
From: planningcomments@staffsmoorlands.gov.uk
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To: Planning Comments (SMDC)
Subject: Comment Received from Public Access

Categories:

Application Reference No. : SMD/2024/0556 Site Address: Land at Newfields Farm Rownall Road Wetley Rocks
Staffordshire ST9 0BS Stoke On Trent Comments by: Ian Podmore Private Rownall Freehold resident

From:

Rownall Ridge, formerly Rownall Hall
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Phone:

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Submission: Objection

Comments: Newfields BESS Appeal SMD/2024/0556 - Hearing Consultee Letter (no date) - App ref SMD/2024/0019. -
APP/APP/B3438/W/25/3362821

So far, the Councillors forming this Planning Committee LPA are severely and corporately responsible for the approval already of 4 major BESS Storage installations at Rownall all, surrounding this National Grid transformer station and all in exceedingly close proximity. Cumulatively, these 4 neighbouring BESS sites already amount to 600 shipping container sized bulk battery containers, all inside our highly rural scenic moorlands Green Belt.

The 4 approved major BESS sites have all been incrementally approved without any consideration to the overall cumulative residential impact or, Health and Safety risk assessment. This is of enormous significance having regard for the fact that there remains another 3 major pending major sized BESS applications submitted and verified awaiting decisions including this appeal APP/APP/B3438/W/25/3362821 and the backup separate current SMDC application SMD/2024/0556 which, if similarly and singularly approved without cumulative consideration, will take the current total of 600 bulk battery containers to 1,100 making this a monumental installation, parts of which are only some 40 metres from long embedded residential property boundaries.

Such a massive development comprising of 7 neighbouring major sized BESS installations is not only an enormous intrusion into previously protected rural lifestyles but also creates an enormously increased risk to the very close residential life and welfare. Additionally this represents a substantial permanent loss of amenity which seriously impacts closest residents, delivering high levels of continuous noise transforming this once quiet rural environment into a huge industrial complex bringing overwhelming personal and financial hardship to local homeowners arising from plummeting home values leaving some with properties being both uninsurable and unsaleable.

Concerning both this appeal, APP/APP/B3438/W/25/3362821 and new recently submitted SMDC application SMD/2024/0556 consideration should be given to the reasons for the previous refusal.

1. Noncompliance with 2023 Fire and Rescue criteria.
2. The dangerously close Newfields Farmhouse which the applicant previously declared unsafe for future human occupation.

In an attempt to win support for this appeal and the new application SMD/2024/0556 the applicants gave a presentation to Cheddleton Parish Council on Tuesday 25th of March 2025 outlining the modifications made to the plan in an attempt to overcome these shortcomings which are listed below:

1. A looped driveway has been added to the southern site entrance. It claimed the SFRS have examined the revised layout, without comment.
2. The applicant claims the repositioned earth bund now protects the Newfields farmhouse from noise.

Residents continuing objections.

1. The access entrance approach is still only via a single track and does not meet the 2023 Fire & Rescue criteria requiring two entirely separate uncompromised emergency access routes. The new driveway loop access still does not overcome the risk of a complete blockage, in event that the southern most eastern bank of battery containers should catch fire. The SFRS have declined to comment!
2. The repositioning of the earth bund does not extend sufficiently far enough east to protect the Newfields Farmhouse which remains fully exposed to the bulk battery containers less than 100 metres to the north and highly vulnerable to continuous noise, explosion, high intensity fires, the toxic consequences and unacceptable risk to life.

The highly compromised location

The positioning of this proposed BESS is not only exceedingly close to the Rownall Transformer Station, it is the closest of all 4 so far approved neighbouring BESS sites. Infact, this BESS is located right inside the 'bite' of the internal corner of the transformer station immediately next to its perimeter fence on the BESS's northern and eastern sides. This represents a serious and unnecessary high risk should this bulk battery storage site ever catch fire as a result of explosion as is increasingly the international experience.

The applicants claim this site conforms to 'Grey Belt' whereas this LPA's senior Planning Officer categorically stated in the most recent approved sustainable energy application that this highly rural area of Green Belt does not meet, nor never would, the definition of Grey Belt!

For these reasons this application SMD/2024/0556 should also be refused.

Sincerely Ian Podmore ST9 OBT on behalf of the 'Save our Green Belt' campaign

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