

DELEGATED REPORT

Application No: P/21/0164

Site Address: Plot 2
Pengarnddu Industrial Estate
Dowlais
Merthyr Tydfil
CF48 2TA

Development: Replace 52 diesel generators with low carbon battery storage technology

Case Officer: David Cross

Site Visit: 14th May 2021

Application Expiry Date: 30th June 2021

Consultation reply date expired: 27th May 2021

APPLICATION SITE

This application relates to an area of land located within the northern section of Pengarnddu Industrial Estate (Plot 2). The site has historically been used in connection with past mining activities and industrial uses and is currently used to accommodate a number of 'Short Term Operating Reserve' (STOR) power plants, which are connected to the National Grid (Western Power Distribution) to provide additional electricity during periods of stress on the National Grid.

The site is bounded to the north and west by land used for industrial purposes and to the east is another power plant facility. The primary means of access into the site is via a gated entrance to the south off the main highway serving the wider area of Pengarnddu Industrial Estate.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Full planning permission is sought for the replacement of the existing 52 diesel generators with containerised battery storage units with associated inverters. All of the ancillary buildings and equipment within the compound would be retained as part of the development. The existing diesel generators would be disconnected from the grid and removed from the site along with any remaining fuel.

The proposal would involve the installation of 12 containerised battery storage units, each measuring approximately 12m in length, 2.5m wide by 2.6m high. The containerised units would be located on the existing foundations within the acoustic compound. It is noted in the Design and Access Statement that the facility would export 20MW to the local

electricity grid and provides support to the local network when the system is under stress. The site is operated by the National Grid control room.

The existing 2.4m high weld mesh 'anti climb' security fence around the compound would be retained, along with the 4m high acoustic fencing. The existing access road that links the compound with the main highway would be utilised.

PLANNING HISTORY

P/12/0265 - Erection of Western Power Distribution substation with associated access (minor revisions to planning application P/12/0135).

Permission GRANTED on 14.11.2012

P/12/0135 - Erection of standby embedded STOR power plant with associated transformer/generators and connection to national grid. Erection of switchrooms, welfare office, bunded fuel tanks and security/acoustic fencing and other associated engineering works.

Permission GRANTED on 19.09.2012

CONSULTATION

Engineering & Highway Manager - No objection

Town Planning Division's Ecologist - No objection. Suggested that a wildflower area be created within the site to provide ecological enhancements.

Environmental Health Manager - No objection, subject to conditions relating to construction hours, dust management and waste disposal.

Western Power Dist. - No response

PUBLICITY

In accordance with the Town & Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2012, two site notices were displayed within the vicinity of the application site.

No representations were received following this publicity exercise.

POLICY CONTEXT

National planning policy

The Future Wales – the National Plan 2040 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 well-being of our communities.

Planning Policy Wales (PPW), Edition 11, February 2021:

Para 3.5 – 3.15 set out the importance of high quality design to ensure inclusive design, to promote environmental sustainability and ensure high environmental quality. Regard should also be given to the special characteristics of an area, community safety and to encourage sustainable forms of transport.

Para 3.55 notes that previously developed land wherever possible should be used in preference to greenfield sites where it is suitable for development.

Para 4.1.43 – 4.1.56 set out the need to reduce the level and speed of traffic in new development, the provision of car parking and how this may be integrated into new development to minimise the reliance on cars. Transport assessments are also an important mechanism to determine anticipated impacts a development proposal may have.

Para 5.7.1 sets out the key role that the planning system plays in delivering clean growth and decarbonisation of energy, as well as building resilience to the impacts of climate change.

Para 5.7.13 notes that energy storage has an important part to play in managing the transition to low carbon economy. Proposals for energy storage facilities should be supported wherever possible.

Para 6.4.21 – 6.4.23 note that local authorities should seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity and build resilient ecological networks to ensure that any adverse environmental effects can first be avoided, mitigated or compensated. Regard should also be given to any potential impacts on protected species which may result in disturbance or harm to the species or its habitat.

Technical Advice Notes (TAN):

- TAN 5, Nature Conservation and Planning, September 2009
- TAN 18, Transport, March 2007
- TAN 12, Design, March 2016

Local planning policy

Merthyr Tydfil Replacement Local Development Plan (LDP) 2016-2031:

- Policy SW4 - Settlement Boundaries
- Policy SW11 - Sustainable Design and Placemaking
- Policy EnW1 - Nature Conservation and Ecosystem Resilience
- Policy EnW4 - Environmental Protection
- Policy EnW5 - Landscape Protection
- Policy EcW2 - Protecting Employment Sites

Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG):

- SPG 4 - Sustainable Design, July 2013

- SPG 5 - Nature and Development, May 2013

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Land-use principal

The application site lies within the settlement limits and primary growth area where the majority of new development is generally encouraged by policy SW4 of the LDP. Additionally, the site has historically been used for industrial purposes, with its current use as a STOR power facility, which similar to the proposal, albeit, utilising battery storage rather than diesel generators. In this regard, the objectives of PPW encourages the decarbonisation of energy and the provision of energy storage facilities wherever possible.

