

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2023/0483
Valid 26/09/2023

LAND
CELLARHEAD
ROWNALL ROAD
WETLEY ROCKS

ADJACENT
SUBSTATION

ENGINEERING WORKS TO
ALLOW FOR THE INSTALLATION
OF A CABLE CONNECTION
BETWEEN CELLARHEAD
SUBSTATION AND THE
CONSENTED BATTERY ENERGY
STORAGE SCHEME (REF -
SMD/2022/0548)

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Principle of Green belt development
- Impact on existing tree and hedgerows
- Impact on residential amenity
- Impact on public footpaths

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site consists of agricultural land in the Green Belt. It lies to the north/north east of Cellarhead substation and is close to two recently approved battery storage facilities (see history below)

PROPOSAL

This application follows the recent approval for a BESS on land at Rownall Road under SMD/2022/0548. Although that application indicated a cable route from the battery storage site to the Cellarhead substation, it is explained that a new route has now been agreed with National Grid and this application seeks full planning permission for the realigned cable route because it lies outside of the application site for SMD/2022/0548. It effectively runs further northwards from the approved route. The plans show that it emerges from the battery storage site in the north west corner and then heads northwards before turning and heading west and finally dropping southward into the Cellarhead substation. Part of the cable is shown trenched or directional drilled, part directional drilled only (see SRE1151/04/03)

As the cabling is all underground and has inconsequential Green Belt impact (see discussion in Officer section) the main issue is the impact on trees and hedges and to this end an Arboricultural Assessment is provided to support the application. Other matters to consider are residential amenity during construction works and the impact on public footpaths of which the works cross the route of three at various points – Cheddleton 47, 48 and 53.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (September 2020)

SS1 Development Principles
SS10 Rural Area Strategy
DC1 Design Considerations
DC3 Landscape protection
SD 4 Pollution
NE2 Tree protection

National Planning Policy Framework

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

Associated with this application:-

SMD/2022/0548 Erection and operation of a Battery energy storage system and associated infrastructure and equipment. Approved

SMD/2022/0047 Erection and operation of a Battery energy storage system and associated infrastructure and equipment. Refused

SMD/2021/0413 Request for screening opinion proposed battery storage facility. Negative opinion issued 25th August 2021

On nearby site to the east

SMD/2022/0444 - Battery storage facility (resubmission of SMD/2021/0695), Land of Rownall Road. Approved

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice: Expired

Letters to nearby residents resulted in one letter of representation received neither objecting nor supporting the application but raising the following points:-

The proposed cabling route seems unnecessarily long and crosses 3 rights of way!

A shorter more direct route, hugging the northern side of the transformer station boundary but well south of the track across the same field would reduce not only the overall length of the cabling and associated risks but also greatly reduce the number of times it crosses existing rights of way. The more direct shorter route would also create less disturbance to the major tree line and the risk of damage to roots. A shorter more direct route would also assist maintenance and repair

Cheddleton Parish Council

No objection but note comment by local resident that a more direct route would be shorter and not cross the PROW as many times

Ramblers association

Note that the cables will cross beneath Public footpaths Cheddleton 47, 48 and 53 but note the steps being taken to protect these routes

Environmental Health

No objection subject to conditions

Staffordshire County Council Highways

Site Visit Conducted on: 04-Oct-2023

All works are remote from the highway. No highway objections.

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue

No objection. Advise that as the consultation is for underground installations firefighter access is not applicable under building regulations. Comments below will be applicable to the sites which are connected by the installation.

Where appropriate supplies of water for firefighting and vehicle access are required at the site, they should be designed as indicated in Approved Document B Volume 2 requirement B5, section 15 and 16.

I would remind you that the roads and drives upon which appliances would have to travel upon should be capable of withstanding the weight of a Staffordshire firefighting appliance (G.V.W. of 17800 Kg.)

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

Although this site is in the Green Belt and the application site is a greenfield site comprising of agricultural land beyond the built up confines of the substation, the works relate to underground cabling in connection with a recently approved battery storage facility. The NPPF allows for engineering operations within the Green Belt provided that they protect openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. In view of the fact that there will be no impact on openness, none of the Green belt purposes will be compromised and no visual harm is occasioned, the proposal is considered to be of minimal consequence in Green Belt terms and no conflict with Policy SS10 (Rural Area Strategy) and the NPPF is found. The main issue to consider relates to the potential impact on existing trees and hedgerows, residential amenity and public footpaths and these matters are considered below

Trees and hedges

None of the existing trees/hedgerows situated on or adjacent to the application site are protected by a Tree Preservation Order nor situated within any designated Conservation Area. A total of ten individual trees, five groups of trees and one hedgerow were surveyed as part of the submitted and comprehensive Arboricultural Assessment. It concludes that the proposed cable route will have minimal impact upon the existing tree stock and where trees are impacted upon, comments that these are of low quality.

The Trees and Woodland Officer has considered the application and the AA. He says that the AA together with the applicant's covering letter, show/describe how the cable would be installed by directional drilling at minimum depth of 600mm wherever the proposed route passes within or close to the Root Protection Areas of existing trees, other than a small section at the eastern end of a group of poor quality Hawthorn adjacent to the cable entry point into the substation compound (denoted G3 in the Arb Assessment) which it is proposed to remove. He comments that a depth of 600mm this is anticipated to be below the likely main rooting depth of the majority of the trees' root systems and thereby result in no significant damage to roots, and directional drilling where proposed would avoid the need to excavate trenches. He says that there may be occasional need to carry out accommodation/access facilitation pruning to avoid impact damage to low overhanging branches by larger items of machinery; his advice is that this would have no adverse impact on trees either on an individual basis or wider landscape-scale. In respect of the part removal of Group G3 which is to be removed he advises that it is of low quality and negligible landscape significance, and provides very little contribution to screening the adjacent substation.

He concludes that provided work is undertaken in the manner indicated in the application, the proposal would have no significant harmful impact on trees and hedgerows and accordingly raises no objection subject to a condition to control the works. With this in place, there is no conflict with Policy NE2 and the NPPF

Residential Amenity

There are a number of residential properties in the vicinity (Rownall Road and further afield) on Armshead Road) whose amenity is a material consideration. As the Environmental Health Officer notes the proposal is relatively low risk from an environmental impact perspective but he nevertheless recommends conditions to control working hours, burning of waste and dust emissions which could give rise to amenity issues during installation of the cabling. The applicant has advised that he accepts the proposed conditions. With these in place residential amenity should be protected and compliance with Policies DC1, SD4 and the NPPF achieved

Public footpaths

As shown on drawing SRE1151 04 03 there are three public rights of way which either cross or are adjacent to the application site. The application documents confirm that these are unaffected by the proposal and will remain operational throughout. It is also confirmed that there will be no need to temporarily close or divert the public rights of way. Where sections of cable are to be installed below or adjacent to the public rights of way they will be installed using directional drills i.e. beneath the rights of way so as not to cause any disruption to users of the rights of way. Therefore, whilst public comments are noted, no issue is raised and it is not considered that a reason for refusal on this basis could be sustained. .

Conclusion

No other issues are raised and a recommendation of conditional approval is made

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : **Approve with conditions**

Case Officer: Jane Curley

Recommendation Date: 28th December 2023

X 

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council