



**Overview and Scrutiny
Committee**

18th November 2025

Subject: Managing Battery Energy Storage Systems - Planning Matters

Report by:	Director of Planning, Regeneration & Communities
Contact Officer:	Russell Clarkson Development Management Team Manager Russell.clarkson@west-lindsey.gov.uk
Purpose / Summary:	To provide an update on the management of Battery Energy Storage planning matters and suggested next steps

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That members of the committee note the update and work to date.
2. That WLDC work with the Central Lincolnshire Local Plans team to review and update the Local Validation List to include specific documents required for planning applications for Battery Energy Storage development.
3. Publish a 'renewables register' to provide easier access to information regarding applications for the development of renewable energy in the district.

IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

There are no legal implications as a result of this report. Any legal matters relating to the management of planning applications is a separate matter.

(N.B.) Where there are legal implications the report MUST be seen by the MO

Financial :

The cost of updating a local validation list and implementing a 'renewables register' are yet to be understood. If there is a financial implication this would be managed through the established channels of governance.

The financial implications of the lost appeal for the development of Battery Energy Storage at Willingham by Stow are to be dealt with as a separate matter.

(N.B.) All committee reports MUST have a Fin Ref

Staffing :

The Development Management Team manage applications for renewable energy development on a day-to-day basis. Updating the local validation list will be a shared endeavour with the Central Lincolnshire Local Plans Team, and depending on capacity, may have an impact on the time it takes to implement any changes.

The advice and guidance of Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service will be sought through this process.

There will be a staffing requirement for support to develop a 'renewables register'.

(N.B.) Where there are staffing implications the report MUST have a HR Ref

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :

There are no direct implications as a result of this paper.

Data Protection Implications :

The Data Protection Officer will be consulted in the development of the local validation list and the 'renewables register' and any recommendations will be implemented as part of the process.

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:

This report has no direct climate related impact; however national & local planning policy is supportive of Battery Energy Storage development in line with ambitions to achieve net zero.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:

There are no section 17 Crime and Disorder considerations in this report.

Health Implications:

This report has no direct health implications. Published guidance into the management of Battery Energy Storage Systems recognises the potential health implications of risks related to fire and water contamination. The guidance also sets out how the safety of Battery Energy Storage Systems is regulated in order to manage these risks.

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report :

Motion to Full Council 4th November 2024: [Agenda for Council on Monday, 4th November, 2024, 7.00 pm | West Lindsey District Council](#)

Battery Energy Storage Systems Government Research briefing 23/06/2025: [CBP-7621.pdf](#)

Grid Scale Battery Energy Storage System Planning – Guidance for Fire and Rescue Service: [Document text here](#)

Planning Practice Guidance – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy: Battery Energy Storage Systems: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/renewable-and-low-carbon-energy#battery-energy-storage-systems>

Risk Assessment :

There are no direct risk implications associated with this paper.

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

☐

No

☒

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

☐

No

☒

Executive Summary

- 1.1 A battery energy storage system (BESS) is a technology that uses rechargeable batteries to store electrical energy for later use. The energy is often generated from renewable sources such as wind or solar. Stored energy can then be released on demand.
- 1.2 The government see BESS as part of the national strategy to reduce the use of fossil fuels and achieve 'net zero'.
- 1.3 Installing BESS requires planning consent from the Local Planning Authority.
- 1.4 National Planning policy and guidance does not set out any site-specific criteria for BESS applications, but does state that that the planning system should *“support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure”*.
- 1.5 West Lindsey District Council has determined two planning applications specifically for BESS development. Both were refused permission after consideration by the Planning Committee. Of these, one has been overturned at appeal.
- 1.6 The four solar project NSIP developments consented within the District have all included BESS infrastructure.
- 1.7 The report sets out measures taken to date; and makes proposals for updating the Central Lincolnshire Local List for Validation, to include specific requirements for BESS applications.
- 1.8 It also proposes the setting up of an online “renewables register” in order to give the public greater access to renewable developments proposed within the District.

2 Background

- 2.1 A battery energy storage system (BESS) is a technology that uses rechargeable batteries to store electrical energy for later use. The energy is often generated from renewable sources such as wind or solar. Stored energy can then be released on demand.
- 2.2 The government see BESS as part of the national strategy to reduce the use of fossil fuels and achieve 'net zero'.
- 2.3 Installing BESS requires planning consent. Local planning authorities are responsible for determining applications for BESS development.

