

Planning Application: Report of Handling

Reference No. 21/0034/PP



Renfrewshire
Council

KEY INFORMATION

Ward: (7) Paisley
Southwest

Applicant: Statkraft UK
Ltd
41 41, Moorgate
London
United Kingdom
EC2R 6PP

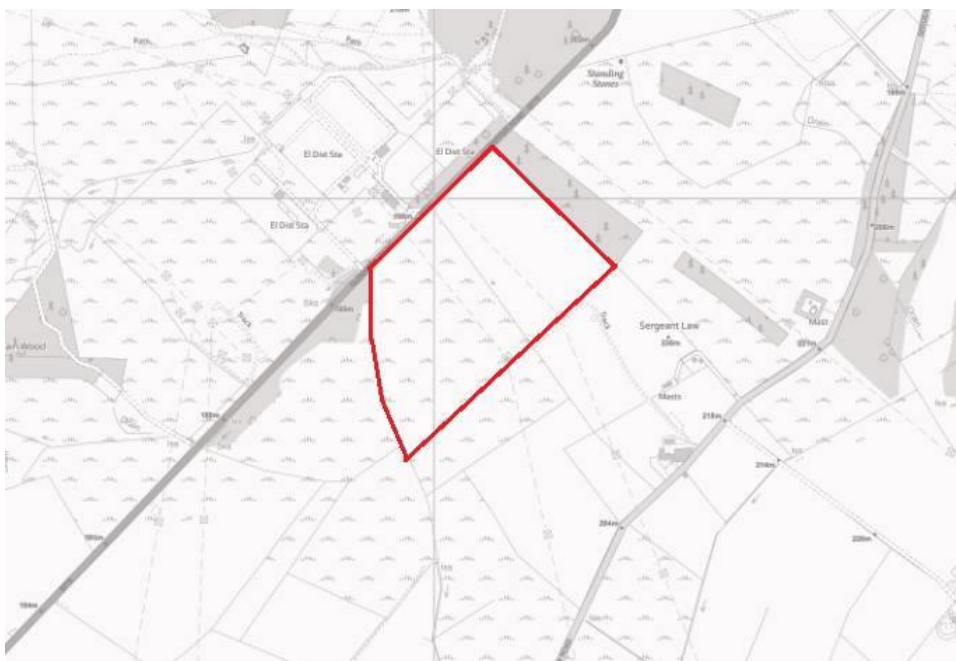
Registered: 22/02/2021

Report by Head of Economy & Development

PROSPECTIVE PROPOSAL: Installation of greener grid park including energy management and battery storage containers with associated access, landscaping and fencing.

LOCATION: Site 400 Metres North West Of Sergeantlaw, Gleniffer Road, Paisley

APPLICATION FOR: Planning Permission



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RECOMMENDATION

Refuse

Alasdair Morrison
Head of Economy and
Development

IDENTIFIED KEY ISSUES

- The site is identified within the Adopted Renfrewshire Local Development Plan (2014) as Policy P1 and the Proposed Renfrewshire Local Development Plan (2021 as modified) as Policy ENV1 – Green Belt.
- No letters of representation have been received.
- There have been no objections from consultees.

REPORT OF HANDLING FOR APPLICATION 21/0034/PP

SITE ADDRESS:	Site 400 Metres North West Of Sergeantlaw, Gleniffer Road, Paisley
PROPOSAL:	Installation of greener grid park including energy management and battery storage containers with associated access, landscaping, and fencing
RECOMENDATION:	Refuse

