. It further states in reference to plan making that where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality and that the availability of agricultural land used for food production should be considered, alongside the other policies in the NPPF, when deciding what sites are most appropriate for development (Footnote 62).

16.11 The Applicant’s Site Selection Process report explains why the Chickerell Substation and application site were selected for the proposed development. In respect of agricultural land, the report notes that the majority of land within a 2km radius of the substation is either Grade 3 land (including sub-grades 3a and 3b) with smaller areas of Grade 4 land, AONB and urban land. This indicates that a development of the proposed scale within 2km of the Chickerell Substation would likely result in the loss of Grade 3 land, some of which may be Best and Most Versatile (BMV) land (i.e. Grade 3a or above).

16.12 A number of objections raise concerns with the loss of agricultural land and highlight concerns with food security. Chapter 4 of the Environmental Statement (ES) and the appended Agricultural Land Classification Report considers land take and soils. It identifies that approximately 49% of the site is BMV land. The breakdown is as follows:

Agricultural Land Classification	Area (hectares)	Proportion of site (%)
Grade 2	1.2	5%
Grade 3a	10.4	44%
BMV sub-total	11.6	49%
Grade 3b	6.6	28%
Grade 4	5.4	23%
Non-BMV sub-total	12	51%
Total	23.6	100%

16.13 The areas of BMV land are located within the south of the site (Fields 2, 3, and 4 – all Grade 3a) and in parts of the north east of the site (western part of Field 5 – Grade 3a and northeastern part of Field 6 – Grade 2).

16.14 Whilst built development of some BMV land is proposed, built development generally seeks to avoid areas of BMV through the location of the majority of BESS infrastructure within the north western part of the site (Field 1). No built development of Grade 2 land is proposed. Closest to the Chickerell Substation, BESS Compound 3 (Field 2) and customer substation (Field 4) fall within Grade 3a land.

16.15 Other than the landscaping and attenuation ponds, no built development is proposed within Fields 3, 5 and 6. These fields are not proposed to be retained in

agricultural use over the lifetime of the development, although there is potential for them to be used for pastoral grazing. The north eastern part of the site (Fields 5 and 6) would be landscaped to create a green space with public access, including a wildlife pond, permissive routes and seating area. Field 6 would accommodate woodland planting and landscaping. These fields would be rested from intensive agricultural use over the lifetime of the development.

16.16 Overall, there would be a temporary direct loss of 11.6ha of BMV land over the 40-year lifespan of the development plus the construction and decommissioning periods. Following the life of the development, the development would be dismantled and the land returned to agricultural use. The ES acknowledges that it can take several years to re-establish soil structures and biological communities. To ensure adverse effects on BMV land are time limited, decommissioning and restoration conditions would be required. With these conditions in place, the adverse effects on BMV land would be temporary (albeit long term). The temporary loss of BMV land through development of the site and associated loss of the natural capital and economic and food security benefits is therefore limited.

16.17 Within Dorset approximately 70% of land is estimated to have an Agricultural Land Classification of Grade 1-3, of which 4% has a grade 1-2 with the remainder falling within Grade 3 (including 3a and 3b). There is no detailed data for the area that quantifies how much of the Grade 3 land is Grade 3a, albeit mapping by Natural England does give an overview of likelihood.

16.18 Part ii) of Policy ENV8 states that where possible, the Council will steer built development towards areas of poorer quality agricultural land where it is available, except where this would be inconsistent with other policy and sustainability considerations. In this case, the site is well related to the Chickerell Substation and Point of Connection (POC) and is therefore a sustainable location for battery storage. Development to provide a 400MW battery storage facility would be consistent with Policy COM11 and would represent a sustainable alternative use of land given the high suitability for the proposed use and high proportion of Grade 3 land within the site selection study area. The limited loss of the BMV land therefore complies with Policy ENV8 and the adverse effects caused by the temporary loss of BMV land is considered to carry limited weight in the planning balance.

Landscape and visual impact

16.19 The application site falls within National Character Area (NCA) 138: Weymouth Lowlands, which is defined by its complex geology of a broad ridge-and-valley pattern of chalk, limestone and clay and associated landform, a dynamic coast and its cultural heritage. At a finer detail, the site falls within Ridge and Vale Dorset Landscape Character Type (LCT) an area of broad evenly spaced shallow ridges and valleys which follow a west-east alignment. They are enclosed and defined by the dramatic chalk escarpment to their north and the coast to their south.

16.20 The site is identified as Land of Local Landscape Importance (LLLI) within the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan and Chickerell Neighbourhood Plan. It is therefore considered a valued landscape wherein the NPPF (Para. 180)

explains decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by inter alia protecting and enhancing valued landscapes in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan.

16.21 Local Plan Policy ENV3 confirms development that proposals would cause harm to LLLI's or would undermine the reasons for an area's inclusion within the network will not be permitted unless clearly outweighed by other considerations.

16.22 Chickerell Neighbourhood Plan Policy CNP10 notes the LLLI is a locally valued landscape and should be protected for the following qualities, in summary:

1. long views to the Dorset National Landscape (AONB) to the north;
2. rural setting for Chickerell and Radipole villages and wider rural backdrop to north-west Weymouth;
3. green wedge between Chickerell and Southill/Radipole; and
4. part of the north-south wildlife corridor.

(Note: assessment against these protected qualities are set out in the respective Landscape and Visual, AONB and Ecology assessment sections of this report).

16.23 Policy CNP 11 of the Chickerell Neighbourhood Plan states that development should be located and designed so that it does not detract from and, where reasonable, enhances the local landscape character.

16.24 The West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan confirms that development should be located and designed so that it does not detract from and, where reasonable, enhances local landscape character. Development that significantly adversely affects the character or visual quality of the local landscape will not be permitted (Policy ENV1).

16.25 The landscape and visual effects of the development must be considered with regard to the existing context and value of the site. The site is characterised by open agricultural fields with hedgerow field boundaries. An area of woodland sits within the south of the site close to the Chickerell Substation. There are a number of visual detractors within and in the immediate and wider vicinity of the site, including: the Chickerell Substation; associated electricity pylons (crossing parts of the site); the adjacent solar farm; small agricultural holdings and equestrian uses within the surrounding fields.

16.26 The BESS would have an operational lifespan of around 40 years. The LVIA ES Chapter notes that after this time, the equipment, fences, tracks and gravel areas will be removed and the platforms grassed over. The landform and mature landscape would remain.

Landscape

16.27 The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) submitted by the applicant considers the landscape quality and value of the site to be low to medium. These judgements are accepted, notably due to the landscape character of the site being influenced by existing infrastructure (Chickerell Substation, electricity pylons and solar farm) and the urban fringe character from the small holdings and associated buildings. Given this baseline, there is some scope for the site to

accommodate change whilst minimising adverse impacts on the landscape of the site and wider area.

16.28 In terms of the landscape effects on the site, the proposed development would substantially alter the character of the fields, replacing three arable fields (Fields 1, 2 and 4) with an engineered landscape of BESS infrastructure (Fields 1 and 2) and an electrical substation (Field 4), together with adjacent soft landscaping. The other three fields (Fields 3, 5 and 6) would be developed for biodiversity and open space. They would comprise woodland, scrub, grassland and SUDS infrastructure. Hedgerows would largely be retained, enabling the individual fields within the site to be perceived, albeit less readily compared to the existing arable fields.

16.29 The BESS infrastructure would have a cumulative effect on the landscape character of the site given the substantial increase in, generally low lying, energy infrastructure across it. The change would be moderated by proposed landscaping, including woodland planting, tree planting and earthworks/recontouring.

16.30 The recontouring and planting surrounding BESS Compound 1 within Field 1, and the existing and proposed landscaping around BESS Compound 2 within Field 2, would largely screen the proposed BESS infrastructure from users of the site (existing PROW and new permissive routes).

16.31 The change in character of the landscape would be perceptible by users of the existing PROW within the south of the site, particularly before planting has time to mature and more effectively screen the development. Over time, as landscaping matures, the adverse landscape effects of the BESS on the site would be limited. It is considered that the proposal would have a moderate adverse impact on the landscaping of the site within Year 1 of the development, which would reduce to minor adverse (not significant) from Year 10.

16.32 In terms of the character of the wider landscape character areas, the surrounding area is characterised by agricultural fields, energy infrastructure and urban fringe development. In this respect, the proposed development would be somewhat consistent with this existing landscape character, albeit the additional infrastructure would have a cumulative adverse effect on the wider landscape.

16.33 The changes to the landform in Field 1 will significantly reduce the visual influence of the BESS on the adjacent landscape. Woodland block planting and tree planting would largely screen the BESS infrastructure from the surrounding landscape, replacing the open arable character of the site. This would take time to mature.

16.34 Woodland within the Ridge and Vale Landscape Character Type is not characteristic. However, given there are pockets of woodland within and adjacent to the site which make a positive contribution to local character, the change in landscape character would not be entirely out of character: it would reinforce positive aspects of local landscape. The applicant's assessment of moderate adverse impacts within Year 1 and minor beneficial effect from Year 10 onwards are generally agreed.

16.35 The Landscape Officer considers that the adverse effects associated with the installation of the electrical infrastructure would be mitigated to a significant degree on the completion of the proposed changes to the landform and that the maturation of the extensive planting proposed would provide further mitigation in the medium to long term for the adverse effects of the electrical infrastructure as well as mitigation

for the adverse landscape impacts of the changes to the landform. The Officer notes the woodland planting would represent a managed change of landscape character which would not be of significant detriment.

16.36 The Landscape Officer concludes the development includes appropriate measures to moderate the adverse effects of the development on the landscape and would not result in a significantly adverse effect on the character of the local landscape.

16.37 The location of the built infrastructure within the site and landscape design, once matured, are not considered to detract from local landscape character or significantly adversely affect the character of the local landscape in the medium to longer term. From a landscape perspective, the proposal is considered to include appropriate measures to moderate the adverse effects of development in compliance with Policy ENV1 (parts ii and iii) and Chickerell Neighbourhood Plan Policy CNP11. The development of Fields 3, 5 and 6 for biodiversity and open space, together landforming and planting across the site would maintain a green wedge between Chickerell and Southill/Radipole and the rural setting of Chickerell and Radipole and wider rural backdrop to north-west Weymouth (i.e. two of the four qualities of the LLLI as identified above). Securing the recreational space within Fields 5 and 5 through a Section 106 Agreement would provide assurance that the green wedge would be sustained, at least for the lifetime of the development.

