

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON WEDNESDAY
16 APRIL 2025, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor S Watson (Chair)
Councillors R Buckmaster, R Carter,
M Connolly, I Devonshire, J Dunlop, G Hill,
A Holt, S Marlow and T Stowe

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors S Bull and G Williamson

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Neil Button	- Interim Development Management Team Leader
Rachel Lee	- Legal Adviser
Peter Mannings	- Committee Support Officer
James Mead	- Planning Officer
Martin Plummer	- Service Manager (Development Management and Enforcement)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Matthew Armstrong - Hertfordshire Highways

402 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors V Burt, S Copley and Y Estop. It was noted that Councillor M Connolly was substituting for Councillor Burt.

403 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair introduced himself, the Vice-Chair and the Officers and the Executive Member for Planning and Growth. He reminded Members and Officers to use their microphones as the meeting was being webcasted.

The Chair invited the Committee and Officers to take part in a 2-minute silence for Paul Burt who had recently passed away. The Chair said that Paul had been a lynchpin in providing information for meetings of the Development Management Committee. He said that Paul had been the team leader for Development Management technical support.

404 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

405 MINUTES - 12 MARCH 2025

Councillor Stowe proposed and Councillor Devonshire seconded, a motion that the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2025, be confirmed as a correct record, and signed by the Chair.

406 3/24/1953/FUL - ERECTION OF A BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEM AND ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE INCLUDING ACCESS, DRAINAGE, LANDSCAPING AND OTHER INCIDENTAL WORKS AT LAND OFF GINNS ROAD, STOCKING PELHAM, SG9 0LR

The Head of Planning and Building Control recommended that in respect of application 3/24/1953/FUL, planning permission be granted subject to a suitable legal agreement and subject to the conditions set out at the end of the report.

The Principal Planning Officer highlighted the location of the site and presented a series of plans, images, aerial photos and elevation drawings. He drew the attention of Members to the agricultural character of the land and how the site was designated as part of the rural area beyond the green belt in the District Plan.

The Principal Planning Officer summarised in detail the key features and elements of the application and set out in detail the main issues for Members to consider when determining the application. He said that several appeal decisions had established that Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) should be viewed as low carbon and renewable energy infrastructure. Members were advised that BESS infrastructure attracted significant positive from both local and national policy.

The Principal Planning Officer summarised the documents that had accompanied the application and Members were advised that these had been summarised in the report. He said that vehicular movements would be low during the operational phase of the proposed development.

Members were advised that during the construction phase, it was proposed that light goods vehicles would access the site from the south via the A120 and Albury Road. It was proposed that HGVs would access the site from the north via Berden, Stocking Pelham and Ginns Road.

The Principal Planning Officer said that the applicant had discussed the HGV routes with the Highways Authority

and had agreed to limit HGV visits to the site to twice daily. The applicant had agreed to widen the road in several locations to allow vehicles to pass each other. Hertfordshire Highways had confirmed that the proposed routes for construction vehicles were safe and usable for construction vehicles and Members were advised that the specific details of highway works would be secured by condition.

The Principal Planning Officer said that a noise impact assessment had been submitted. He said that Environmental Health Officers had reviewed this document and had indicated that with appropriate noise mitigations in place, the development would not result in material adverse impacts on nearby properties by virtue of noise generation.

Members were advised that numerous safety features and various other measures had been included in an outline battery safety management plan and Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue had not objected to the proposed development. The final version of the plan would be agreed by the council and Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue by condition.

Members were advised that there were several other proposals in the area for low carbon and renewable infrastructure. The Committee were reminded that this current application must be considered on its own merits.

The Principal Planning Officer said that Officers considered that the significant benefits associated with the provision of low carbon and renewable technologies would outweigh any limited harm arising from the proposed development.

Georgina Hofer addressed the committee in objection to the application. The Committee asked questions of the speaker in objection to the application.

Andrew Urquhart and Ian York spoke for the application.

Councillor Watson (Chair) proposed, and Councillor Carter seconded a motion that, in accordance with paragraph 6.5.6 of the constitution, the committee deviate from the agreed public speaking scheme to allow questions to be put to an expert from the applicant's team in addition to the two speakers who had just addressed the committee in support of the application.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that in accordance with paragraph 6.5.6 of the constitution, the committee deviate from the agreed public speaking scheme to allow questions to be put to an expert from the applicant's team in addition to the two speakers who had just addressed the committee in support of the application.