PRPOSALS	<p>This application seeks planning permission for the installation of a greener grid energy park which primarily comprises of batteries housed in storage containers with associated plant and supporting infrastructure including a new site access, landscaping, and boundary fencing.</p> <p>The application site extends to approximately 14 hectares in area. It primarily comprises of grassland, and the topography is gently sloping uphill from the north west to the south east boundary.</p> <p>The site is directly opposite Neilston substation. A mature strip of woodland bounds the site to the north east, with rolling agricultural land to the south east and grassland to the south west.</p> <p>Access to the site will be taken from Gleniffer Road. The proposed energy park is arranged around a looped internal road network.</p> <p>A total of 364 battery units are proposed. 276 battery units will be located centrally, with the associated transformers, inverter units, switch houses, coolers and other ancillary equipment flanking these containers to the north east and south west. The remaining 88 battery units will be grouped in the south west corner of the site.</p> <p>The battery storage containers are 3.0m in height, with the transforming equipment and housing up to 10.0m in height. A firewall around the transformers will measure 14.0m in height.</p> <p>The proposed boundary treatment comprises of a 2.4m palisade fence.</p> <p>A landscaping scheme comprising a mix of native shrubs, trees and hedgerows is also proposed around the periphery of the site.</p> <p>The proposed development is designed to support the flexible and resilient operation of the national grid and contribute to the decarbonisation of the electricity supply. The proposed development will store and manage the energy supply to balance supply and demand.</p>
SITE HISTORY	<p>Application No: 20/0353/NO</p> <p>Description: Erection of an Energy Management Facility</p> <p>Decision: Accepted.</p>

	<p>Application No: 19/0735/EO Description: Request for screening opinion as a requirement for an Environmental Impact Assessment relating to the erection of an Energy Management Facility Decision: Environmental assessment not required.</p> <p>Application No: 20/0440/EO Description: Request for screening opinion as to the requirement for an Environmental Impact Assessment relating to the erection of an Energy Management Facility. Decision: Environmental assessment not required.</p>
CONSULTATIONS	<p>Glasgow Airport Safeguarding – No objections.</p> <p>National Air Traffic Services – No objection.</p> <p>Scottish Water – No objection.</p> <p>NatureScot – No objection subject to conditions.</p> <p>Scottish Power Energy Network – No objection. Exclusion zones have been incorporated around existing infrastructure.</p> <p>West of Scotland Archaeology Service – The site is within an area that is rich in recorded archaeological features. No objection subject to conditions.</p> <p>Glenniffer Braes Country Park – The ecology survey should be extended to consider any potential impact on the Sergeantlaw Moss Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). The SINC comprises of sensitive peatland, and supports some vulnerable species including the Large Heath Butterfly.</p> <p>Communities and Housing Service (Environmental Protection) – No objection subject to conditions.</p> <p>Environment and Infrastructure Service (Roads / Traffic) – No objection subject to conditions.</p>
REPRESENTATIONS	No representations received
CLYDEPLAN POLICIES	<p><u>Clydeplan Strategic Development Plan 2017</u> The proposal is classified as a strategic development by virtue of the site area being in excess of 2 hectares and the generating capacity being in excess of 20MW.</p> <p>Policy 1 - Placemaking Policy 10 - Delivering Heat and Electricity Policy 14 - Green Belt Schedule 14 - Strategic Scales of Development Schedule 15 - Indicative Compatible Development</p> <p>Diagram 10 - Assessment of Development Proposals</p>