16.38 Chickerell Neighbourhood Plan Policy CNP10 notes the LLLI is a locally valued landscape and should be protected for the following qualities, in summary: long views to the Dorset National Landscape (AONB) to the north; rural setting for Chickerell and Radipole villages and wider rural backdrop to north-west Weymouth; green wedge between Chickerell and Southill/Radipole; and part of the north-south wildlife corridor. The proposal is not considered to harm the landscape qualities specified in Policy CNP 10 given it would sustain a rural setting and a green wedge between Chickerell and Southill/Radipole.

16.39 In landscape terms, the proposals accord with Policies ENV1, ENV3, COM11 of the Local Plan, Policy CNP10 and CNP11 of the Chickerell Neighbourhood Plan and the NPPF.

Visual Impact

16.40 The LVIA assesses the visual impact of the development from 21 representative viewpoints. These viewpoints were agreed with officers during pre-application engagement and include a series of close range, medium distance and long distant views.

16.41 During construction, the LVIA identifies significant adverse visual effects to five viewpoints (Views 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6). For all but one of these viewpoints (No. 6: rural footpath S16/21 as it enters the southwest corner of the site), the visual effect following completion of earthworks is assessed as reducing to moderate adverse (not significant) when the earthworks have been completed due to the earthworks screening the majority of the site. This includes the three viewpoints from Coldharbour (Views 1, 2 and 3) where traffic and traffic management would remain clearly visible but wider construction activities would be screened. At View 6, the construction activities across the site would be clearly visible throughout construction. The LVIA also assesses that there would be moderate adverse (not

significant) effects from seven other viewpoints during construction (Views 7, 8, 10, 11, 12 15 and 17). All adverse effects during construction would be temporary.

16.42 During operation of the development, visual impacts would result from the changes in land use, topography, introduction of additional electrical infrastructure and soft landscaping including woodland and tree planting. The LVIA assesses impacts at Year 1 (immediately after construction) and 10 years after construction.

16.43 At Year 1 the LVIA identifies significant adverse effects to two viewpoints (Views 6 and 7) along rural footpath S16/21 as it enters the southwest corner of the site (View 6) and passes to the south of the site (View 7). At Year 10, the visual effect is assessed as reducing to minor adverse for View 6 and moderate adverse for View 7 (i.e. not significant). The residual adverse impact would be for a short section of the footpath.

16.44 The LVIA also assesses that there would be moderate adverse (not significant) effects from six other viewpoints at Year 1 of operation (Views 3, 8, 9, 15, 16 and 17). At all but one of these viewpoints (View 8: rural footpath S16/21 as it passes to the southeast of the site), visual effects are assessed as reducing to either neutral (Views 3 and 15) or minor adverse (View 9) or improving to minor beneficial (View 16 and 17) at Year 10. At View 8, a moderate adverse (not significant) effect is identified at Year 10.

16.45 The LVIA considers cumulative adverse effects in association a now refused 60MW BESS application to the east of the site, and the residential-led mixed use development to the east of Chickerell. At Year 1 the LVIA identifies significant adverse effects at two viewpoints (Views 6 and 7) along rural footpath S16/21. At Year 10, the visual effect at both viewpoints is reduced to minor adverse (not significant). Following the refusal of the 60MW BESS in March 2024, the proposal no longer comprises a cumulative development against which the impacts of this development need to be assessed. Taking this refused scheme into account, the LVIA does not identify any significant adverse impacts after 10 Years.

16.46 The Landscape Officer notes that the proposal is likely to generate significant adverse visual effects during construction. The Officer notes that the extensive woodland planting, when mature, would largely screen the development and would provide visual enhancements for existing development of poor quality (i.e. the adjacent solar farm). The officer concludes that the development would not significantly adversely affect visual amenity.

16.47 Whilst there would be significant adverse effects during construction, at Year 1 of operation, significant adverse effects would be limited to two viewpoints (Views 6 and 7) along rural footpath S16/21. The section of footpath between these two viewpoints is approximately 250m and takes less than 5 minutes to walk. From both viewpoints, and along the route, footpath users are aware of existing electrical infrastructure in the surrounding area (electricity pylons and the Chickerell Substation). The proposed development, including earthworks and BESS infrastructure, would be a noticeable new feature in this urban fringe landscape. However, the development would not be a framed view, and the adverse visual impact of the development would only be experienced during a short period of time. Following establishment of landscaping after 10 years visual impacts would not be significant. It is acknowledged that 10 years represents a significant amount of time wherein the significant adverse effects would be experienced.

16.48 From a visual impact perspective, the proposal is considered to include appropriate measures to moderate the medium and long term adverse visual effects of the development in compliance with Policy ENV1 (parts ii and iii) subject to securing appropriate landscaping and maintenance via planning condition. The temporary adverse visual effects in the shorter term are afforded moderate weight in the planning balance.

16.49 Notwithstanding the adverse effects, the applicant proposes to provide public access to Fields 5 and 6 and create new permissible paths across the northern part of Field 1 and north/south from Coldharbour to link with existing footpaths S16/20 (to the north of Coldharbour) and S16/21. These new routes would provide new public viewpoints across the site, helping to compensate for the visual harm during construction and the first 10 years of operation.

Dorset National Landscape (AONB)

16.50 December 2023 amendments to the Clause 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW) require relevant authorities (including Local Planning Authorities) to “seek to further the purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty” (rather than “have regard to...”) in relation to land in an AONB.

16.51 The NPPF (Para 176) states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty within AONBs and that development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.

16.52 Policy ENV1 of the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan states that development which would harm the character, special qualities or natural beauty of the Dorset Area of Outstanding Beauty or Heritage Coast, including their characteristic landscape quality and diversity, uninterrupted panoramic views, individual landmarks, and sense of tranquillity and remoteness, will not be permitted.

16.53 Partial views of the site are possible from the Dorset National Landscape (AONB). As noted in the assessment section above, no significant adverse visual effects are anticipated from the six viewpoints within the Dorset National Landscape (AONB) (View 16-21) at Year 10. However, the LVIA identifies there would be a moderate adverse (not significant) visual effect from View 17 (Bincombe) during construction and moderate adverse visual effects at Views 16 (Crook Hill) and 17 (Bincombe) at Year 1.

16.54 From the two longer range views to the south of the site (View 9 and 15), the Dorset AONB is only visible from View 15. From viewpoint 15 the majority of Chickerell Substation is screened by earthworks, buildings and trees. Associated electricity pylons are visible and the escarpment of the Dorset AONB form a backdrop. The application site would be partially visible alongside the adjacent solar farm, residential areas and the Granby Industrial Estate. The LVIA identifies the view as having a high sensitivity due, in part, to it affording views of the AONB. The LVIA concludes the proposal would have a moderate adverse effect (not significant) at Year 1 and a neutral effect at Year 10. Due to the distance, and as the site would be seen in the context of urban development and infrastructure, the development is not considered to harm views into the AONB.

16.55 The Landscape Officer comments that the LVIA evidences the proposed earthworks would screen the development from viewpoints within the Dorset AONB

to the north of the site (Views 17-21). The Officer considers the woodland planting may have a minor beneficial effect on visual amenity from these viewpoints given it would screen parts of Granby Industrial Estate which sit in the backdrop of these views. From the Viewpoint within the Dorset AONB to the south west of the site (View 16: Crook Hill), the landscape officer considers the site would be visible in the context of existing industrial, residential and electrical infrastructure development and would have a minor adverse impact which would diminish as the proposed woodland planting matures. Overall, the Landscape Officer has no objection and considers the proposal would not harm the character, special qualities or natural beauty of the Dorset AONB.

16.56 The Dorset AONB Team notes construction would be discernible from the AONB viewpoints and that it is foreseeable that operational effects on views from the north would be low and capable of mitigation through the proposed planting. Similarly, the AONB Team note the view from Cook Hill (View 16) would be seen in the context of urban development and infrastructure.

16.57 The Dorset AONB Team note that publicly accessible locations close to the site that are most affected (footpath S16/21) do not appear to afford notable views of the AONB. This is evidenced by the baseline photography of Views 5-7 (along the footpath) and the rendered AVRs from View 6. The viewpoints do not afford long range views to the Dorset AONB to the north. Accordingly, the proposal would not affect 'long views to the Dorset AONB to the north' one of the identified qualities of the designated LLLI (Chickerell Neighbourhood Plan Policy CNP10).

16.58 Overall, the proposed development is not considered to harm the character, special qualities or natural beauty of the Dorset National Landscape (AONB) in accordance with Policy ENV1 and the NPPF.

Rights of Way

16.59 Part v) of Local Plan Policy COM7 states that development should not result in the severance or degradation of existing or proposed rights of way (PROW). Where development degrades the attractiveness of a route, compensatory enhancements will be sought such that there is a net improvement to the PROW network.

16.60 As identified within the landscape and visual impact section above, the proposal would result in adverse visual impacts for users of public footpath S16/21 at four viewpoints (Views 5-8). Whilst the quality of this route is compromised by existing electricity infrastructure, the proposed development would further degrade the attractiveness of the route. This degradation would lessen over time as planting within Field 3 matures. The proposed planting includes a hedgerow to the north of the footpath which in itself would limit views to the north and degrade the open character of this part of the footpath.

16.61 The proposed creation of new permissible paths across the northern part of Field 1 and 6 (to the south of Coldharbour) and north/south from Coldharbour to link with existing footpaths S16/20 (to the north of Coldharbour) and S16/21 would compensate for the degradation of footpath S16/21 and would provide a safe pedestrian route to the south of Coldharbour given it does not have a pedestrian footway. Whilst the permissive route north/south through the site would be heavily influenced by electrical infrastructure, this would not be uncharacteristic of the existing S16/21 footpath between Chickerell and Southill. The informal recreational space within Fields 5 and 6 would also create new informal routes.

16.62 To ensure adequate compensation in accordance with Policy COM7 it is reasonable and necessary for the permissive routes and informal recreational space to be secured via a Section 106 legal agreement. The agreement must define the new permissive routes and recreational space (as shown on the Proposed Landscape Plan) and ensure they remain available for use by members of the public. With the legal agreement in place, the proposal accords with Policy COM7 and would enhance the PROW network.

Noise and residential amenity

16.63 Local Plan Policy ENV16 states that proposals should be designed to minimise their impact on amenity and quiet enjoyment of both existing and future residents and that proposals will only be permitted where they do not have a significant adverse effect on residents or significantly detract from the character and amenity of the area or the quiet enjoyment of residential properties. Policy COM11 (Renewable Energy Development), notes that proposals for generating electricity from renewable sources will only be permitted, inter alia, where the proposal minimises harm to residential amenity by virtue of noise, vibration, or other detrimental emissions, during construction, operation and decommissioning.

