

23/01351/MFUL

Proposal: Construction, operation and maintenance of a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) facility with associated infrastructure and works including highway access, landscaping and biodiversity enhancements

Location: Land at NGR 304444 114510 North of A361, Junction 27 Westleigh

Grid Ref: 304444 / 114510

Parish: Burllescombe 06

1. Willand Parish Council object to this application for the following reasons which have the potential to adversely affect or harm the Parish and it's residents either directly or indirectly. Some of the concerns could also have a potential or actual adverse or harmful effect on the wider community of Mid Devon District or the wider South West.

2. The summary of main reasons, not in any particular order, are set out as brief headings and brief detail under each heading will follow. Great detail has not been produced as this would only be duplicating what other objectors have raised in their submissions.

2.1. Adverse landscape impact;

2.2. Use of good quality agricultural land;

2.3. Potential to adversely impact on the ecology of the site;

2.4. Potential to affect transport infrastructure to the South West;

2.5. Safety of the installation and likely adverse/harmful impact on nearby properties;

2.6. Potential pollution of waterways;

2.7. Lack of credible evidence and information in a number of the documents submitted in support of the application.

3. Adverse landscape impact.

3.1 The land is a reasonably flat site next to the M5, A361 North Devon Link Road and the main railway line to the South West peninsula. It will be clearly visible from nearly all points to people coming to the South West for tourism. Added to the nearby solar panel array it will make a very large scar on the landscape. This is a greenfield site which is being turned into a brownfield industrial site with no real justification. It is not renewable energy as the batteries will have to be charged from the grid and the electricity will then be fed back into the grid as required.

3.2 The indicative plan shows 100 battery units plus 44 Inverters plus other infrastructure. This is covered in more detail by others.

4. Use of Good quality agricultural land.

4.1 The applicant states that 30% of the land is Best and Most Versatile, being Grade 3a. It is suggested that the application therefore is not compliant with MDDC Local Plan Policies S1 and S9.

5. Potential to adversely impact on the ecology of the site.

5.1 Where all the batteries and Inverters are placed that land will potentially be lost as feeding ground for bats etc. It is appreciated that screening woodland is intended but this is a different 'landscape'. The proposed fencing will also place restrictions on the wildlife.

6. Potential to affect transport infrastructure in the South West.

6.1 Should there be a major incident at this location it has the potential to require the shutting down of the M5, A361 and the main railway line until an incident is resolved. No contingency plans appear to be in place to cater for such an incident. See paragraph 7 below.

7. Safety of the installation and likely adverse/harmful impact on nearby properties.

7.1 The concerns around this aspect of objection are well covered in the CPRE report and that of others who have noticeably researched the subject and produced ample evidence to support their views. There is little point in repeating the concerns other than to say that the Parish Council understand and support the arguments.

8. Potential pollution of waterways.

8.1 The potential for exceptional use of considerable volumes of water should there be a fire or similar incident involving the batteries has been explained by others with examples of incidents elsewhere. Any water run off is likely to be heavily polluted and will find its way into the nearby River Lyner. This then runs through to the Spratford Stream and then to the River Culm. All of these water courses have the potential to adversely affect residential and business areas.

9. Lack of creditable evidence and information in a number of the documents submitted in support of the application.

9.1 This is noticeable on examination and has been commented on in detail by others.

The use of this land is not in the Local Plan. Refusal of the application is recommended.