

SITE AND CONTEXT

The application site is located on the grass verge near the junction of Central Avenue and Polaris Drive, Baglan Energy Park. The industrial estate location is characterised by modern industrial units set back from the spine road, Central Avenue, with extensive landscaping including planting and managed verges between the units and the road. To the west of application site are the units of Mardon Park with intervening planting and a cycle track, to the northwest and southeast is primarily the continuation of the grass verge. On the opposite side of Central Avenue to the north is denser landscaping with a mix of trees and ponds beyond, and to the east a vacant plot overgrown with vegetation.

The application site is located within the settlement boundary as defined by Policy SC1 of the NPTCBC LDP.

DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

This is a full application for a 200kW Energy Storage System (Battery Box).

The battery compound consists of a 3.9m wide by 6.13m long rectangular area for a total footprint of approximately 24m². Within the compound are located four adjacent battery storage cabinets with an additional grid interface cabinet on the southern end. The battery cabinets and interface cabinet would be sited on a 15cm high support plinth measuring 5.98m long by 1.83m wide with each of the battery cabinets being 2.25m high, 1.8m deep and 1.15m wide. The Grid interface cabinet is proposed to be 2.25m high, 1.83m wide and 0.62m deep. The eastern perimeter of the compound would be enclosed with a 2.4m high wire mesh fence restricting access to the battery cabinets.

NEGOTIATIONS

The bug boxes were upgraded following consultations with our ecologists.

PLANNING HISTORY

The application site has the following relevant planning history:

97/0373 – Outline planning approval for phase 1 of the Baglan Energy Park – Approved with conditions 03/06/97

98/0080 – Road and combined footway/cycleway layout (plans and sections) required to serve Phase 1 of the Baglan Energy Park – Approved with conditions 02/04/98

98/0207 – Road connection, footway & landscaping works – Approved with conditions 02/04/98

98/0219 – Landscape works for entrance area, roads, and attenuation pond and screening between plots – Approved with conditions 11/06/98

02/1257 – Amendment to application P/98/0080 with regard to the road and combined footway/cycleway layout required to serve Phase 1 of the Baglan Energy Park – Approved with conditions 02/01/03

CONSULTATIONS

Highways - No objection

Natural Resources Wales – No objection

Contaminated Land – No objection subject to condition

Noise – No objection

Coal Remediation Authority – No objection subject to an informative

Biodiversity – No objection

Ward members have been notified.

REPRESENTATIONS

Site notices were displayed adjacent to the site on 22/7/26.

In response, to date no representations have been received.

REPORT

The Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 places a duty on the Council to take reasonable steps in exercising its functions to meet its sustainable development (or wellbeing) objectives. This report has been prepared in consideration of the Council's duty and the "sustainable development principle", as set out in the 2015 Act. In reaching the recommendation set out below, the Council has sought to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

National Planning Policy:

[**Future Wales: The National Plan 2040**](#) is the national development framework, setting the direction for development in Wales to 2040. The development plan sets out a strategy for addressing key national priorities through the planning system, including sustaining and developing a vibrant economy, achieving decarbonisation and climate resilience, developing strong ecosystems and improving the health and wellbeing of our communities.

The following policy is of particular relevance to the assessment of this application:

Policy 1	Where Wales will grow.
Policy 2	Shaping Urban Growth and Regeneration – Strategic Placemaking.
Policy 9	Resilient Ecological Networks and Green Infrastructure.
Policy 17	Renewable and Low Carbon Energy and Associated Infrastructure
Policy 19	Strategic Policies for Regional Planning.
Policy 28	National Growth Area – Swansea Bay and Llanelli

[Planning Policy Wales \(Edition 12, February 2024\)](#)

The primary objective of PPW is to ensure that the planning system contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development and improves the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, as required by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and other key legislation and resultant duties such as the Socio-economic Duty. A well-functioning planning system is fundamental for sustainable development and achieving sustainable places

PPW promotes action at all levels of the planning process which is conducive to maximising its contribution to the well-being of Wales and its communities. It encourages a wider, sustainable and problem solving outlook which focuses on integrating and addressing multiple issues rather than on an approach which is fragmented, un-coordinated and deals with issues in isolation. It provides an opportunity to remove any actual or perceived problems in current approaches and stimulate and support innovative and creative ideas as well as high standards of evidence and assessment to underpin the preparation of development plans and strategies and individual proposals. Monitoring and learning from development outcomes so as to drive sustainable improvements in planning practice is also important.