The Committee asked questions of the two speakers in support of the application, plus the expert who had not addressed the committee.

Stocking Pelham Parish Councillor Colin Berthoud addressed the committee on behalf of Furneux Pelham and Stocking Pelham Parish Councils. He was asked questions by the Committee.

Councillor Williamson addressed the committee in respect of his concerns as the local ward Member. The Chairman and the Committee Support Officer responded to a point of order raised by Councillor Williamson about the additional expert from the applicant that was questioned by Members.

Councillor Stowe referred to a concern that had been expressed regarding the selection of this site and the thoroughness of the site selection process. The Interim Development Management Team Leader said that the requirements of planning policy did not necessitate the need for a sequential type of assessment or an assessment of need.

Matthew Armstrong, Hertfordshire Highways, gave an overview of the highway's history relevant to the application. He said that he could answer questions in respect of the 1.5-mile HGV route that was located in Hertfordshire. Members were advised that the majority of the construction route was located in Essex.

Mathew Armstrong said that the latest construction traffic management plan overcomes his initial concerns, and the objection of Hertfordshire Highways was withdrawn. He gave a definition of what classified a vehicle as an HGV, and talked at length about the timings of deliveries, timings for the movements of vehicles (both articulated and non-articulated).

Members raised concerns regarding the construction management plan and the options open to Officers to enforce the movement restrictions contained in the plan and the proposed conditions. The Interim Development Management Team Leader talked about proportionality and the various regimes of control open to officers.

The Interim Development Management Team responded to a number of questions from Members regarding fire safety and the fire safety plan. He said that Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue and the National Fire Chiefs Council had not raised objections to the application subject to spacing and distances between the battery storage units. Members were advised that the battery technology contained any overheating, and no turning circles were required.

Councillor Stowe mentioned the track leading up to the site and asked if there was a requirement to make this up to a proper road protected by kerbs. He expressed concern about mud affecting the surrounding village roads. Mathew Armstrong advised that the track was a private road with a public footpath running over part of it. He said that the road was semi made up with hardcore material, and this was quite hard wearing for HGVs.

Mathew Armstrong said that, in respect of the public highway, he had asked for before and after photograph surveys with a written description and this would be monitored. He said that this could be covered in the full construction traffic management plan, and this could be extended to the public right of way as well.

Councillor Carter asked for detail in respect of biodiversity, and linked to that was whether there were any conditions regarding planting to improve the screening of the site to protect the surrounding area. The Interim Development Management Team said that scheme had over the minimum 10% biodiversity net gain. He said that the approved plans set out the details of the landscaping.

Councillor Watson proposed and Councillor Dunlop seconded, a motion that application 3/24/1953/FUL be granted planning permission subject to the conditions set out at the end of the report, and subject to the following amendments to conditions:

Condition 5 – Construction Traffic Management Plan

- Enhanced signage with a focus on the pre-school in the final construction traffic management plan.
- The applicant be required to be in regular communication with the pre-school in respect of

when development was to commence and the phases of development.

- Include a scheme for reviewing speed limits to determine whether amendments to speed limits should be included.
- Maintaining public access over the access route.

Condition 16 – Battery Safety Management Plan

- Widening of the condition to ensure that the building management plan considers fire safety requirements and relevant guidance and amending the reason for the condition to ensure that fire safety was the main reason for the change.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that application 3/24/1953/FUL be granted planning permission subject to a suitable legal agreement and subject to the conditions set out at the end of the report, and subject to the following amendments to conditions:

Condition 5 – Construction Traffic Management Plan

- Enhanced signage with a focus on the pre-school in the final construction traffic management plan.
- The applicant be required to be in regular communication with the pre-school in respect of when development was to commence and the phases of development.
- Include a scheme for reviewing speed limits to determine whether amendments to speed limits should be included.
- Maintaining public access over the access route.

Condition 16 – Battery Safety Management Plan

- Widening of the condition to ensure that the building management plan considers fire safety requirements and relevant guidance and amending the reason for the condition to ensure that fire safety was the main reason for the change.

407 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm

Chairman
Date