3 National Legislation and Guidance

- 3.1 The Government has a legally binding target to reduce the UK's greenhouse gas emissions by 100% by 2050, compared with 1990 levels – the 'net zero target'. In December 2024, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) published its Clean Power 2030 Action Plan. This set out the government's pathway to a clean power system and what it plans to do to achieve this. The Action Plan states that it expects 23-27 GW of battery storage to be needed by 2030 to support its clean power ambitions, up from 4.5 GW it said was installed in December 2024 – a *"very significant level of increase"*. The government said it expected most of this storage to come from grid-scale batteries, with small-scale batteries also contributing.
- 3.2 There is no single piece of legislation that sets the specific requirements for BESS sites. There is a framework of legislation that applies.
- 3.3 Until 2020, energy storage systems with a capacity of over 50MW qualified as "nationally significant infrastructure projects" (NSIP). They required development consent from the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). Only those under 50MW capacity were determined by the Local Planning Authority.
- 3.4 In 2020, planning legislation was amended to omit energy storage systems from the NSIP regime. Now all energy storage systems (except pumped hydro), regardless of their size and capacity, are determined by local planning authorities in the first instance, through an application for planning permission. The only exception is when the BESS is deemed to be "associated development" with another NSIP project.
- 3.5 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2024) states that the planning system should *"support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure"*. It states that when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should *"give significant weight to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy generation and the proposal's contribution to a net zero future"*.

- 3.6 There are no specific policies for the siting of BESS. The NPPF advises authorities to identify “suitable areas” for renewable energy developments and supporting infrastructure.
- 3.7 In August 2023, specific national Planning Practice Guidance on BESS was published. This guidance remains current and in use for the determination of planning applications related to BESS. It encourages planning authorities to consider guidance produced by the National Fire Chiefs Council¹ in determining applications. The guidance is dated August 2023.
- 3.8 During summer 2024 there was a consultation exercise to update and replace the guidance². Updated guidance has not yet been published.
- 3.9 Whilst the Fire and rescue Service are not classed as statutory consultees at the present time, the guidance states that it is best practice for them to be consulted on any planning applications for BESS (over 1MW capacity).
- 3.10 In June 2025, a research briefing was published by Government. This briefing brings together all current published research and guidance relating to the management of BESS developments. It confirms the position that *‘developers and local planning authorities are encouraged to consult the local fire and rescue service in consideration applications for development’*.

4 Battery Energy Storage Systems (Fire Safety) Bill

- 4.1 A Bill to make fire and rescue authorities statutory consultees for planning applications relating to Battery Energy Storage Systems; and for connected purposes is currently being heard by Parliament. The Bill was presented in October 2024 and has passed the first reading stage. It is next scheduled to be heard in May 2026³.

5 WLDC Motion to Full Council

- 5.1 On 4th November 2024 Full Council considered a motion presented by Cllr Bridgwood. Council resolved to:
- Lobby the Government (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to make Local Fire Authorities statutory consultees in respect of planning applications relating to renewable energy sites and specifically battery energy storage system sites.

¹ [Grid Scale Battery Energy Storage System planning – Guidance for FRS](#) (National Fire Chiefs Council, 2023).

² See <https://nfcc.org.uk/consultation/draft-grid-scale-energy-storage-system-planning-guidance/>

³ Battery Energy Storage Systems (Fire Safety) Bill. See <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3806>

- Write to the Local Government Association and Greater Lincolnshire Authorities to highlight the current situation and lack of oversight on such developments and request that they too lobby the Government to bring about this national change.

5.2 These actions were completed as follows:

1. Letter to Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP (then Secretary of State Housing, Communities and Local Government) from Chairman of Council (December 24)
2. Letter to Councillor Louise Gittins, Chair of Local Government Association from Chairman of Council (December 2024)
3. Letter to all 9 Greater Lincolnshire Planning Authorities from Ian Knowles Chief Executive (January 2025).