The Pengarnddu Industrial Estate lies within an area identified in the LDP as being a 'protected employment site'. In order to protect the employment function of the Borough, policy EcW3 states that development proposals in this area will only be permitted if they:

- fall within Use Classes B1, B2 or B8; or
- provides an ancillary facility or service to the primary employment use; or
- is an acceptable complimentary commercial service unrelated to Class B uses; or
- is an appropriate waste management facility compatible with existing industrial and commercial activities.

The proposed power plant is classified as a '*sui generis*' use, indicating that it does not fall into any particular Use Class. Notwithstanding the fact the site is already used as a power plant facility, the proposed battery storage facility is deemed to provide a complimentary service outside of Class B uses. Accordingly, the principle of the development is acceptable and complies with policies SW4 and EcW3 of the LDP.

Design approach

Various elements of the existing power plant facility would remain in-situ, in particular the welfare building, switch-room, transformers and compound fencing. The existing containerised diesel generators would be removed and the new containerised battery storage units would be situated in similar positions on the existing foundations. The proposal would also be largely screened by the 4m high acoustic fencing. As such, taking into account the industrial nature of the surrounding area, the proposal would not be out of character with the local context and its appearance would not differ significantly to the existing power plant facility. Nor would the development adversely impact on the wider historic landscape. Therefore the design of the proposal is acceptable and complies with policies SW11 and EnW5 of the LDP.

Local amenities

The development is situated a considerable distance away from any residential properties and is within the vicinity of a local waste management facility. No impact on residential or business amenities have been highlighted as a result of the publicity exercise, nor is this anticipated given the industrial nature of the surrounding area. It is acknowledged that Environmental Health has not raised any particular concerns and has suggested that conditions could be imposed to restrict the construction hours and to manage dust and waste. Given the location of the site and the nature of the proposal with minimal ground

works involved, in this instance it is not considered necessary to impose the suggested conditions.

Ecological impact

There are no important natural features within the application site such as trees, hedges or watercourses that are deemed to be of significant ecological value. The proposal would involve works within an existing power plant facility, which largely comprises of hard surfaced areas and plant equipment.

It has been highlighted by the Planning Division's Ecologist that in line with the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and policy EnW1 of the LDP, the development should provide biodiversity enhancements. Accordingly, it has been indicated on the submitted plans that an area of land adjoining (south) the compound in the applicant's control will be planted with a wild flower seed mix as recommended by the Ecologist. Therefore, the proposal would have a negligible impact on protect species or habitats and in line with policy EnW1 of the LDP, it would provide appropriate biodiversity enhancements.

Highway implications

The existing access road serving the application site is currently used in connection with a number of large commercial and industrial type uses that are frequently visited by heavy goods vehicles on a daily basis. This access road is of a suitable standard to accommodate the necessary construction traffic and meet the operational needs of the proposed development. There is adequate turning provision on land adjoining the site to enable large vehicles to enter and leave in a forward gear, without impinging on the free flow of vehicular movement in the area.

The level of traffic generated by the development is considered to be low and would not differing significantly from the existing operation of the power plant facility. In this regard, the Head of Engineering has not raised any highway safety concerns. Therefore the proposal complies with policy SW11 of the LDP.

CONCLUSIONS

The duty to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, under section 3 of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 ("the WBFG Act") has been taken into consideration when determining this application. In reaching the following recommendation, the ways of working set out at section 5 of the WBFG Act have been considered and thus the proposal is in accordance with the sustainable development principle through its contribution towards one or more of the Welsh Ministers well-being objectives set out as required by section 8 of the WBFG Act.

For the above reasons, the proposed development is acceptable and complies with the relevant LDP policies. Accordingly, the following recommendation is made:

RECOMMENDATION: **BE APPROVED** subject to the following **CONDITIONS:**

1. The development shall begin not later than five years from the date of this decision.

Reason - To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and documents:

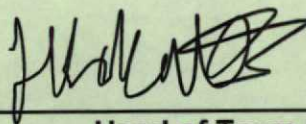
- Drawing No. DOW/LP/003, Wild Seed Mix Location, received 21.05.2021
- Drawing No. DOW/PS/002, Proposed Site Plan, received 05.05.2021
- Drawing No. STD_GF_DR_CB_333, Containerised Batter, received 05.05.2021

Reason - To ensure compliance with the approved plans and clearly define the scope of the permission.

3. All planting, seeding or turfing comprised in the approved details of landscaping (as set in Drawing No. DOW/LP/003, Wild Seed Mix Location, received 21.05.2021) shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the beneficial use of the proposed battery storage facility, or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner; and any plants which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species.

Reason - To ensure that the new development will be visually attractive in the interests of amenity and to accord with Policy SW11 of the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Replacement Local Development Plan.

RECOMMENDATION ENDORSED



Head of Town Planning

DATE:

29/6/21