16.64 The closest existing dwellings (on Coldharbour) are located approximately 100m from the closest BESS containers and 20m north of the site boundary within BESS Compound 1. The residential-led mixed use development site to the east of Chickerell is approximately 50m from the closest BESS container and approximately 30m south east of the site boundary with BESS Compound 3.

Construction

16.65 Noise and vibration impacts during construction and operation are assessed within Volume 8: Noise Impact Assessment (NIA) of the ES. The NIA identifies and assesses noise and vibration from a series of 'noise and vibration sensitive receptors' (NVSR) around the site at Coldharbour Road (NVRS B & C), Woodlands Way Road (NVRS D), Edwards Court Road (NVRS E), Lower Putton Lane (NVRS F), Grafton Avenue (NVRS G) and the residential-led mixed use development site to the east of Chickerell (NVRS A). Long term sound monitoring was undertaken at two locations over a two week period to establish background noise, one in the centre of the site (LT1) and one on Coldharbour Road (LT2).

16.66 During construction the NIA concludes ambient noise levels would be below 55 dB LAeq1 and below the identified significant threshold at all NVSRs. The NIA notes that some activities have the potential to exceed the noise level criteria at close receiver distances. The assessment sets out a series of mitigation measures and best practice guidance to minimise noise and vibration effects where possible.

16.67 In respect of vibration, the NIA notes that vibration associated with earthworks may be perceptible for brief periods, but not significant. Piling is expected to be required in relation to the substation. Due to the location of the substation within the centre of the site +200m from the closest NVSR it is not anticipated that piling would generate significant vibration effects at the NVSRs.

16.68 Overall, with mitigation in place, noise impacts during construction are not predicted to give rise to significant adverse amenity impacts in accordance with Policy ENV16.

16.69 A planning condition securing a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) is proposed in the interests of residential amenity.

Operation

16.70 Noise will be generated during the operation of the development by various equipment within the compounds and substation, including: transformers; BESS containers; inverter transformers; and inverter buildings. The only source of tonal noise is from the grid transformers.

16.71 The NIA identifies that during the daytime at proposed residential receptor NVSR A (East Chickerell housing site) noise levels would be +1dB above background (41dB $LA_{90,T}$ vs. 42dB $L_{Ar,Tr}$) and +2dB above background at nighttime (37dB $LA_{90,T}$ vs. 39dB $L_{Ar,Tr}$). At all other receptors the predicted rating levels are between -6 and -13dB below background sound levels during daytime and between -4 and -5dB below background sound levels during nighttime. During daytime and nighttime no increases above baseline residual ambient sound levels ($L_{Aeq,T}$) are found to occur at any receptors. Whilst combined noise levels are predicted to exceed the 55/42 dB $L_{Aeq,T}$ noise level specified in WHO guidance during daytime/nighttime, the threshold is already exceeded and the proposed development is not predicted to result in the absolute noise level increasing at any of the NVSRs.

16.72 In January 2024, the EHO advised no objection subject to planning conditions in respect of noise mitigation measures and testing during operation of the development. Mitigation measures are subject to detailed design. They are to include standard acoustic solutions for the grid transformers and air inlets/outlets of the inverter buildings (the noisiest parts of the development). With mitigation measures proposed to be secured via planning condition the proposal would not have a significant adverse impact on residential amenity in accordance with Policy ENV16 of the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan.

16.73 Policy ENV16 also states developments will only be permitted where they do not generate a level of noise that will detract significantly from the character and amenity of the area. PROW S16/21 runs east to west through Field 3 close to the southern boundary of the site. It is approximately 150m from the closest BESS equipment. Along the route, existing noise from the Chickerell Substation and overhead powerlines are audible.

16.74 Whilst noise impacts have not been assessed on users of the PROW it is assumed, on a precautionary basis, that users would experience elevated noise levels similar to NVSR A. The NVSR is located closer to the BESS compound than the PROW. Slightly elevated noise levels would only be experienced for a short period of time whilst following the footpath. The proposal is not therefore considered

to generate a level of noise that would significantly detract from the character or amenity of the area. Furthermore, a network of permissive routes and publicly accessible informal recreational space are proposed across the site to compensate for the degradation of the route due to landscape and visual harm (as assessed above).

16.75 A number of representations raise concern with the perceived impact of the development on mental health, predominantly due to the fear of a fire occurring and anxiety of it being close to residential properties. Based on the representations it is accepted that the development may cause some fear and anxiety in some people, included because BESS' are a relatively new form of technology. Such concerns are not unique to BESS developments and may arise in respect of other forms of development such as solar farms and 5G infrastructure. For the reasons set out in the health and safety assessment section of this report, health and safety aspects have been rigorously assessed and the development is considered acceptable in this regard. Furthermore, as proposed planting and landscaping establishes, visibility of the BESS infrastructure will reduce over time, thereby reducing the perception of the site and potentially associated fear and anxiety.

16.76 Subject to planning conditions, the proposals accord with Policy ENV16 and would avoid significant harm to residential amenity in accordance with Policy COM11.

Biodiversity and trees

16.77 The application is informed by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA), Biodiversity Plan (BP), Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP), Ecological Impact Assessment, Biodiversity Net Gain Report and Shadow Habitats Regulations Assessment. The ecological studies are underpinned by ecological surveys of: badgers; bats; breeding birds; wintering birds; barn owls; great crested newt; hazel dormouse; otter and water vole; reptiles; brown hare; and vegetation surveys.

16.78 As the site is predominantly in arable agricultural use, the most existing ecological value of the site lies in the hedgerows along field boundaries and the woodland and ponds within the centre of the site. The arable land has limited ecological value and constrains opportunities for wildlife corridors across the site. As a result there is scope to improve the ecological value of the site through the creation of more biodiverse habitats outside of the areas of built development.

16.79 The proposals would result in the loss of 180m of Category C (low quality) hedgerow consisting of elm, field maple, goat willow and hawthorn to facilitate access between the fields and two sections of Category C (low quality) tree groups (G1 within Field 4 and G15 within Field 2) totalling 200sq.m are proposed to be removed to facilitate access and the proposed cable connection to the Chickerell Substation. The removals are not considered to have a significant impact on the amenity of the site and would be compensated for through extensive replacement planting as indicated on the proposed Landscape Plan (ref. 521-LP-01-Rev B). Minor

tree works and works within the root protection areas of existing trees are also proposed. Subject to securing replacement planting and an Arboricultural Method Statement via planning condition, the proposals are acceptable in respect of tree impacts.

16.80 The BP and LEMP establish ecological objectives for the site, including increasing ecological corridors across it. Extensive woodland planting is proposed around both BESS compounds and blocks of woodland are proposed in the south and north east of the site. The woodland serves a dual function in providing necessary landscape screening and biodiversity improvements. Overall, the LEMP concludes that the proposed development will not result in the loss of any habitats of significance apart from the loss of small sections of hedgerow totalling 180m to facilitate pedestrian and vehicle access. The conversion of farmland to more biodiverse habitats is considered to compensate for the loss of land to electrical infrastructure.

16.81 The application is supported by a Biodiversity Plan (BP) that has been agreed by the Council's Natural Environment Team (NET). The BP outlines a range of measures to protect biodiversity and deliver biodiversity improvements, in summary:

- i. Grassland enhancements, scrub creation and a new woodland buffer planting, including the planting of scattered trees and creation of suitable grassland habitat for breeding skylarks, to be managed via low intensity sheep grazing or a mowing regime and restrictions on public access during bird breeding season;
- ii. Infilling of existing hedgerows using native hedgerow species and creation of approximately 550m of new species-rich hedgerows across the site;
- iii. Ecological lighting strategy and creation of 'dark corridors' around existing hedgerow and woodland;
- iv. Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) to reduce adverse impacts associated with construction (notably dust);
- v. Tree and hedgerow protection measures during construction;
- vi. Precautionary measures in respect of great crested newts, hazel dormouse and reptiles;
- vii. Management and maintenance of habitats;
- viii. Erection of bird boxes (No. 12), bat boxes (No. 8) and a barn owl box; and
- ix. Provision of log piles (No. 7), a pyramid logger, reptiles hibernacula (No. 6) and a bee bank.

16.82 The Accompanying Biodiversity Net Gain Report, based on an earlier iteration (Version 4.0) of the biodiversity metric, demonstrates that the proposals would result in a 29.92% increase in Habitat Units and 18.84% increase in Hedgerow Units. This substantially exceeds the 'measurable net gain' that needs to be demonstrated

under planning policy (note: the application was submitted before the requirement to demonstrate a 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG) came into effect). Accordingly, the biodiversity enhancements represent a substantial increase above current policy requirements and the existing ecological value of the site. In the context of a declared climate and ecological emergency, the net gain is a moderate benefit to be weighed in the planning balance. Natural England raises no objection to the proposed development.

16.83 One of the four identified qualities of the LLLI north and east of Chickerell Village is the role it plays as part of the north-south wildlife corridor from Radipole Lake SSSI (Chickerell Neighbourhood Plan Policy CNP10). Radipole Lake is designated for its wetland habitats which are identified as being of great importance for birds as a breeding, wintering and passage site. The application site forms part of the LLLI along with other surrounding land. The land currently plays a limited role as a wildlife corridor due to it largely comprising arable agricultural fields, with some woodland, hedgerows and trees. The proposals include substantial areas of new woodland and tree planting across the site, including north-south through the site adjacent to the BESS compounds. This would link with existing woodland within Field 3 and enhance the role the site plays as part of the north-south wildlife corridor from Radipole Lake SSSI. Accordingly, the proposal would protect and enhance this identified quality of the LLLI in accordance with Policy CNP10 and Policy CNP4.

16.84 NFCC guidance recommends areas within 10m of battery containers should be cleared of combustible vegetation and any other vegetation should be kept in a condition that doesn't increase fire risk. The proposed landscape scheme shows planting would be beyond 10m. However, there is potential for vegetation to encroach into the 10m zone over time as it establishes. Landscape management and maintenance would therefore be needed to be secured via planning conditions to ensure compliance with NFCC guidance and to ensure the ecological objectives of the BP and LEMP.

16.85 Subject to these planning conditions the development is acceptable from a biodiversity perspective in accordance with Policies ENV2 and COM11 of the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan and the Policy CNP12 of the Chickerell Neighbourhood Plan.

Highways

16.86 The application is accompanied by a Transport Assessment and Abnormal Indivisible Load Access Report. Construction traffic impacts have also been assessed within the ES (Volume 7: Construction Traffic Impact Assessment).