PPW12 is supported by a series of more detailed [Technical Advice Notes](#) (TANs), of which the following are of relevance: -

- Technical Advice Note (TAN) 12: Design
- Technical Advice Note (TAN) 15: Development flooding and coastal erosion

Local Planning Policies

The Local Development Plan for the area comprises the [Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan](#) which was adopted in January 2016, and within which the following policies are of relevance:

Strategic Policies

- **Policy SP1** Climate Change
- **Policy SP3** Sustainable Communities
- **Policy SP15** Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- **Policy SP16** Environmental Protection
- **Policy SP18** Renewable and Low Carbon Energy
- **Policy SP21** Built Environment and Historic Heritage

Topic Based Policy

- **Policy SC1** Settlement limits
- **Policy EN6** Important biodiversity and geodiversity sites.
- **Policy EN7** Important Natural Features
- **Policy EN8** Pollution and Land Stability
- **Policy BE1** Design
- **Policy TR2** Design and access of new development

Supplementary Planning Guidance:

The following SPG is of relevance to this application: -

- [Design](#) (July 2017)
- Biodiversity and Geodiversity (May 2018)
- [Parking Standards](#) (October 2016)
- [Pollution](#) (October 2016)

Issues

Having regard to the above, the main issues to consider in this application relate to the impact on the visual amenity of the area, the amenities of neighbouring residents, and highway safety.

Impact on Visual Amenity

Policy BE1 requires that development complements and enhances the character and appearance of the site; respects the context of the site and its place within the local landscape; utilises materials appropriate to its surroundings; and incorporates appropriate landscaping.

The proposal is located within a landscaped verge and is relatively modest in scale. The interface cabinet and mesh fencing are to be coloured in RAL6009 Fir Green with the battery cabinets coloured white. The scale and colouring of the proposal would be similar to other common street infrastructure such as electrical sub-stations or broadband boxes examples of which can be found in close proximity to the application site.

As a generating station, the proposal would require details of decommissioning, however given the relatively small scale of the proposal it is recommended that a suitable worded condition be imposed on any consent granted such that once its operation ceases, the development is decommissioned, removed and the site restored to its previous condition.

It is considered that given the location, size and height of the battery compound, it will on balance be acceptable with regard to visual amenity.

Impact on Residential Amenity

In respect of potential overlooking, overbearing and overshadowing due to the location and nature of the proposal and no nearby residential properties, it is considered that it would not create any unacceptable issues in these regards. The

proposal is therefore considered to accord with Policies BE1 & EN8 of the Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan.

Parking and Access Requirements and Impact on Highway Safety

The Highways Authority were consulted on the proposal and offered no objection to the proposal given that the setback of the proposed unit is sufficient to not impede the visibility of vehicles entering and existing the highway from the adopted unclassified Central Avenue to the private highway of Polaris Drive.

The proposed development would not result in the displacement of any existing off-street parking provision nor increase parking demand. It is therefore considered that the proposed change of use would not have a detrimental effect on highway safety and would subsequently be in accordance with Policy TR2 of the Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan.

Flood risk / Drainage

With regard to the site being within a defended flood zone 2 for rivers, a flood consequences assessment was submitted alongside the planning application and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) was consulted on the proposal. NRW offered no objection as the proposed battery units are considered to be a less vulnerable development, and it is therefore not considered that the proposed battery would have a detrimental effect on any flooding issues in the area.

