
From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 24 November 2025 14:51
To: Planning Comments (SMDC)
Subject: Comment Received from Public Access

Application Reference No. : DOC/2025/0082 Site Address: Land east of Cellarhead Substation Rownall Road Wetley
Rocks Staffordshire Comments by: Wendy Johnson
From:

Station Road
Cheddleton
Leek
Staffordshire

Phone:
Email: [REDACTED]
Submission: Objection
Comments: Date: 24 November 2025

Re: DOC/2025/0082 & Discharge of Condition 15 (Materials Management Plan)

Related Application: SMD/2022/0444 Flexible Energy Facility, Cellarhead

Introduction

I wish to formally object to the discharge of Condition 15 (Materials Management Plan). The submitted documentation fails to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of the original planning permission. The evidence shows unresolved impacts on highways safety, flood risk, landscape character, geological compatibility, restoration feasibility, and transparency of assessment. The condition cannot lawfully be discharged at this stage.

Grounds of Objection

1. Condition 15 & Materials Management Plan

⌋ The MMP confirms that 38,775 m³ of spoil will be exported off site to Foxes Plantation, Cheddleton, subject to a separate planning application.

⌋ Condition 15 requires clarity on excavation, bund formation, and raised earthworks before development commences. Deferring spoil destination impacts to another application means the condition is not properly discharged.

⌋ Spoil volume calculations vary between documents (RSK MMP vs Paul Butler Associates analysis), highlighting discrepancies and the absence of independent verification.

2. Highways Safety

⌋ Spoil volumes equate to thousands of HGV trips.

⌋ Public Rights of Way (FP43 and FP44) are directly affected & FP43 may need stopping up.

¿ No updated traffic assessment or consultation with Staffordshire County Council Highways has been provided, despite Conditions 9 and 10 requiring strict controls.

¿ This conflicts with NPPF paragraph 110 and SMDC Local Plan Policy DC1.

3. Flood Risk

¿ Spoil deposition overlays culverted watercourses.

¿ JBA Consulting advises that Land Drainage Consent and consultation with the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) are required.

¿ Without this, Condition 18 (surface water drainage scheme) is undermined.

¿ This conflicts with NPPF paragraphs 159¿169 and SMDC Local Plan Policy SD4.

4. Landscape & Visual Impact

¿ Stephenson Halliday¿s statement admits large visibility impacts during construction, especially from FP43, and residual glimpsed views from Coach House cottages and Woodend Manor.

¿ Deposition areas lie within the Green Belt, undermining Conditions 12¿14 and conflicting with SMDC Local Plan Policy SS10, DC1, and NE2, as well as NPPF paragraph 174.

¿ Bund cross sections and elevation drawings show significant engineered landforms that alter the pastoral character.

5. Geological Compatibility

¿ The deposition land is currently low lying pastoral farmland with natural drainage channels.

¿ The spoil is confirmed to comprise clay and weathered sandstone fragments.

¿ Introducing sandstone spoil risks altering soil fertility, permeability, and drainage.

¿ Without detailed geotechnical assessment, the Council cannot be satisfied that deposition will not degrade the land or increase flood risk.

6. Restoration Feasibility

¿ Excavation of sandstone bedrock is irreversible. Once broken up, sandstone cannot be reinstated to its original geological condition.

¿ Spoil consisting of clay and sandstone fragments cannot replicate the natural stratification, compaction, or drainage properties of intact bedrock.

¿ This means that at the end of the installation¿s life, the land cannot be returned to its original state as required by Condition 21. Restoration would leave a fundamentally altered soil profile, undermining agricultural productivity and landscape character.

7. Financial Bond Requirement

¿ The volume of spoil (approx. 38,775 m³) will generate substantial HGV movements, risking damage to local highways. A financial bond is necessary to ensure Staffordshire County Council Highways can recover costs for repairs.

¿ Condition 21 requires restoration of the site to pasture after cessation of use. A bond is essential to guarantee that restoration is carried out, preventing the land from being left in a degraded state.

¿ Bonds are standard practice in mineral extraction and renewable energy projects to secure restoration and protect public infrastructure. Without such security, the Council cannot be satisfied that the development is reversible or that the Green Belt will be protected.

8. Outdated Aerial Data and Need for Site Visit

¿ The supporting documentation relies on LiDAR and DEFRA vegetation datasets from 2020¿2021 and Ordnance Survey mapping from 2023. These are not sufficiently current to reflect present conditions.