<p>LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES/ OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS</p>	<p><u>Adopted Renfrewshire Local Development Plan August 2014</u> Policy ENV1 - Green Belt Policy ENV2 - Natural Heritage Policy ENV3 - Built Heritage Policy ENV4 - The Water Environment Policy I1 - Connecting Places Policy I5 - Flooding and Drainage Policy I6 - Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Developments Policy I7 - Low Carbon Developments</p> <p><u>New Development Supplementary Guidance 2014</u> Delivering the Environment Strategy - Environment Development Criteria, Green Belt, Archaeological Sites, Natural Heritage, Trees, Woodland and Forestry, Biodiversity, Local Designations, Contaminated Land The Water Environment - Delivering the Infrastructure Strategy - Connecting Places, Flooding and Drainage and Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Developments</p> <p><u>Proposed Renfrewshire Local Development Plan 2021 (as amended)</u> Policy ENV1 - Green Belt Policy ENV2 - Natural Heritage Policy ENV3 - Built and Cultural Heritage Policy ENV4 - The Water Environment Policy ENV6 - Natural Resources (Minerals and Soil) Policy I1 - Connecting Places Policy I3 - Flooding and Drainage Policy I4 - Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Developments</p> <p><u>New Development Supplementary Guidance 2019</u> Delivering the Environment Strategy - Green Belt, Natural Heritage, Archaeological Sites, Local Designations, Contaminated Land, The Water Environment and Natural Resources (Soil) Delivering the Infrastructure Strategy - Connecting Places, Flooding and Drainage and Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Developments</p> <p><u>Material considerations</u></p> <p><u>National Planning Framework 3 (NPF)</u> States that planning will play a key role in delivering on the Scottish Governments targets on carbon emission reduction and facilitating the transition to a low carbon economy.</p> <p>Electricity grid enhancements will facilitate increased renewable electricity generation across Scotland. However, the environmental impacts of this type of infrastructure require careful management.</p> <p><u>Scottish Planning Policy (SPP)</u> The planning system should support the transformational change to a low carbon economy and support the development of a diverse range of electricity generation including the expansion of renewable</p>
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	<p>energy generation capacity.</p> <p>Development should be guided to appropriate locations, and advice should be given on the issues that will be taken into account when specific proposals are being assessed.</p> <p>With respect to green belt designations, SPP states that local development plans should describe the types and scales of development which would be appropriate within a green belt.</p>
PLANNING ASSESSMENT	<p><u>National Planning Framework 3 (NPF)</u></p> <p>The principle of the proposed development complies with the NPF aspirations for the planning system to facilitate the transition to a low carbon economy.</p> <p>The proposed development is required to support the transition towards a low carbon energy network based on a mix of renewable energy sources.</p> <p><u>Scottish Planning Policy</u></p> <p>The proposed development complies with Scottish Planning Policy in principle as it will support the transition to a low carbon economy.</p> <p>The development will support the operation of the national grid as it transitions towards a greater proportion of electricity being generated from low carbon but intermittent renewable sources.</p> <p>The development provides greater flexibility to the national grid and allows it to manage and balance the peaks and troughs associated with intermittent renewable sources. Energy stored at the facility can be fed into the grid at times when demand exceeds supply. This provides resilience to the grid system and facilitates the expansion of energy generation from renewable sources.</p> <p>The development will therefore allow Renfrewshire to further contribute towards the achievement of national renewable energy targets.</p> <p><u>Clydeplan Strategic Development Plan 2017</u></p> <p>The proposed development supports the transition towards the generation of more electricity by renewable sources.</p> <p>At a strategic level the development will therefore contribute positively to the creation of a safe and pleasant, resource efficient and resilient city region.</p> <p>The proposed development is necessary piece of infrastructure in this regard.</p> <p>The development will therefore support the Clydeplan vision and spatial development strategy.</p>

Adopted Local Development Plan 2014

Policy ENV1 states appropriate development within the green belt will be considered acceptable where it can be demonstrated that it is compatible with the provisions of the new development supplementary guidance.

The supplementary guidance lists several forms of development which are acceptable within the green belt in principle. This includes essential infrastructure such as electricity equipment.

The development is considered to constitute essential infrastructure as it will support the flexible and resilient operation of the national grid and facilitate the continued transition towards a low carbon energy supply.

The application site is within green belt in an area adjacent to existing infrastructure including the Neilston substation and a network of high voltage pylons. Proximity to this existing infrastructure was a key priority in the site selection process and provides justification in principle for the development to be located within a green belt location.

The proposal must thereafter be assessed against the **Green Belt Development Criteria**.

The development will not result in the loss of prime quality agricultural land or agricultural land of lesser quality that is locally important.

The development requires a new access to be formed onto Gleniffer Road. The applicants have submitted plans which show the access and associated visibility splays can be accommodated.