16.87 Vehicle access to the site would remain from Coldharbour via the existing hard surfaced access track which leads north/south through the site and serves nearby agricultural holdings and equestrian plots. The applicant has undertaken vehicle access tracking / swept path analysis of the access from Coldharbour. The analysis has informed proposed design changes to the site access so that it is able to accommodate the largest abnormal load vehicle. The changes include widening of the access, relocating the access gates serving the track 20m from the edge of the

highway and relocation of existing telegraph pole. Subject to the completion of the proposed access works, the access is considered suitable and does not raise highway safety concerns. Planning conditions to ensure appropriate access construction and visibility splays are proposed.

16.88 There would be traffic impacts during construction of the development and very infrequent vehicle movements when the site is in operation.

16.89 Construction is anticipated to take 18 months and is expected to involve an average of 12 two-way HGVs (tippers, flat-beds and articulated) trips per day and 44 workforce vehicles (cars, vans and mini-busses) during peak construction (months 12 and 13). The Transport Assessment reports that the largest vehicle that will be used to deliver equipment to the site on a day-to-day basis during the construction period will be a 16.5m articulated vehicle. HVG movements to and from the site are proposed to be restricted to only take place between 09:30-15:00 so as to avoid the school run and rush hour. Larger vehicles, as reported in the Abnormal Indivisible Load Report, would be required in order to deliver the 112 tonne transformer. Temporary car parking for construction workers would be provided within the site with construction worker trips peaking during 7-8am and 6-7pm (31 trips). The ES concludes that the proposals would not result in any significant transport and access effects during construction.

16.90 The Transport Assessment and Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) propose that construction vehicle routing would be from the A354 Chafeys Roundabout Junction to the site via Granby Way/B3157, Glennie Way/Putton Lane and Coldharbour. When leaving the site construction vehicles would follow the reverse of the route. Within the site a 5.5m site access track is proposed. The CTMP also sets out proposals for surveys of the highway network to ensure any damage resulting from the development is addressed.

16.91 Other measures to manage deliveries, as set out within the CTMP include an advanced booking system, signage and the management of deliveries by banksmen and temporary traffic lights. Measures such as wheel washing are also required to minimise debris on the highway. In order to minimise the impact of construction traffic on the surrounding highway network a final CTMP is proposed to be conditioned, including details of wheel washing facilities. This requires that inspection of the highways serving the site prior to work commencing and at regular intervals during the construction stage,

16.92 Subject to planning conditions, the highway related impacts of the development are acceptable, can be appropriately managed and accord with Policy COM7 and the NPPF (Para. 114). The development would not have an unacceptable impact on highway safety and the residual cumulative impact on the road network would not be "severe" where considered against the NPPF (Para. 115).

Health and safety

16.93 Fire risk and associated impacts are the principal reason for objection raised by members of the public and third parties.

16.94 The NPPF notes Local Planning Authorities must determine applications on planning grounds only. Whilst fire risk can be associated with almost all types of development it is not routinely assessed at the planning application stage as potential implications are managed under other regulatory frameworks and regimes, such as Building Regulations and the Environmental Protection Act. However, given

the nature of the development, providing Lithium-Ion battery storage, health and safety is a material planning consideration so far as it relates to land use planning. It should also be noted that the proposal does not constitute a building for the purposes of the Building Regulations, and so the requirement to comply with the fire-related aspects of Building Regulations does not apply.

16.95 The NPPF notes Local Planning Authorities should “consult the appropriate bodies when considering applications for the siting of, or changes to, major hazard sites, installations or pipelines, or for development around them” (Para. 45). Appropriate bodies have been consulted in respect of health and safety matters. The application falls within the consultation distance zones of a high pressure pipeline. Accordingly, HSE advice has been sought and utility companies have been consulted. HSE has confirmed it does not advise against the development and has no further comment on the application.

16.96 Of relevance to health and safety considerations is Planning Policy ENV16, which notes inter alia that development proposals will only be permitted provided “they do not generate unacceptable pollution, vibration or detrimental emissions unless it can be demonstrated that the effects on amenity and living conditions, health and the natural environment can be mitigated to the appropriate standard”.

16.97 The NPPF more generally promotes healthy places and notes decisions should “promote public safety and take into account wider security and defence requirements” (Para. 101). In respect of pollution, the NPPF states decisions should also ensure “new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely 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...” (Para. 191).

16.98 National Planning Practice Guidance establishes guidance to Local Planning Authorities in the assessment of applications for battery storage (034 References ID: 5-034-20230814 and 035). It recommends consultation with the local Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) and consideration of guidance for FRS’ published by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) entitled ‘Grid Scale Battery Storage System Planning’.

16.99 The NFCC guidance recognises BESS developments are a fundamental part of the UK’s move toward a sustainable energy system and recognises the potential for fire. It notes the NFCC’s expectation is that a comprehensive risk management process must be undertaken by operators to “identify hazards and risks specific to the facility and develop, implement, maintain and review risk controls. From this process a robust Emergency Response Plan should be developed.” The guidance is wide ranging. It includes a number of recommendations relevant at the planning stage (such as access and layout) as well as detailed design and site management recommendations (such as venting and signage). The guidance explains that every BESS development is different and states a FRS should not limit themselves to the content of the guidance noting reference may be made to other guidance and standards including the internationally recognised guidance of the National Fire Protection Authority (NFPA) (2023) – Standard for the Installation of Stationary Energy Storage Systems (‘NFPA855’).

16.100 In accordance with the Council’s consultation protocol, the FRS has been consulted. The applicant assesses fire risk within the ES (Volume 9). This includes a

Fire and Plume Study (Appendix 1) and Fire Liaison Framework (Appendix 2). Given the scale of development and extensive third party concerns related to fire risk, the Council instructed a third party consultant (Hydrock) to: determine and evaluate whether the fire risks stated by the applicant are reasonable; and assess whether the impacts of a fire at this BESS site, as stated by the applicant, are reasonable, including fire spread to neighbouring buildings, fire service provisions and occupant safety.

16.101 The applicant has amended the proposals over the course of determination in response to initial comments and concerns raised in relation to fire risk, including by the FRS and Hydrock. Key updates include: providing two forms of access to the site; creating passing places on the access routes and between battery rows; adjustments to landscape design to ensure proposed planting is set a minimum of 10m from battery containers; and creation of an emergency services. The applicant has also committed to a BYD energy storage system (MC Cube Energy Storage System) and submitted the BYD Safety Manual, strategy (MC Cube ESS Fire Control Technology Plan) and datasheets of the proposed equipment.

16.102 The proposed BYD MC Cube Energy Storage System (ESS) contains 10 MC Cubes (five on each side), each consisting of 416 Lithium Iron Phosphate (LFP) cells.

16.103 Overall, Hydrock's peer review of March 2024 concluded the potential impacts of fire to neighbouring sites that are addressed within the ES have been demonstrated to either not to bear a sufficient level of risk or that they have been appropriately mitigated. The review made a number of recommendations, noting that a number of matters would be determined at the detailed design stage and requested further information in order to enable fire risks to be more fully considered. A number of the matters raised have a bearing on the proposed site layout, for which planning permission is sought.

16.104 The key aspects that affect the proposed development at planning stage are considered in turn:

Detection and monitoring

16.105 Hydrock's peer review noted that the applicant should detail the fire detection system specification and operation at the detailed design stage, including the specific operating parameters of detectors, how they are monitored and the response to a detection event.

16.106 In response, and following selection of the battery manufacturer, the applicant submitted the BYD Safety Manual, MC Cube ESS Fire Control Technology Plan and fire detection datasheets for the equipment. This confirms the proposed BYD MC Cube Energy Storage System (ESS) contains 10 MC Cubes (five on each side), each equipped with its own humidity, water, smoke and heat detectors calibrated to detect early signs of fire within the MC Cube. Each BESS container would have its own battery management system that provides information on the

energy capacity, thermal status and detection systems that reports to a controller which is responsible for management of each battery container. Each controller would then connect up and report to an overall site control unit and off-site controller. Each MC Cube ESS is fitted with both an audible fire alarm and visual fire strobe light. The site boundary would be monitored via CCTV.

16.107 In the event of an emergency, the MC Cube ES can be shut down locally or remotely. A system shutdown would result in electrical isolation of the battery strings and stop the battery charging or discharging.

16.108 Hydrock has confirmed that in their view the submitted information provides detailed information of the design regarding the detection system specification that is sufficient for the planning application.

Suppression systems

16.109 The BESS containers include a series of mitigation measures to reduce the risk of a fire occurring, thermal runaway taking place and fire spreading. Measures include: cooling systems to keep battery temperatures low; controls to stop the charging of batteries should certain temperatures be reached; pulsed aerosol systems initiated on sensing heat and smoke. Measures are proposed for each of the 10 MC Cube units within each BESS container. Hydrock advise that in their view the information is sufficient for the planning application albeit without the detailed test date/information Hydrock is unable to comment on the effectiveness of the suppression system.

Deflagration (explosion) prevention and venting

16.110 The BYD Safety Manual confirms the BESS containers would have an off-gassing valve and the MC Cube ESS Fire Control Technology Plan demonstrates that ventilation systems are included in the design. The flammable gas detector is calibrated to 25% of the lower explosive limit (LEL) in accordance with NFCC guidance. If the flammable gas detector is triggered, alarms would be activated and the off-gassing valve would open for exhaust. Hydrock advise that in their view the information is sufficient for the planning application.

Access

16.111 Access has been amended over the course of determination to respond to comments from the FRS in respect of site access. The revised layout incorporates a secondary emergency access track along the western side of the site allowing full circulation between battery rows and BESS compounds. It also includes passing places across the site and between battery rows. This complies with NFCC guidance which advises sites should include at least two separate access points to account for opposite wind directions/conditions. All BESS compounds can be accessed via the east or west and the circulatory access track allows vehicles to route either from the north or south. Access routes are suitably sized and comply with NFCC guidance.

Spacing of BESS containers

16.112 BESS containers are proposed to be spaced 3m apart. This falls below the suggested 6m minimum standard identified within the NFCC guidance. However, the guidance notes reduced spacing can be introduced where suitable design features are proposed, in which case a “clear, evidenced based, case for the reduction should be shown”. The referenced FM Global (2017) Property Loss Prevention Data Sheets: Electrical Energy Storage Systems document explains spacing can be reduced where there is adequate thermal barrier between battery enclosures. However, this document is out-of-date and has been superseded. The latest (July 2023) version includes reduced recommended separation distances.

