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To: Planning Comments (SMDC)
Subject: Comment Received from Public Access

Categories:

Application Reference No. : SMD/2025/0354 Site Address: Land off Leek Road Werrington Staffordshire ST9 0DQ
Comments by: Karen Askey

From:

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Submission: Objection

Comments: Karen Askey

St. David's, Leek Road, Cellarhead, ST9 0DQ

04/10/25

To: Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

Re: Objection to Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) Proposal

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to formally object to the proposed installation of a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) in our community. While these facilities are often described as 'green' or environmentally friendly, the reality is very different. A BESS is an industrial structure with significant environmental and visual impacts, and calling it 'green' is misleading. Importantly, the proposal conflicts with key principles set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

1. Industrial Appearance and Landscape Impact

A BESS typically consists of large metal containers, often arranged on concrete foundations. The site is entirely industrial, with no greenery or natural features. This type of construction changes the local landscape dramatically, replacing open or natural spaces with metal, concrete, and electrical equipment. The visual impact alone can be substantial, especially in rural or suburban areas where residents value natural surroundings.

NPPF Paragraph 130 requires planning decisions to ensure developments are sympathetic to local character, including landscape setting, and maintain a strong sense of place.

NPPF Paragraph 174 emphasizes protecting and enhancing valued landscapes and minimizing impacts on natural beauty. The industrial nature of a BESS fails these objectives.

2. Environmental Costs of Construction

The materials required to build a BESS are far from environmentally friendly:

Steel and concrete production is highly carbon-intensive, contributing significant CO₂ emissions.

Lithium, cobalt, and nickel mining damages ecosystems, pollutes water sources, and consumes large amounts of energy. These processes often take place in areas with vulnerable communities and environments.

Transporting heavy materials to the site adds further carbon emissions.

NPPF Paragraph 174(a&d) highlights the need to protect and enhance biodiversity, soil, water, and environmental quality. The lifecycle impacts of BESS construction conflict with these requirements.

The combination of these factors makes the construction phase of a BESS a major environmental burden, which cannot be overlooked when assessing its 'green' credentials.

3. Operation and Maintenance Challenges

Once operational, BESS units require cooling and ventilation systems to maintain battery safety and efficiency. These systems consume additional energy and release heat into the surrounding environment. Furthermore, the batteries themselves have a limited lifespan, generally between 10 and 15 years, after which they must be replaced. This recurring cycle of replacement ensures continued demand for new materials and manufacturing, creating ongoing environmental costs.

NPPF Paragraph 152 stresses planning for sustainable development that avoids harm to environmental assets. The ongoing operational demands and resource use of BESS units are inconsistent with these sustainability principles.

4. Waste and Recycling Concerns

End-of-life management for BESS batteries is complex and resource-intensive. Recycling large lithium-ion batteries is challenging, and not all facilities are equipped to handle them safely. Improper disposal can result in toxic chemicals leaching into soil and water, creating long-term environmental hazards.

NPPF Paragraph 174(c, d) requires planning to minimize environmental impacts and manage pollution. Improper disposal or recycling of BESS batteries would clearly conflict with this policy.

5. Misrepresentation as ‘Green’ Technology

While a BESS can play a role in storing renewable energy, this does not make the facility itself green. Its construction, operation, and disposal all involve significant environmental impacts. To describe such a facility as inherently ‘green’ focuses only on its potential function, ignoring the full lifecycle costs to the environment. This characterization is misleading to the public and decision-makers.

NPPF Paragraph 8 promotes sustainable development, which balances environmental, social, and economic factors. Misrepresenting the BESS as inherently green undermines this principle.

6. Location Next to a Petrol Station – Serious Safety Concerns

The proposed BESS site is immediately adjacent to a petrol station. This location raises significant safety risks:

High fire risk: Both BESS units and petrol stations contain highly flammable materials. A fire or thermal runaway in a BESS could ignite fuel at the petrol station, creating a massive, uncontrolled fire hazard.

Explosion risk: The combination of lithium-ion batteries and petrol storage increases the potential severity of any accident, putting nearby residents, customers, and workers at extreme risk.

Emergency response challenges: Fires involving both BESS batteries and petrol would require specialized firefighting resources. In an emergency, nearby roads could be blocked, delaying evacuation and emergency services.

Installing a BESS next to a petrol station is a clear misjudgment of site suitability and amplifies the industrial hazards beyond those normally associated with battery storage facilities.

This clearly conflicts with NPPF Paragraph 92, which emphasizes the need to ensure safe and healthy places and that developments do not create risks to public safety.

7. Noise and Traffic Concerns

During construction, heavy vehicles delivering batteries, steel containers, and other materials will increase traffic, road wear, and hazards for pedestrians. Operationally, ventilation systems and inverters generate continuous noise. When located next to a petrol station, these combined industrial operations exacerbate disturbances to nearby residents and businesses.

NPPF Paragraph 174(f) requires that planning decisions avoid unacceptable noise impacts on health and quality of life.

8. Light Pollution

BESS facilities require security and operational lighting, which often operates 24/7. When placed next to a petrol station, these lights compound existing light pollution. The continuous glare and bright security lights can disturb local residents, disrupt wildlife, and reduce the quality of the night-time environment. Light pollution is often overlooked but has a measurable impact on community amenity, sleep, and local biodiversity.

NPPF Paragraph 185(c) highlights that planning decisions should limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity and nature, which this proposal clearly does not achieve.

Approving further units in Staffordshire Moorlands risks over-saturating the area with industrial battery storage, which would be detrimental to community amenity, landscape character, and public safety.

Conclusion

A BESS is an industrial metal facility with serious environmental, visual, and waste-related implications. It is not a green development in itself. Any assessment of its suitability should consider the full environmental impact, from mining and construction to operation and end-of-life disposal. Based on these factors, I strongly object to the portrayal of a BESS as 'green' and urge careful scrutiny before approval. Furthermore, the NPPF, while a key planning document, is out of date regarding battery storage technology and provides no clear guidance for assessing these developments.

Given the combination of unregulated risks, outdated planning policy, and significant community impacts, I strongly object to this proposal and urge the planning authority to reject it.

Thank you for considering this objection.

Yours faithfully,

Karen Askey

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