6 Planning applications for the development of Battery Energy Storage Systems in West Lindsey

- 6.1 Since 2020, all BESS applications are to be determined by the Local Planning Authority (other than as “associated development” to a NSIP project). We have in the last 18 months considered two applications specifically relating to energy storage related developments within West Lindsey.
- 6.2 Alongside national policy, planning applications within West Lindsey are assessed against the development plan – comprising the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan adopted in April 2023 (CLLP) and any applicable Neighbourhood Plan.
- 6.3 Policy S16: Wider Energy Infrastructure of the CLLP is particularly relevant to BESS developments, as set out below and at Appendix 1:

Policy S16: Wider Energy Infrastructure

The Joint Committee is committed to supporting the transition to net zero carbon future and, in doing so, recognises and supports, in principle, the need for significant investment in new and upgraded energy infrastructure.

Where planning permission is needed from a Central Lincolnshire authority, support will be given to proposals which are necessary for, or form part of, the transition to a net zero carbon sub-region, which could include: energy storage facilities (such as battery storage or thermal storage); and upgraded or new electricity facilities (such as transmission facilities, sub-stations or other electricity infrastructure).

However, any such proposals should take all reasonable opportunities to mitigate any harm arising from such proposals, and take care to select not only appropriate locations for such facilities, but also design solutions (see Policy S53) which minimises harm arising.

- 6.4 West Lindsey has now determined two planning applications specifically for large-scale battery energy storage systems, as can be summarised in table 1.

Application Reference	Development Description	Capacity	Site	Decision	Appeal
-----------------------	-------------------------	----------	------	----------	--------

WL/2024/00662	Planning application for the installation and operation of a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) with ancillary infrastructure and landscaping and biodiversity enhancements.	400MW	LAND AT WILLINGHAM BY STOW FARM MARTON ROAD WILLINGHAM BY STOW GAINSBOROUGH DN21 5BH	Refused – 7 th February 2025 (Planning Committee meeting – February 2025)	Appeal allowed – 19 August 2025
WL/2024/00036	Planning application for the construction and operation of a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) including substations, inverters, transformer stations, cabling, fencing, internal service track and landscaping.	53MVA	LAND SOUTH OF BARFIELD LANE REEPHAM	Refused – 6 th December 2024 (Planning Committee – December 2024)	Appeal lodged – then withdrawn

Table 1: Battery Energy Storage System planning applications in WL (October 2025)

- 6.5 In order to make a valid planning application for consideration, it needs to meet the national validation requirements⁴. In May 2024, the Central Lincolnshire Authorities produced a Local List for Validation⁵ – this sets out all the documents required to make a valid planning application in Central Lincolnshire.
- 6.6 Neither the national nor local validation requirements set out any specific requirements for BESS applications. During consideration of application WL/2024/00036 (Reepham), the local planning authority requested that the applicant provide a Battery Safety Management Plan. This led to delays in the determination of the application whilst this was produced by the applicant, then consulted upon and reviewed in order to be taken into consideration. Application WL/2024/00662 (Willingham by Stow) voluntarily submitted an Outline Battery Safety Management Plan at the time they made their application.
- 6.7 Although not mandatory to do so, the Local Planning Authority consulted Lincolnshire Fire & Rescue on both applications before making a decision, as it is advised to do so by the national Planning Practice Guidance.
- 6.8 Both applications were referred to the Planning Committee to be determined. In both instances, planning permission was refused,

⁴ See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-an-application#Validation-requirements-for-planning-permission>

⁵ See <https://www.n-kesteven.gov.uk/central-lincolnshire/adopted-local-plan-2023/supplementary-planning-documents-guidance-notes>

contrary to the officer recommendations, with the Committee citing concerns primarily around the siting of the development, as well as safety concerns (particularly around fire risk and water pollution). In both instances, an appeal was lodged against the Council's decision.

6.9 A Public Inquiry was scheduled for October 2025 to hear the appeal against the refusal of WL/2024/00036 (Reepham). However, the applicant subsequently withdrew their appeal and this has not proceeded. The six-month period for lodging an appeal has now expired, and WLDC's decision to refuse permission therefore stands.

6.10 However, a planning appeal against the decision to refuse WL/2024/00662 (Willingham by Stow) was upheld in August 2025. The Government Planning Inspector overturned West Lindsey's decision and granted planning permission, subject to conditions. The permission allows 5 years for works to commence.

6.11 In overturning the appeal, the Inspector also granted the appellant a full award of costs – having found that WLDC had acted unreasonably on both substantive and procedural grounds in refusing its permission and subsequently defending its decision at the appeal.