16.113 To support the proposed separation distance of 3m, the applicant has provided assessment within the ES and fire testing information of the proposed battery. This presents computational fire dynamics (CFD) modelling of fire to assess fire spread within and between BESS containers. It shows that if all battery racks on one side of a battery container are on fire, then the heat generated on containers 3m away, in the worst-case wind conditions, are not sufficient to heat the neighbouring container to a level that might initiate thermal runaway. Hydrock note that the calculated heat at an adjacent BESS container is 7.5kW/m^2 , against an acceptance criterion of 35kW/m^2 . Hydrock agrees that the heat of 7kW/m^2 represents a low risk of fire spread between containers, and is a betterment over the standard criterion of the Building Regulations for building-to-building fire spread (12.6kW/m^2). Therefore, Hydrock agrees that the likelihood of BESS-to-BESS fire spread on site is low.

16.114 Following requests from Hydrock, the applicant has provided UL9540A testing results. The test, recommended by NFCC guidance, assesses fire safety hazards associated with propagating thermal runaway within battery systems by forcing a battery cell into thermal runaway. Whilst the proposed containers are separated by steel enclosure walls, they are not formally fire rated. However successful UL9540A test results demonstrate that fire does not spread between the specified enclosures in the event of a thermal runaway. On this basis, further thermal barriers and insulation are not considered necessary as the applicant has demonstrated through an evidence based approach that the BESS containers are adequately spaced. This is on the basis of the proposed batteries and specification, which are proposed to be secured via planning condition.

16.115 The FRS' response of January 2024 (prior to a BESS manufacturer being specified) notes that “on the basis that procurement of the battery units includes an ongoing assessment of the suitability of the fire engineered solution regarding spacing of containers, DWFRS are satisfied this achieves the objectives of NFPA 855.”

Distance from BESS containers to occupied buildings, site boundaries and other infrastructure

16.116 The impact of a fire event to a neighbouring site has been assessed for three possible fire scenarios: a single battery cabinet (rack) fire which does not spread; fire spread to 5 battery cabinets; and fire spread to all 10 battery cabinets in a battery container (i.e. one BESS container). The applicant has assessed these scenarios in relation to the neighbouring housing (existing and proposed) and commercial use.

16.117 In respect of distance to residential properties, the NFCC guidance notes distances between BESS container and occupied buildings/site boundaries will vary. It recommends an initial minimum distance of 25m prior to any mitigation and notes reduced distances may be possible in rural settings. Notwithstanding the proposed mitigation, the closest existing residential property is located approximately 100m from the closest BESS container, four times further than the NFCC guidance. The residential-led mixed use development site to the east of Chickerell is approximately 50m to the south east, double that of the NFCC guidance. This indicates the site is appropriately sited in relation to residential properties. The buildings on the commercial site are approximately 20m from the closest BESS container. Whilst this falls below the initial minimum distance of 25m, the proposal includes significant mitigation and the site can be considered a lower risk rural setting for which the NFCC guidance notes reduced distances may be possible.

16.118 The computational fluid dynamic (CFD) analysis undertaken by the applicant included six fire scenarios. All scenarios consider wind blowing towards the nearby houses and employment use for average and extreme wind speeds (6m/s and 12m/s). The CDF modelling considers impacts of reduced visibility, hydrogen fluoride and thermal radiation. It concludes that hydrogen fluoride plumes would be limited to the proximity of the site and the immediacy of a fire in all scenarios. Visibility impairments would be localised to the immediate vicinity of the BESS compound and visibility off-site (i.e. along Coldharbour or neighbouring properties) would not be impacted as a result of smoke. Hydrock confirms that the CFD analysis justifies the layout and determines that the likelihood of fire spread beyond the site boundary is low.

16.119 In response to comments from Hydrock that the separation distance between BESS containers and other site critical infrastructure should be reviewed, the applicant has confirmed that separation between transformers would be greater than 15m in line with British Standard EN 61936.

16.120 Given the agricultural nature of surrounding land uses, the closer proximity to the west is considered to accord with guidance.

Landscaping

16.121 The proposals have been amended to ensure all vegetation is set a minimum of 10m away from the nearest battery containers. A planning condition is proposed to ensure that vegetation is maintained in accordance with NFCC guidance and doesn't impinge within 10m of BESS containers.

Water supplies

16.122 In respect of water supply, NFCC guidance recommends that hydrant supplies should be located close to BESS containers (minimum 10m) and should be capable of delivering no less than 1,900 litres per minute for at least 2 hours (i.e. 228,000 litres capacity). Wessex Water has confirmed the closest fire hydrant on Coldharbour Road has a flow rate of 8.5l/second (510 litres per minute). As this falls significantly below recommended guidance the applicant has proposed that four fire water tanks are placed across the site. Each tank has a capacity of 58,000 litres, equating to a total capacity of 232,000 litres. The water tanks are proposed to be connected and pumped to perimeter piping across the site, with hydrants maintained in line with the proposed Fire Liaison Framework and Emergency Response Plan. Hydrock has confirmed the proposal meets NFCC guidance in respect of water supply.

16.123 The provision of water tanks prior to installation of any battery containers, and maintenance thereafter for the lifetime of the development, is proposed to be secured via planning condition.

Security

16.124 A perimeter fence and locked gates would prevent unauthorised access to the BESS compound. CCTV cameras facing into the compound would monitor the proposed site and signage around the external perimeter would be erected to warn of high-voltage equipment etc. The applicant has confirmed that the CCTV is for both temperature monitoring and intruder monitoring and would include some infrared thermal imaging cameras. The applicant has confirmed that CCTV images would be monitored from a 24/7 manned control room.

Signage and firefighting

16.125 An emergency services information point is proposed at the entrance of the site close to Coldharbour Road. The applicant confirms this will provide detail on emergency contact information, emergency isolation points and any specific hazards on site. The applicant notes that signage would be provided as part of the detailed design of the project and would be specified within an Emergency Response Plan (ERP).

Emergency Plans

16.126 NFCC Guidance notes that site operators should develop emergency plans (including a Risk Management Plan and ERP) and share these with the FRS. An ERP would be prepared at the detailed design stage. Given the recommendations of the NFCC Guidance an ERP is proposed to be secured via a pre-commencement condition.

16.127 The applicant has suggested that a Fire Liaison Framework (FLF) with the FRS will be maintained for the lifetime of the BESS and that a EPR is put in place in advance of the BESS operation. It is proposed that an Integrated Fire Risk Management Strategy (IFRMS) would be prepared based on the detailed design informed by the submitted FLF.

16.128 Subject to appropriately worded conditions securing the ERP, and IFRMS, the proposal complies with NFCC guidance in respect of emergency plans. Dorset Council would consult with Dorset FRS when details are submitted for approval pursuant to the conditions.

Environmental impacts

16.129 As noted in the pollution assessment section below, the proposal includes systems for containing and managing water run off and the EA has no objection.

Other matters

16.130 A number of comments have raised concern with the proposed battery chemistry (Lithium Iron Phosphate, LFP) and suggest that other chemistries such as vanadium should be used instead. The applicant has proposed LFP batteries which have been assessed in detail via peer review and considered by the FRS. As a planning application it is necessary to consider whether the proposed development, including specified batteries, are acceptable. It is therefore beyond the scope of the assessment of this application to require that alternative chemistries are explored by the applicant.

Summary

16.131 Due to the nature of battery storage facilities, the risk of fire cannot not be fully eliminated however, with the proposed mitigation measures in place as described above, a fire is not considered likely. Subject to the above recommended planning conditions (i.e. proposed specification, water tanks, landscape maintenance and maintenance, and emergency plans), officers are satisfied that the health and safety matters of the development in so far as they relate to land use planning matters have been satisfactorily addressed.

Pollution

16.132 The development would not generate unacceptable pollution, odour, detrimental emissions or associated impacts during normal operation. There is however a risk of such impacts in the event of a fire and thermal runaway and the Environment Agency (EA) raised initial concerns with potential pollution of water in the event of a fire.

16.133 The applicant has responded to initial concerns raised by the EA including by amending the conceptual drainage proposals to include an impermeable lining underneath the gravel attenuation areas beneath the battery unit compounds, lined swales and penstocks valves.

16.134 The EA has now removed its objection to the development subject to conditions. These conditions relate to surface water drainage, an emergency pollution control method statement and a verification plan. The EA recommend that BESS sites have drainage systems which can be completely sealed in the event of a fire to contain all contaminated firewater within the site and ensure there is no discharge of polluted water to ground or surface water bodies (including sealed gravel attenuation areas, lined attenuation ponds and penstock valves which can be

automatically closed). These measures are included with the submitted Flood Risk Assessment and Conceptual Drainage Strategy (April 2024).

16.135 It is noted that contamination of land would be managed under separate legislation, notably the Environmental Protection Act, with the precise method of remediation depending on the nature and extent of contamination. Accordingly, with the recommended conditions imposed the proposal is not considered to give rise to concerns with pollution.

16.136 Pollution risks and potential adverse impacts during construction can be appropriately managed during construction through a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) condition. Subject to this planning condition the proposal accords with Policy ENV9.

Flood risk and drainage

16.137 The site falls entirely within Flood Zone 1 and has low risk of flooding from rivers and sea. Parts of the site are subject to high (1 in 30 year) and medium (1 in 100 year) risks of surface water flooding, notably land within the proposed recreational space (Fields 5 and 6) where the watercourse runs west to east and in the south of the site close to exiting woodland (Fields 2, 3 and 4) where the watercourse flows south through the existing woodland.

16.138 Within the south of the site (Field 3) groundwater levels are between 0.025m and 0.5m below the ground surface within the site. Within this zone there is a risk of groundwater flooding to both surface and subsurface assets and there is the possibility of groundwater emerging at the surface locally.

16.139 The NPPF defines Essential Infrastructure as infrastructure which has to be located in a flood risk area for operational reasons, including essential utility infrastructure such as electricity storage and distribution systems. Such infrastructure is compatible within all flood zones and areas of medium and high surface water flood risk. The proposal avoids BESS compounds and the substation within areas of medium and high surface water drainage. Whilst parts of the wider site are affected by medium and high surface water flood risk, given the proximity of the BESS to Chickerell Substation there is an operational reason for it to be located where it is. Accordingly, the application of the Sequential and Exception Tests are not required.

16.140 The proposals would significantly increase the impermeable areas of the site compared to the existing site though the installation of the BESS compounds, substation and associated areas of hard standing.

16.141 The submitted Flood Risk Assessment and Conceptual Drainage Strategy (April 2024) considers latest information on flooding contained within the Dorset Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (March 2024). Surface water is proposed to be stored within the gravel BESS compound and three attenuation basins (two within Field Five and one within Field 3) and discharged at a restricted rate to the existing watercourse within Field 3.

