



12 December 2024

Chief Planning Officer  
Mole Valley District Council  
Pippbrook  
Dorking  
Surrey  
RH14 1SJ

Dear Sir

**Planning Application No: MO/2024/1544**  
**Location: Installation of a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS)**  
**on land Northwest of Barnett Wood Lane, Ashtead KT21 2BU**

On behalf of the Ashtead Residents' Association I refer to the above planning application.

Our immediate reaction is the inappropriateness of locating the BESS upon Green Belt land close to residential dwellings at Bushey Shaw and Fairholme Crescent, both roads are within 300 metres of the site. Furthermore the location is in close proximity to junction 9 of the M25 and the Leatherhead bypass. Although the site is said to be temporary, a lease of 40 years would appear to be medium term during which time the future is uncertain.

The proposal represents an undesirable intrusion of development within the Green Belt covering an area of 18.2 ha. The inner battery plot is to be protected by a 2.75m high security fence but in spite of landscaping, the site will be intrusive and detrimental as seen from the adjoining Green Belt. We do not consider the BESS to represent acceptable development upon Green Belt land as defined by Policy EN1 of the Mole Valley Local Plan 2020-2039.

In addition we consider there are numerous environmental matters that deem the planning application to be unsuitable for the following reasons:-

- The site adjoins Ashtead Common, an SSSI designated for its diversity of habitat with communities of breeding birds, rare invertebrates, butterflies and several species of bats
- The field of the site is known as “Kestrel Field” with sightings of kestrels, red kite, buzzards and other protected species
- Close by is the Rye Brook and in the event of water cooling spillage from a fire we are concerned for river pollution
- There are known archaeological remains nearby with evidence of bronze age and iron age occupation. We are unconvinced that adequate surveys have been undertaken.

In view of the close proximity of residential dwellings to lithium-ion cells forming the BESS, we have grave concerns for the adequacy of safety precautions. There are instances of thermal runaways which have led to off-gassing, fire and explosions. The battery fires are uncontrollable except by extravagant water cooling. We note a water tank is on site but is it sufficient to manage the potential risk to life? Also in the event of an emergency, where and how will the water drain? Are there sufficient safeguards to protect the local water course of the Rye Brook which runs into the River Mole and beyond?

We are concerned for local residents about the noise associated with a BESS. It is interesting to note from sites considered within the Alternative Site Assessment the deterrent quoted is proximity to residential development and noise implications. We would argue both characteristics apply to the chosen site.

In order to connect to the grid a 3.4 km cable is to be laid from the BESS to the Chessington sub-station along the A243. Is there a less intrusive site nearer to Chessington and further away from dwellings?

We have seen clear evidence from the past that Merton College is anxious to develop their swathes of designated Green Belt land located on either side of the M25 off Barnett Wood Lane. Currently the Green Belt remains to restrict urban sprawl between Ashtead and Leatherhead. We should not wish to see any form of development that could be construed as establishing a precedent.

We have endeavoured to look at this very detailed and technical application with an open mind. However in reality we consider it to be detrimental to the Green Belt, the environment and those residents living in the immediate vicinity. In the circumstances we have concluded that the planning application as submitted must be refused.

Yours faithfully