Contaminated Land

The Authority's Environmental Health section was consulted on the proposal with regard to the potential of land contamination at the site and the environmental health officer offered no objection to the proposal subject to a conditional regarding the detection of unexpected contamination. It is recommended that should consent be granted a suitably worded condition be imposed. A further informative regarding the potential for ground gas was also recommended by the officer and it is recommended that this also be added to any consent granted.

Noise

The Authority's Environmental Health section was also consulted on the potential noise impacts of the proposal where the environmental health officer noted that the noise levels associated with the proposed battery box were low and that its siting would not result in any noise impacting noise sensitive receptors either during the construction phase or the operational phase of the development. As such, the officer offered no objection to the proposal

Fire Safety

It is noted that the National Fire Chiefs Council have issued guidance for Battery Energy Storage Systems to ensure that appropriate fire safety measures are incorporated into the design and operation of these developments. As such, it is recommended that an informative be added to any consent issued directing the applicant to this guidance and to liaise with the relevant emergency services prior to installation and operation of the development.

Coal Risk

The application site is located in a Coal Mining Remediation Authority high risk coal area and a Coal Mining Risk Assessment (CMRA) was submitted alongside the application. The Coal Mining Remediation Authority was consulted on the proposal and commented that as it does not appear that the energy storage system (battery box) would require substantial foundations or earthworks it would therefore fall within their exemptions list. Nevertheless, the Coal Mining Remediation Authority considered the CMRA and offered no objections to the proposal though did recommend that an informative regarding working within a high-risk coal area be added to any consent granted and it is proposed to do so.

Biodiversity / Ecology

As identified above, Policies EN6 and EN7 of the Local Development Plan will be of relevance insofar as there is a need to ensure any impacts on biodiversity/ natural features are appropriately assessed and, where applicable, mitigated.

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) 12 sets out that;

The quality of the built environment should be enhanced by integrating green infrastructure into development through appropriate site selection and use of creative design. With careful planning and design, informed by an appropriate level of assessment, green infrastructure can embed the benefits of biodiversity and ecosystem services into new development and places, help to overcome the potential for conflicting objectives, and contribute to health and well-being outcomes.

A green infrastructure statement (GIS) should be submitted with all planning applications. This will be proportionate to the scale and nature of the development proposed and will describe how green infrastructure has been incorporated into the proposal. In the case of minor development this will be a short description and should not be an onerous requirement for applicants. The green infrastructure statement will be an effective way of demonstrating positive multi-functional outcomes which are appropriate to the site in question and must be used for demonstrating how the step-wise approach (Paragraph 6.4.15 of PPW 12) has been applied.

The site is identified as being located in a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) for lowland meadow and small blue butterflies, and the Authority's ecologists were consulted on the proposal and the submitted GIS. Following consultation with the ecologist, the proposed planting of a hornbeam hedge was removed from the proposal and a higher specification "BugBlock Bug and Bee Hotel" was recommended for the two proposed bug boxes. Given the limited scale of the proposal and the amended biodiversity enhancement this proposal has been considered acceptable, and a suitable worded condition is recommended to be imposed on any consent granted.

CONCLUSION

The decision to recommend planning permission has been taken in accordance with Section 38 of The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, which requires that, in determining a planning application the determination must be in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The

Development Plan comprises Future Wales - the National Plan 2040 and the Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan (2011–2026) adopted January 2016.

It is considered that the proposal represents an appropriate form of development that would have no unacceptable impact on the visual amenity of the area, the amenities of neighbouring residents and highway safety. Accordingly, the proposed development is in accordance with Policies SP1, SP3, SP15, SP16, SP18, SP21, SC1, EN6, EN7, EN8, TR2 and BE1 of the Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan.

It is further considered that the decision complies with Future Wales - the National Plan 2040 and the Council's well-being objectives and the sustainable development principle in accordance with the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.