16.142 The Lead Local Flood Authority has reviewed the surface water proposals by the applicant and has no objection subject to conditions.

16.143 Given the generally low risk of flooding on the site, and subject to surface water drainage conditions, the proposed development would be acceptable from a flood risk perspective and would not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere in accordance with Policy ENV5 and the NPPF.

Other Matters

Air Quality

16.144 Air quality impacts would arise through the construction of the development via associated vehicle movements and construction processes. During construction, air quality impacts are capable of mitigation through a Construction Management Plan that would require measures to suppress dust. The applicant's Shadow Habitats Regulations Assessment identifies that the development would not cause adverse effects on the integrity of protected sites. Impacts on air quality through vehicle movements are not considered to give rise to a significant change in air quality.

Archaeology

16.145 The applicant's Archaeological Trial Trenching Evaluation assesses the archaeological potential of the site, revealing limited archaeological potential. In light of the results, the Council's Senior Archaeologist has confirmed that no further archaeological work is required in relation to the proposed development. Accordingly, planning conditions are not required in respect of archaeology and the development accords with Policy ENV4 and the NPPF (Para. 209) in terms of archaeology.

Built Heritage Assets

16.146 The closest listed buildings are located approximately 400m from the eastern boundary of the site along Causeway (between Coldharbour and Radipole Lane). Given the nature of development, proposed recontouring and intervening topography the proposed development is not considered to fall within the setting of any built heritage asset or other heritage asset and would avoid heritage harm in accordance with Policy ENV4 and the NPPF. The Conservation Officer has no objection.

Decommissioning

16.147 A suitably worded planning condition to secure appropriate decommissioning of the site would ensure that electrical storage infrastructure is removed at the end of the 40-year period or within 6 months of the cessation of electricity storage and distribution by the facility (whichever is the sooner).

Gound Conditions

16.148 The applicant has submitted a Geo Environmental report which has been reviewed by the Council's land contamination advisor (WPA). WPA concur with the need to undertake a watching brief concerning unexpected and currently unknown contamination issues. Subject to planning conditions the proposal is acceptable in relation to ground conditions and contamination.

Minerals Safeguarding

16.149 As advised by the Council's Minerals & Waste Policy Team, the Minerals Planning Authority (MPA) confirm that in this case the mineral safeguarding

requirement is waived and no objection is raised to this proposal on mineral safeguarding grounds.

Overhead power lines

16.150 Two overhead power lines cross the site. National Grid raises no objection subject to maintaining sufficient clearance, avoiding planting, limiting changes in ground levels and stand offs from overhead towers from permanent structures. The proposals adhere to guidance from the National Grid.

Habitats Regulations

16.151 The proposed development is not considered to give rise to likely significant effects and is screened out from Habitats Regulations Assessment on the following basis:

- Chesil and Fleet SAC/SPA/Ramsar (2km) and Isle of Portland to Studland Cliffs SAC (4km): Natural England's approach to advising competent authorities on the assessment of road traffic emissions under the Habitats Regulations states "... protected sites falling within 200 metres of the edge of a road affected by a plan or project need to be considered further." The specified traffic route is along the B3157, which is 800m from the Chesil and Fleet designated site. Therefore, effects on air quality can be screened out. Impacts on water quality can also be screened out as there is no viable pathway.
- Crookhill Brick Pit SAC (1km): District Level licencing applies, but from an HRA perspective effects can be screened out as Great Crested Newt individuals generally inhabit the area within 250m of a pond and there is no viable pathway 1km from the SAC.
- Noise: Effects of noise on wildlife including birds in relation to all the sites can be screened out from HRA, given the distance from designated sites and the conclusion from the Noise Impact Assessment. The assessment confirms the increase in noise levels from the operation of the proposed development and vibration effects from piling will be negligible, and noise impacts from the operation of the site will be negligible compared to existing baseline levels.

High pressure gas pipelines

16.152 Two high pressure gas pipelines crosses the site, north/south through the eastern part of Field 5 and northeast/southeast through the southern parts of Fields 3 and 4. No changes in ground levels are proposed in either area. The only development proposed across the pipelines is a 400kV underground cable connecting the BESS to Chickerell Substation.

16.153 Since receiving an objection from SGN in March 2024, officers have liaised with SGN to seek to address the objection given it erroneously states that the development includes a wind turbine and solar panels and it is not clear whether SGN had reviewed the proposed drawings.

16.154 As requested by SGN in subsequent correspondence, the proposed development within the proximity of the pipelines has been confirmed and proposed drawings have been provided. SNG has advised that any trees planting within the vicinity of the pipeline must adhere to SNG's tree planting guidelines and that any cables crossing the pipeline must cross the pipeline perpendicular or with 15 degrees of perpendicular. SNG advise that installation must adhere to SGN Safety Management Framework (ref. SGN/WI/SW/2 dated June 2018).

16.155 Whilst SGN's objection has not been withdrawn at the time of writing, SGN has advised that the objection can be addressed by implementing suitable planning conditions. With appropriately worded landscaping conditions and an informative on works within the vicinity of the pipeline, the development is considered acceptable in relation to high pressure gas pipelines.

High voltage underground cable

16.156 A 33kv high voltage cable crosses the site, north/south through Fields 6, 1, 2 and 3. It passes beneath the proposed BESS compounds, landscaping and landforming.

16.157 Whilst SSEN did not provide any comments at either formal consultation stage (in August 2023 and January 2024), it provided late comments on 16 July 2024 following advertisement of the planning committee. SSEN currently object to the proposed development in the absence of an agreed solution for diverting the high voltage cable. The applicant has however, provided correspondence with SSEN dating back to August 2023 and related to the proposed diversion. SSEN's response of August 2023 provides a quote for the diversion and details the works that could, subject to agreement of fees, be undertaken.

16.158 The proposed Landscape Plan identifies a 'possible 33kv cable diversion' running to the west of the main access road from Coldharbour through Fields 1 and 2. The proposed route would avoid the BESS Compounds, proposed landscaping and landforming.

16.159 Whilst the proposed revised route has not yet been formally agreed with SSEN, the proposal set out by the applicant appears to be reasonable and there appears to be sufficient space within the site to accommodate the redirected cable subject to further discussion and formal agreement with SSEN. Acknowledging the need to protect the electricity infrastructure, a pre-commencement planning condition is considered necessary to secure the agreement of the proposed route. SSEN would be consulted on the details submitted pursuant to the condition.

16.160 Whilst SSEN's objection has not been withdrawn at the time of writing, with an appropriately worded condition, the development is considered acceptable in relation to high voltage underground cables.

17.0 Conclusion

17.1 The proposal is for a battery storage scheme and associated infrastructure. It is located in the countryside in close proximity to the Chickerell Substation.

17.2 The proposed BESS is 400MW. Once operational it is estimated⁶ to discharge 2,400MWh/day, enough to supply the average annual electricity needs of approximately 233,937 households. Whilst electricity discharged by the BESS would not all be consumed locally, it has the potential to serve the electricity needs of approximately 138% of households in Dorset.

17.3 The Dorset Council Climate Change: Interim Guidance and Position Statement notes climate change will be given significant weight as a material consideration in the balance when determining applications, in line with the legislative and national policy context. It identifies renewable energy generation as a public benefit which should be afforded significant weight even if the project is small-scale.

17.4 As noted in Section 15 of this report, the proposal would help to support local, national and international targets through the provision of renewable energy supporting infrastructure, thereby reducing carbon emissions, helping to decarbonise the grid and support energy security. It would respond to Dorset Council's declared climate, ecological and nature emergencies. The renewable energy benefits of the development therefore attracts significant positive weight in the planning balance.

17.5 Moderate net positive economic benefits would accrue through the development of the site during the construction period (construction jobs and supply chain benefits) and limited positive economic benefits would accrue through the operation of the development, given it would support few off-site jobs.

17.6 Biodiversity net gains would be delivered in excess of policy requirements. In the context of the declared ecological emergency, the benefits carry moderate weight.

17.7 Adverse impacts on residential amenity would not result in a significant adverse effect on residential amenity and the proposals would not generate a level of noise that would detract significantly from the character and amenity of the area or the quiet enjoyment of residential properties. As the adverse impacts would not amount to a reason for refusal, they carry limited adverse weight in the planning balance.

17.8 Significant adverse landscape and visual effects would be limited and localised to footpath S16/21 within Field 3. Harm would reduce over time to a non-significant level 10 years after development when proposed landscaping establishes. There would be no harm to the Dorset AONB and the specified qualities of the designated Land of Local Landscape Importance would be protected. Given the incorporation of appropriate measures to moderate the affects, the harm is judged to carry moderate weight in the planning balance.

⁶ See Paragraph 15.16 of this report

17.9 Degradation of footpath S16/21 through development within its setting would be appropriately compensated for through provision of a network of permissive routes through the site and creation of informal recreational areas within Fields 5 and 6.

17.10 Whilst part of the site is Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land, limited temporary loss of Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land is acceptable under Policy ENV8 given retention would be inconsistent with other policy and sustainability considerations. The loss is attributed limited weight.

17.11 Resulting pollution from potential fires is regulated by other legislative regimes and the planning system must operate on the assumption that these are effective. Nevertheless, the proposals have been rigorously assessed against NFCC guidance and independently peer reviewed by a consultant instructed by Dorset Council. The site is located in excess of the minimum distances to residential properties advised by NFCC guidance and the site layout has been justified. The proposals have been subject to iterative consultation with the Environment Agency, recommended conditions regarding water pollution and drainage are proposed to be imposed. There is no objection from Natural England.

17.12 On balance, the development is sustainable and the collective significant benefits of the proposal are considered to outweigh the identified harm of the development. For the reasons set out above, it is considered that the proposal is in accordance with the Development Plan read as a whole and there are no material considerations meaning that planning permission should be refused. The application is therefore recommended for approval subject to planning conditions and a Section 106 Agreement to secure compensatory permissive routes and publicly accessible informal recreational space within the site.

18.0 Recommendation

- A) Delegate authority to the Head of Planning or the Service Manager for Development Management and Enforcement to grant planning permission, subject to the completion of a legal agreement under section 106 of the town and country planning act 1990 (as amended) in a form to be agreed by the Head of Legal Services to secure:
- Permissive footpath routes through the site as shown on Landscape Plan ref. 21-LP-01 Rev B and publicly accessible recreational space within Fields 5 and 6 for the lifetime of the development.

And the following conditions:

Time limit

1. The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of five 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). The longer time period is

considered reasonable given the complexity of the pre-commencement conditions and the anticipated receiving date to the National Grid of 2028.