It is not envisaged that the development will generate a significant pollution risk to the public water supply or water courses. A Sustainable Drainage Strategy has been developed to manage surface water, and a condition will be attached to ensure the construction and operation of the facility accords with SEPA guidance on pollution prevention.

With respect to landscape and visual impact, the row of trees which bounds the north east of the site screen views from this direction. The rising topography screens views from the south. Views from the north west are screened by the existing substation and a row of conifer trees.

The proposed landscape strategy includes the planting of a hedgerow along the site frontage. The hedgerow is likely to soften the frontage of the site.

There are though open views of the site from the south west, and the development will be prominent within the landscape given the scale

	<p>of some of the component infrastructure. While some existing planting to the south west and the proposed additional landscaping will soften the appearance of the development over time, they are unlikely to screen these taller elements from view.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that the landscape in this area already contains electricity infrastructure. However, the majority of the existing components (with the exception of the network of pylons) are located on the northern side of Gleniffer Road. This includes the existing sub-station, and the recently approved Grid Stability Facility (planning application 20/0793/PP).</p> <p>With respect to cumulative impact of additional infrastructure, it is considered that this can best be absorbed within the landscape by coalescing development on the northern side of the road. The proposed development will significantly alter the existing character of the land on the southern side of the road in this regard.</p> <p>The development will remain prominent as the vantage points move closer to the site (vehicles travelling towards Paisley along Gleniffer Road) and will be most prominent from the Gleniffer Road frontage. It is accepted that mitigation, including landscaping and painting the infrastructure, can be put in place to soften the appearance of the development. However, it is not considered that such mitigation will suitably screen a development of this scale.</p> <p>The benefits arising from the development with respect to decarbonising the electricity network are acknowledged. However, the Local Development Plan states that infrastructure must be appropriate in terms of location, siting and design having regard to individual and cumulative significant effects on landscape character and the local environment. Some components within the proposed development are of significant scale, and the applicants own landscape assessment concludes that the visual impact is in the 'major' category from certain viewpoints.</p> <p>It is considered that the proposed development will be detrimental to the landscape character in this area by virtue of its prominence on the southern side of Gleniffer Road, the scale and visual appearance of the component infrastructure both on an individual and cumulative basis.</p> <p>On balance it is considered that the detrimental impact on landscape character does not outweigh the positive benefits of the development.</p> <p>In view of the above, the proposal is not considered to comply with the Supplementary Guidance on Green Belt Development and the requirement to ensure that local landscape character will be maintained.</p> <p>Moving on from landscape character, it is not anticipated that there will be any significant detrimental impact on identified nature</p>
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	<p>conservation interests. As noted in the ecology report the application site (comprising of improved grassland) is of low ecological value, and no protected species were identified. Potential impact on the adjacent Sergeantlaw Moss SINC will also be mitigated through the provision of a 30m hydrological buffer zone.</p> <p>The ecology survey undertaken for the development makes several recommendations including a requirement for tree protection, and clearance of vegetation to take place outwith the bird breeding season.</p> <p>Policy ENV2 states that developments must not have an adverse effect on the integrity of sites protected for their natural conservation interest.</p> <p>It is noted above that the site itself is of low conservation value as it almost solely comprises of improved grassland. The primary consideration therefore is any potential impact on habitats surrounding the site.</p> <p>The ecology report confirms that there are no sites of national or international designation that will be detrimentally impacted by the development. A locally designated SINC bounds the site to the south west. The SINC covers the Bardrain Glen, Sergeantlaw Moss and Glennifer Braes West area. The area to the south west of the site sits on lower ground and is made up of a sensitive peatland hydrology which supports some vulnerable species such as the Large Heath Butterfly.</p> <p>The report by NatureScot points out that the peatland habitat in this area has been disrupted by man-made drainage interventions, and makes several recommendations as to how the bog can be restored. With respect to the potential impact of the proposed development, this will be mitigated by the provision of a 30m hydrological buffer zone along the south western boundary.