¿ While viewpoint photographs were taken in August 2025, the baseline aerial data is several years old.

¿ Reliance on outdated datasets risks underestimating changes in landform, vegetation, drainage, and highway conditions.

¿ A site visit is therefore essential. I request that the SMDC Planning Committee, together with officers from Highways, Waste Management, and Flood Risk Management, conduct a site inspection before determining this discharge application.

¿ A desk based assessment cannot adequately capture the physical realities of narrow rural lanes, drainage channels, and the visual impact on nearby residents and public rights of way.

9. Evidence Base ¿ Physical Testing of Site Materials

¿ The only physical testing of site materials is contained in the Soil Engineering Ltd Preliminary Ground Investigation (June 2023).

¿ This confirms that topsoil is limited to 0.20¿0.50 m depth, underlain by clays and weathered sandstone bedrock proven to depths of up to 20 m bgl.

¿ The Materials Management Plan extrapolates this into volumetric figures (16,970 m³ topsoil vs 68,250 m³ spoil), but no independent reconciliation has been provided between borehole data and excavation drawings.

¿ Without transparent verification of the relative proportions of topsoil and bedrock, the Council cannot be satisfied that the spoil volumes are accurate or that restoration to agricultural use is feasible.

10. Absence of a Detailed HGV Routing Plan

¿ The discharge documents confirm spoil volumes and deposition location but do not provide a mapped haulage route for the thousands of HGV trips required.

¿ Without a detailed routing plan, the Council cannot assess impacts on local highways, verges, culverts, and rural lanes.

¿ National Grid¿s site access information indicates vehicles have used Mill Lane/Armshead Road, but this is not formally secured.

¿ This omission undermines Conditions 9 and 10 of the original approval, which required safe access and traffic management.

¿ Condition 15 should not be discharged until a full HGV routing plan is submitted and agreed with Staffordshire County Council Highways.

11. Cumulative Impact of Other Planning Applications

- ¿ The proposed deposition of spoil at Foxes Plantation, Bones Lane, Cheddleton must be considered in the context of other recent planning approvals.
- ¿ Application SMD/2022/0088 (food processing facility) involved substantial cut and fill operations at the same location, altering the ridge topography and pastoral character.
- ¿ This demonstrates that Foxes Plantation has already been subject to engineered landform alteration.
- ¿ The cumulative impact of multiple developments using the same land for spoil deposition undermines Green Belt policy (SS10) and landscape protection (NE2).
- ¿ Condition 15 cannot be discharged without a full cumulative landscape and geotechnical assessment of past and proposed deposition at Foxes Plantation.

12. Cumulative Effect of Waste Management from Multiple BESS Schemes

- ¿ There are other energy storage schemes in the vicinity that will also require excavation and spoil removal.
- ¿ Application SMD/2022/0548 (adjacent to Cellarhead Substation) and the resubmitted Newlands Farm BESS proposal both involve substantial excavation and bund formation. Each will require discharge of Condition 15 and generate significant spoil volumes.
- ¿ The Council must therefore consider the cumulative effect of waste management across multiple BESS projects, including combined spoil volumes, HGV movements, highways damage, and deposition of spoil in the Green Belt.
- ¿ Condition 15 cannot be discharged in isolation without a coordinated cumulative assessment of waste management impacts from all nearby energy storage schemes.

Conclusion

For the reasons above, the discharge of Condition 15 is premature and should be refused or deferred until full evidence is provided, including:

- ¿ Updated traffic assessments and highways consultation.
- ¿ Land Drainage Consent and LLFA consultation.
- ¿ Detailed geological and landscape impact analysis of off site spoil deposition.
- ¿ A financial bond to secure highways repairs and site restoration.
- ¿ A site visit by SMDC Planning Committee and statutory consultees to assess impacts on the ground.
- ¿ Independent reconciliation of borehole data with volumetric excavation figures.
- ¿ A detailed HGV routing plan agreed with Staffordshire County Council Highways.
- ¿ A cumulative assessment of past and proposed deposition at Foxes Plantation.
- ¿ A coordinated cumulative assessment of waste management impacts from all nearby BESS schemes.

Only once these matters are resolved can Condition 15 be lawfully discharged in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan.

Yours faithfully,

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