Approved Drawings

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

SL259_L_X_LP_1 Location Plan

SL259_L_X_MP_1 Rev B Block Plan

SL259_L_X_CS_1 Rev A Cross Sections

521_LP_01 B Landscape Plan

SD_1 Rev A Vehicle Tracks

SD_2 Rev A Contractors Temporary Compound

SD_3 Weld Mesh Fence to Battery Compounds

SD_4 Palisade fence to the substation compound

SD_5 External Transformer

SD_6 Container housing batteries

SD_7 Spare Parts Container

SD_8 Welfare Module

SD_9 Inverter House

SD_10 Reptile Hibernacula

SD_11 Pole Mounted Security Camera

SD_12 Rev A Fire Water Tank

SD_13 Control Room Building

SD_15 Compound Surface Finishes

SD_16 Rev A Permissive Footpath Construction

SD_17 Kissing Gate Detail

SD_18 Permissive Path Way Marker Post

SD_18 Rev B Piped Ditch Crossing

SD_19 Fruit Tree Protection Fence

SD_20 Tree Pit detail in soft landscape areas

SD_21 Rev A Retaining Wall 1

SD_22 Rev A Retaining Wall 2

SD_23 Bee Bank Detail

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

Temporary Development

3. The planning permission hereby granted shall be limited to a period of 40 years from the date when electrical power is first exported from the batteries to the electricity grid network, excluding electricity exported during initial testing and commissioning. Written confirmation of the first export date shall be provided to the Local Planning Authority no later than one calendar month after the event.

Reason: To define the permission and in the interests of proper planning.

Decommissioning

4. No later than 6 months prior to the expiry of the planning permission, or within 6 months of the cessation of electricity storage and distribution by this facility or within 6 months of a permanent cessation of construction works prior to the facility coming into operational use, whichever is the sooner a detailed scheme of works for the removal of the development (excluding the approved landscaping and biodiversity works) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme of works shall include the following details:

- i) a programme of works, including a timetable for their completion;
- ii) a method statement for the decommissioning and dismantling of all equipment and surfacing on site;
- iii) a Decommissioning Traffic Management Plan to address likely traffic impacts associated with the decommissioning;
- iv) details of any items to be retained on site;
- v) a method statement for restoring the land to agricultural use;
- vi) timescale for the decommissioning, removal and reinstatement of the land;
- vii) a method statement for the disposal/recycling of redundant equipment/structures.

The scheme of works shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved details and timescales. The Local Planning Authority shall be notified in writing of the date of the cessation of electricity storage by or distribution from the development within one calendar month of the event.

Reason: To ensure the satisfactory restoration of the site.

Construction Traffic Management Plan

5. Notwithstanding the submitted Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP), before the development hereby approved commences a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) must be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The CTMP must include:

- i. site operating hours.
- ii. construction vehicle details (number, size, type and frequency of movement).
- iii. a programme of construction works and anticipated deliveries.
- iv. timings of deliveries so as to avoid, where possible, peak traffic periods.
- v. a framework for managing abnormal loads.
- vi. location of construction site access.
- vii. location and form of compound, storage areas, parking, turning, surfacing and drainage details.
- viii. wheel wash and vehicle cleaning facilities, including details of the design, specification, position of facilities and measures for the disposal of resultant dirty water, oils/chemicals and materials.
- ix. inspection of the highways serving the site (by the developer or their contractor and Dorset Highways) prior to work commencing and at regular, agreed intervals during the construction phase.
- x. a vehicle routing plan for all contractors and suppliers to adhere to.
- xi. a scheme of appropriate signing of vehicle routes to the site (including access track).
- xii. general signage details.
- xiii. temporary traffic management measures where necessary (for example, lollipop stop/go traffic management).
- xiv. banksmen to oversee larger vehicle arrivals and departures, and to warn any users of the lane.
- xv. measures for consideration of horse riders using the access track.
- xvi. a point of contact for the users of the lane and the Local Highway Authority.
- xvii. noise restrictions if appropriate.
- xviii. details of personnel car/van sharing initiative(s) to minimise vehicle movements.

The development must be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved CTMP.

Reason: To minimise the likely impact of construction traffic on the surrounding highway network and prevent the possible deposit of loose material on the adjoining highway.

Construction Environmental Management Plan

6. Before the development hereby approved commences a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) must be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The CEMP must include:
- i. details of pollution prevention measures;
 - ii. details of the use and routing of plant equipment;
 - iii. details of the control and removal of spoil and wastes;
 - iv. details of the control of oils, chemicals and materials; and
 - v. a timetable for implementation.

The development must be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved CEMP and agreed timetable.

Reason: To prevent pollution of the water environment in line with paragraph 180 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Diversion of High Voltage Cable

7. Prior to commencement of development details of the re-routed 33kv high voltage cable running beneath the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Details shall include the location and depth of the cable, a timetable for carrying out the diversion together with any proposed hard and soft landscaping, change in ground levels and built development within 15m of the high voltage cable. Thereafter, the diversion shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and timetable.

Reason: To ensure the high voltage cable is re-routed and the rights of the statutory undertaker are not compromised.

Connection with Chickerell Substation

8. Prior to commencement of development details of the exact route and depth of the underground cable connecting the development with the Chickerell Substation shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the underground cable shall be installed as approved.

Reason: To ensure the underground cable is routed appropriately in relation to nearby utilities infrastructure (including SGN high pressure gas pipelines) and the rights of the statutory undertaker are not compromised.

External Colours

9. Prior to commencement of development, details of external colours for all external walls and roofs shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the development shall proceed in accordance with such specification as have been agreed.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory visual appearance of the development.

Landscaping

10. No development shall commence until a hard and soft landscape scheme informed by Landscape Plan ref. 521_LP_01 Rev B together with a schedule of landscape maintenance has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The hard and soft landscaping scheme and schedule of landscape maintenance must include:

- i. details of all trees and other planting to be retained;
- ii. a planting specification and plan to include numbers, size, species, positions of all new trees and shrubs;
- iii. details of existing and proposed levels, walls, fences and other boundary treatments (including colour);
- iv. details of proposed surface treatments;
- v. details of how any trees planted within 10m of high pressure gas pipelines adhere to SGN's tree planting guidelines reference SGN/PM/MAINT/5.
- vi. a programme of implementation;
- vii. a schedule of landscape maintenance covering a minimum period of five years following substantial completion of the development for all landscaping works; and
- viii. a schedule of landscape maintenance for soft landscaping adjacent to BESS compounds for the lifetime of the development to ensure vegetation does not grow within 10m of any BESS container.

All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and the landscaping shall be maintained in accordance with the approved schedules of landscape maintenance.

Reason: To ensure the adequate mitigation of the landscape and visual impact of the proposals and the provision of an appropriate hard and soft

landscape scheme prior to the commencement of the development; to ensure that the agreed hard and soft landscape scheme is implemented; and to ensure that soft landscaping complies with National Fire Chiefs Council guidance 'Grid Scale Battery Energy Storage System Planning – Guidance for FRS' (2023).

Arboricultural Method Statement

11. Prior to the commencement of any development hereby approved a detailed Arboricultural Method Statement shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Statement shall include details of how the existing trees and hedgerows are to be protected and managed before and during construction of the development and shall include information on traffic flows, phased works and construction practices near trees. The development shall thereafter proceed in strict accordance with the approved Statement.

Reason: To ensure thorough consideration of the impacts of development on the existing trees

Surface Water Drainage

12. The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until such time as a final scheme to dispose of surface water has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall include the principles of the 'Flood Risk Assessment and Conceptual Drainage Strategy' (dated 16 April 2024, Ref: HLEF85368, Ver 11) including, for the avoidance of doubt, the pollution protection principles associated with BESS compounds. The final drainage designs must demonstrate that in the event of a battery fire, all firefighting effluent can be retained on site. The surface water scheme shall be fully implemented in accordance with the approved details before the development is completed.

Reason: To ensure that any potentially contaminated effluent in the event of a pollution incident does not pose an unacceptable risk to the water environment in line with paragraph 180 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

13. No development shall take place until details of maintenance & management of both the surface water sustainable drainage scheme and any receiving system have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme shall be implemented and thereafter managed and maintained in accordance with the approved details. These shall include a plan for the lifetime of the development, the arrangements for adoption by any

public body or statutory undertaker, or any other arrangements to secure the operation of the surface water drainage scheme throughout its lifetime.

Reason: To ensure future maintenance of the surface water drainage system, and to prevent the increased risk of flooding.

Pollution Control

14. The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until such time as a detailed method statement and emergency plan for pollution control in the event of, and remediation following, a battery fire incident has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall include, but not necessarily be limited to:
- i. The pollution control methods used in case of a fire, such as how and when valves will be closed to ensure firewater is stored on site and ensuring there is sufficient capacity within the system if needed.
 - ii. How and where contaminated surface water, site materials and drainage infrastructure will be sampled, managed and remediated/replaced following a fire incident to ensure no contamination enters the environment when normal operation resumes.
 - iii. A verification plan providing details of the data that will be collected and provided in order to demonstrate that the works set out in the remediation strategy in are complete.

The scheme shall be implemented as approved in the event of a fire incident and any subsequent amendments shall be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the any potentially contaminated effluent does not pose an unacceptable risk to the water environment in line with paragraph 180 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Emergency Response Plan

15. Prior to the commencement of development an Emergency Response Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Emergency Response Plan must demonstrate how any fire event on site would be approached, including details on site familiarisation and exercising of emergency plans with the fire service. It shall include the relevant details set out at page 9 of Guidance Produced by the National Fire Chiefs Council 'Grid Scale Battery Energy Storage System Planning – Guidance for FRS' (2023).

Thereafter, the approved Emergency Response Plan shall be implemented and made available on site for the lifetime of the development at the

Emergency Services Information Point identified on the approved Landscape Plan (ref. 521-LP-01-Rev B).

Reason: To assist appropriate emergency planning in accordance with National Fire Chiefs Council guidance 'Grid Scale Battery Energy Storage System Planning – Guidance for FRS' (2023).

Noise Mitigation

16. Prior to commencement of development, noise mitigation measures shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority so as to ensure that the day and night rating levels at NSVRs A, B, C, D, E, F and G, as presented in Column 6, Table 8.4: 'BS 4142:2014+A1:2019 Assessment: Initial Estimate of Impact' on Page 41 of the document 'Chickerell Storage Environmental Impact Assessment Volume 8: Noise Impact Assessment' received 29 December 2023 are not exceeded. Thereafter the development shall be carried out in accordance with the mitigation measures which shall be retained, maintained and operated for the lifetime of the development unless otherwise agreed by the Local Planning Authority under the terms of condition no. 17.

