
From:
Sent: 23 December 2022 14:48
To: Planning Comments (SMDC)
Subject: Comment Received from Public Access

Categories:

Application Reference No. : SMD/2022/0548 Site Address: Land Adjacent Cellarhead Substation Rownall Road
Wetley Rocks Staffordshire Comments by: Mark Johnson Moorlands Climate Action

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Submission: Support

Comments: Moorlands Climate Action writes in support of this application.

The previous application was turned down solely on grounds of landscape impact, with members of the committee clearly indicating that should the applicants return with a plan that met their specific concerns they would be minded to approve.

We believe that the applicants have done just done that, and delivered a scheme that, together with its location immediately adjacent to the existing substation, minimises the landscape impact.

The compelling reasons for location of battery storage at Cellarhead advanced by us and others in relation to the previous application (and accepted by the committee) stand for the revised version; indeed, international events and the increasingly rapid transformation of the National Grid make these still more urgent.

Arguments on renewable energy projects were advanced at a recent committee meeting (and elsewhere) to the effect that if you approve one scheme you will have to agree to them all.

We respectfully suggest that is not the case.

While the principle that battery storage can be placed in the Green Belt has now been granted, in no sense has the committee ceded its right to exercise judgement on the question of cumulative landscape impact.

While even opponents might find it hard to turn down this revised application on landscape grounds (the applicant having been so diligent in addressing specific concerns voiced at a previous meeting), at any point in the future the committee remains wholly free to exercise its judgement on the point of cumulative landscape impact with respect to completely new applications.

In effect, to say: thus far and no further.

We believe that point is not in view in the near future, but that question will be for the committee to decide at that time.

We suggest that if the committee is (justifiably) concerned with the issues that the national drive for renewable energy raises for the Staffordshire Moorlands, it might usefully suggest to the council that it brings forward its

commitment under section 4.2 of part 2 of its Climate Action Plan to 'identify areas suitable for renewable energy and produce guidance'.

As it stands this commitment to review policies falls due in September 2025 (and any changes would come into force many years later); transformation in the energy sector and recent shifts in national policy already make that timetable look dangerously complacent.

Any resulting changes in local policy on renewable energy could only ever have a limited effect on future decisions on projects that came before this committee, but they might conceivably provide a cohesive local framework for members, and so improve the current ad-hoc, first-come first-serve nature of the process at Cellarhead and elsewhere.

One other point of relevance to this decision was raised in the December 2022 planning committee meeting: that of post-approval noise monitoring.

While we understand the position of the planning officers that it is not in their powers to impose monitoring requirements above and beyond those already to hand, we sympathise wholly with the position of the affected resident who raised this issue and note the comment of one planning committee member that 'Enforcement is not our strong suit'.

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