</p> <p>Policy ENV3 states that built heritage, including sites of unscheduled archaeological interest, shall be safeguarded, conserved, and enhanced where appropriate.</p> <p>The West of Scotland Archaeology Service advises that the site is within an area of known archaeological interest. To ensure that the potential for archaeological deposits at the site is appropriately investigated, it is recommended that a condition is applied to secure a programme of archaeological works.</p> <p>Policy ENV4 states that there will be support for the protection of the existing water environment and the enhancement of biodiversity, flora and fauna.</p> <p>As noted under Policy ENV2 the potential impact of the development on the sensitive hydrology associated with the SINC has been considered, and a hydrological buffer zone has been</p>
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	<p>incorporated to ensure the impact of the development is mitigated.</p> <p>In view of the above, the development complies with Policies ENV2, 3 and 4.</p> <p>Policy I1 states that the Council will support development proposals that give priority to sustainable modes of travel and have no significant impact on the safe and efficient operation of the local road network.</p> <p>Most of the traffic generated by the development will occur at the construction phase. A construction management plan will be implemented to ensure the operation of the local road network is maintained. Traffic associated with the operational phase is primarily restricted to infrequent visits for routine maintenance, and the access infrastructure necessary to accommodate these journeys can be installed sensitively.</p> <p>Policy I5 states that new development should avoid areas susceptible to flooding and should promote sustainable flood risk management measures to ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere.</p> <p>A condition will be attached which requires the submission of a detailed drainage design, and to ensure the approved scheme is maintained in accordance with the recommendations within the outline drainage strategy report.</p> <p>Policy I6 states that renewable and low carbon developments will be supported in principle where they are appropriate in terms of location, siting and design having regard to both individual and cumulative effects. The supplementary guidance on renewable and low carbon technologies states that the Council is supportive of an increase in the proportion of electricity produced from renewable sources.</p> <p>Issues relating to effect on the local environment and landscape character and visual amenity have been addressed above.</p> <p>Both Glasgow Airport Safeguarding and NATS have offered no objections to the proposed development with respect to the safe and efficient use of the airport.</p> <p>Communities and Housing Services (Environmental Protection) has also offered no objection with respect to the potential impact on amenity of nearby residents subject to the submission of a noise assessment.</p> <p>Policy I7 aims to reduce the predicted carbon dioxide emissions from proposed developments.</p> <p>As noted above, the proposed development will play an important role in safeguarding the flexible and resilient operation of the electricity network. It will also contribute towards modernising the</p>
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	<p>electricity network and improving capacity for renewable energy generation.</p> <p><u>Proposed Local Development Plan 2021 (as modified)</u></p> <p>The policies within the Proposed Local Development Plan and the associated Supplementary Guidance generally reflect those of the currently adopted plan.</p> <p>The proposed Local Development Plan introduces an additional Policy ENV6 which refers to natural resources including minerals and soils. New developments should avoid the unnecessary disturbance of areas of peatland or carbon rich soils.</p> <p>This policy is relevant given the presence of peat deposits adjacent to the site.</p> <p>As noted above, the potential impact on the adjacent Sergeantlaw Moss and it's peatland habitat will be mitigated by the provision of a 30m hydrological buffer zone as recommended by NatureScot.</p> <p><u>Conclusion</u></p> <p>It is considered that the development will have a significant detrimental impact on landscape character and visual amenity. The benefits arising from the development are not considered to outweigh the visual impact and therefore the proposal does not fully comply with the Local Development Plan.</p>
RECOMMENDATION	Refuse

Reason for Decision

1. That the proposed development, by virtue of its location, scale and visual appearance, will have a significant detrimental impact on local landscape character and visual amenity. It is therefore contrary to policies ENV1 and I6 of the Adopted Local Development Plan 2016, Policies ENV1 and I4 of the Proposed Local Development Plan (2021 as amended), and the associated New Development Supplementary Guidance on delivering the Environment and Infrastructure Strategies.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 - Background Papers
For further information or to inspect any letters of objection and other background papers, please contact Sharon Marklow on 0141 618 7835.