Reason: In the interests of residential amenity.

17. Within six months of commencement of electricity storage and distribution, an Acoustic Report shall be submitted to the planning authority demonstrating that day and night rating levels at NSVRs A, B, C, D, E, F and G, as presented in Column 6, Table 8.4: 'BS 4142:2014+A1:2019 Assessment: Initial Estimate of Impact' on Page 41 of the document 'Chickerell Storage Environmental Impact Assessment Volume 8: Noise Impact Assessment' received 29 December 2023 are not exceeded. The acoustic report shall be produced by a suitably qualified and competent acoustic consultant. If post-commencement testing detailed within the Acoustic Report identifies that day or night rating levels are exceeded, details of further mitigation measures to achieve the levels shall be included with the Acoustic Report submitted to the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, within 3 months of approval in writing by the Local Planning Authority, the agreed further mitigation measures shall be implemented in full and a further Acoustic Report demonstrating the relevant day and night rating levels are met shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the mitigation measures and any further mitigation measures shall be retained, maintained and operated for the lifetime of the development.

Reason: In the interests of residential amenity.

Unexpected Contamination

18. In the event that contamination is found at any time when carrying out the approved development, it must be reported in writing immediately to the Local Planning Authority and an investigation and risk assessment must be undertaken in accordance with requirements of BS10175 (as amended). If any contamination is found requiring remediation, a Remediation Scheme, including a time scale, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved Remediation Scheme shall be carried out within the approved timescale. On completion of the approved Remediation Scheme a Verification Report shall be prepared and submitted within two weeks of completion and submitted to the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure risks from contamination are minimised.

Water Tanks

19. Prior to the installation of battery storage units, the water tanks shown on the approved Fire Water Tank drawing (ref: SD-12-Rev A dated 6 October 2023) shall be installed, filled with water to capacity and made available for use. Thereafter, the water tanks shall be maintained, filled with water to capacity and available for use throughout the lifetime of the development and until the battery containers are removed from the site. The water tanks shall be green in colour externally, and details of the precise shade shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to first installation and shall thereafter be installed and retained in the agreed colour. The water tanks shall have a minimum flow rate of 1,900 litres per minute.

Reason: To ensure adequate water supplies in accordance with National Fire Chiefs Council guidance 'Grid Scale Battery Energy Storage System Planning – Guidance for FRS' (2023) and in the interests of visual amenity.

External Lighting

20. No external lighting shall be installed until a detailed lighting scheme including lighting levels at the boundary of the site has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the external lighting shall be installed, operated and maintained in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To protect visual amenities and avoid nuisance to adjoining properties

Battery Specification

21. The BESS containers hereby permitted shall be the BYD MC Cube ESS.

They shall be strictly assembled and operated in accordance with the submitted MC Cube ESS Safety Manual (ref. MC10C-B4659-E-R2M01 V01 dated 29 May 2023), MC Cube ESS Fire Technology Plan (ref. MC10C-B5365-U-R4M01 Rev 01 dated 15 November 2022) and BYD Fire Detection Data Datasheets (ref. 001-013 registered 21 May 2024), or updated versions thereof, and maintained in accordance with the specified details for the lifetime of the development.

Prior to installation of any BESS containers, a BESS Safety Management Plan (BSMP) prescribing measures to facilitate safety during the construction and decommissioning of the BESS containers shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The BSMP shall be implemented as approved and strictly adhered to throughout the construction and decommissioning of the development.

Reason: To minimise fire risks, associated pollution and adverse impacts on residential amenity given the specified batteries have been assessed against National Fire Chiefs Council guidance 'Grid Scale Battery Energy Storage System Planning – Guidance for FRS' (2023) and found to be acceptable by the Local Planning Authority.

Landscape and Ecological Management Plan

22. The measures set out within the Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP)(ref. 512-Rev D dated 20 November 2023) must be implemented in accordance with any specified timetable and completed in full prior to the substantial completion, or the first bringing into use of the development hereby approved, whichever is the sooner. The development shall subsequently be implemented and managed entirely in accordance with the approved details and the mitigation, compensation and enhancement/net gain measures shall be permanently maintained and retained for the lifetime of the development.

Reason: To mitigate, compensate and enhance/provide net gain for impacts on biodiversity.

Biodiversity Plan

23. The detailed biodiversity mitigation, compensation and enhancement/net gain strategy set out within the approved Biodiversity Plan certified by the Dorset Council Natural Environment Team on 24 April 2024 must be implemented in accordance with any specified timetable and completed in full. The works shall be completed prior to the substantial completion, or the first bringing into

use of the development hereby approved, whichever is the sooner and photographic evidence of compliance shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority in accordance with Section J of the Biodiversity Plan. The development shall subsequently be implemented in accordance with the approved details and the mitigation, compensation and enhancement/net gain measures shall be permanently maintained and retained for the lifetime of the development.

Reason: To mitigate, compensate and enhance/provide net gain for impacts on biodiversity.

Fire Risk Management Strategy

24. Prior to the occupation of the development an Integrated Fire Risk Management Strategy shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The Integrated Fire Risk Management Strategy shall be informed by Environmental Statement Volume 9: Fire Risk, Appendix 2: Fire Liaison Framework. It shall provide details in relation to potential emergency response implications including:

- i. The hazards and risks at and to the facility and their proposed management.
- ii. Any safety issues for firefighters responding to emergencies at the facility.
- iii. Safe access to and within the facility for emergency vehicles and responders, including to key site infrastructure and fire protection systems.
- iv. The adequacy of proposed fire detection and suppression systems (e.g., water supply) on-site.
- v. Natural and built infrastructure and on-site processes that may impact or delay effective emergency response.

Thereafter, the approved Integrated Fire Risk Management Strategy shall be implemented and made available on site for the lifetime of the development at the Emergency Services Information Point identified on the approved Landscape Plan (ref. 521-LP-01-Rev B).

Reason: To assist appropriate emergency planning in accordance with National Fire Chiefs Council guidance 'Grid Scale Battery Energy Storage System Planning – Guidance for FRS' (2023).

Highways

25. Before the development is occupied or utilised the first 20.00 metres of the vehicle access, measured from the rear edge of the highway (excluding the vehicle crossing - see the Informative Note below), must be laid out and constructed to a specification that shall have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that a suitably surfaced and constructed access to the site is provided that prevents loose material being dragged and/or deposited onto the adjacent carriageway causing a safety hazard.

26. Before the development hereby approved is occupied or utilised the access improvement works shown on drawing No. SK06 Rev A (or similar scheme to be first agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority under the terms of this condition) must have been constructed to a specification which has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: These specified works are seen as a pre-requisite for allowing the development to proceed, providing the necessary highway infrastructure improvements to mitigate the likely impact of the proposal.

27. Before the development is occupied or utilised the turning/manoeuvring and parking shown on the approved plans must have been constructed. Thereafter, these areas must be permanently maintained, kept free from obstruction and available for the purposes specified for the lifetime of the development.

Reason: To ensure the proper and appropriate development of the site and to ensure that highway safety is not adversely impacted upon.

Trees

28. Any trees or other plants indicated in the approved landscaping scheme which, within a period of five years from the date of the development being completed, die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced during the same if possible or next planting season with other trees or plants of a species and size to be first approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. All hard landscaping works shall be permanently retained in accordance with the approved details for the lifetime of the development.

Reason: To ensure that the agreed hard and soft landscaping scheme is established and maintained.

Pollution Verification

29. Prior to any areas affected by a potential pollution incident being brought back into use, a Verification Report demonstrating the completion of works set out in the approved emergency plan and the effectiveness of the remediation shall be submitted to, and approved in writing, by the Local Planning Authority. The report shall include results of sampling and monitoring carried out in accordance with the approved verification plan to demonstrate that the site remediation criteria have been met. The relevant areas shall thereafter only be brought back into use following approval in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the site does not pose any further risk to the water environment by demonstrating that the requirements of the approved emergency plan have been met, in line with paragraph 180 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Informatives

1. Informative: National Planning Policy Framework Statement

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 applicants/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.
- The applicant was provided with pre-application advice.

2. Informative: Section 106 Agreement

This permission is subject to an agreement made pursuant to Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 dated [TBC] relating to provision of permissive routes through the site as indicated on the proposed drawings and publicly accessible recreational space within Fields 5 and 6.

3. Informative: Dorset Highways

The vehicle crossing serving this proposal (that is, the area of highway land between the nearside carriageway edge and the site's road boundary) must be constructed to the specification of the Highway Authority in order to comply with Section 184 of the Highways Act 1980. The applicant should contact Dorset Highways by telephone at 01305 221020, by email at dorsethighways@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, or in writing at Dorset Highways, Dorset Council, County Hall, Dorchester, DT1 1XJ, before the commencement of any works on or adjacent to the public highway.

4. Informative: Users of Access Track

The applicant is advised that proper consideration must be given to all users of the access track when large vehicles arrive and leave the site, with banksmen employed to alert and control other users of the lane, such as horse riders.

5. Informative: Water supply

Provision of water supply should comply as far as is reasonably practicable with the requirements of Approved Document B, specifically part B5, regarding access and water supplies for firefighting or other industry or sector specific guidance by the National Fire Chiefs Council. Particular regard should be given to water supply resilience and the terrain over which fire service vehicles may have to drive in order to access the site.

6. Informative: Southern Gas Networks (SGN)

The site includes easements associated with high pressure gas pipelines. Before any tree planting is carried out on permanent easements, written approval should be obtained from SGN. This approval must be subject to SGN retaining the right to remove any trees which might become a danger, or restrict access to the pipeline at any time in the future. The developer's attention is drawn to SGN's Guidance for Third Parties: Safe Working Near High Pressure Gas Pipelines.

7. Informative: SSEN High Voltage Cable

The site includes a high voltage underground cable covered by a Deed of Grant (dated 2 August 1967). Notwithstanding planning conditions, written approval must also be obtained from SSEN prior to the diversion of the cable.

B) Refuse permission for the reasons set out below if the agreement is not completed by 29 January 2025 (6 months from the date of committee) or such extended time as agreed by the Head of Planning:

1. In the absence of a completed Section 106 legal agreement to secure provision of permissive footpath routes through the site as shown on Landscape Plan ref. 21-LP-01 Rev B and publicly accessible recreational space within Fields 5 and 6 for the lifetime of the development the degradation to existing Public Right of Way S16/21 would not be compensated for and there would be a resultant net degradation of the Public Right of Way network in conflict with West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan (2015) Policy COM7.