6.12 In addition, we have also received a request for a screening opinion as to whether a future planning application for a BESS development near Blyton should be subject to the technical requirements of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations. The Local Planning Authority's opinion is that the development would not meet the criteria for requiring a full Environmental Statement. However, any forthcoming planning application will still need to be accompanied by sufficient documents to address the impacts of development.

Application Reference	Development Description	Capacity	Site	Decision
WL/2024/01017	Request for a screening opinion for a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) facility, with all associated works, equipment and necessary infrastructure.	Up to 35.5MW	LAND OFF STATION ROAD BLYTON GAINSBOROUGH DN21 3LE	EIA not required for future planning application

Table 2: Requests for EIA Screening Opinion in WL

6.13 Battery energy storage has also been accepted by the Government as 'associated development' along with the four solar park NSIP projects that have now been consented within West Lindsey. See table 3 below.

6.14 The One Earth Solar Project (OESF) is currently at examination (due to close January 2026) with a decision due by July 2026. The development is proposed to expand across three Districts: West Lindsey; Bassetlaw,

and Newark & Sherwood. It includes proposals to erect a 370MW BESS site within the West Lindsey part of the development.

Project Name	Approximate Solar Capacity (MW)	Approximate battery storage capacity (MWh)	Extent of Order Limits(Ha)	Decision
Gate Burton Solar Project	531MW	500MWh	824	DCO Granted (July 2024)
Cottam Solar Project	600MW	1357MWh/ 2773MWh	1,451	DCO Granted (September 2024)
West Burton Solar Project	480MW	159MWh	886.4	DCO Granted (January 2025)
Tillbridge Solar	500MW	2310MWh	1,345	DCO Granted (October 2025)
TOTAL APPROVED (Oct 2025)	2,111MW	Up to 5,742MWh	4,506.4	
One Earth Solar Farm	740MW	Eastern BESS in W Lindsey = 370MW Western BESS in Bassetlaw = 500MW	1,409 (1203Ha in Nottinghamshire; 206Ha in Lincolnshire)	Under Examination (8th July 2025 - 8 th January 2026. Decision due by 8th July 2026)

7 Next Steps

- 7.1 At the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in July 2025 members requested that a paper be prepared summarising the current situation regarding battery energy storage applications to allow continued discussion regarding next steps.
- 7.2 This paper sets out above the current national and local position and includes work to date and the applications received for BESS to date.
- 7.3 During the July meeting members referenced work of Horsham District Council considered to be best practice. Since this time officers have reviewed in detail all nationally published guidance, as well as the published work of Horsham DC.
- 7.4 Additionally, a meeting with Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service took place on 28th October. **[update after meeting - insert any additional detail]**

- 7.5 In accordance with national Planning Practice Guidance, WLDC have always consulted with the Fire and Rescue Service on planning applications related to BESS, despite this not currently being mandatory. Their views have been fully considered as part of the planning process, and this will continue as custom and good practice.
- 7.6 The work of Horsham DC resulted in the creation of a Local Validation List specifically for BESS (see appendix 2). This requires any planning application for a BESS development to provide an 'Outline Fire strategy' and details of a 'Maintenance regime'. The list sets out in detail what it requires to be included within the documents.
- 7.7 It is considered that updating the Local Validation List for Central Lincolnshire to include specific requirements for BESS applications, would provide both developers and the local planning authority with clarity regarding information that is necessary to determine such applications. It is considered that the requirement of a Battery Safety Management Plan (to include measures to reduce and mitigate against fire risk; and water contamination) as well as measures for maintenance, would assist the Central Lincolnshire Authorities in assessing such applications.
- 7.8 The Central Lincolnshire Local List for Validation was adopted in May 2024. Planning Practice Guidance requires that the Local List is reviewed at least every two years – i.e. by May 2026.
- 7.9 As WLDC are part of the Central Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning unit this work will be done across WLDC, North Kesteven and the City of Lincoln Council areas.
- 7.10 Planning Practice Guidance sets out 3 stages to a Local List review:

Stage 1: Reviewing the existing local list. *Local planning authorities should identify the drivers for each item on their existing local list of information requirements. These drivers should be statutory requirements, policies in the National Planning Policy Framework or development plan, or published guidance that explains how adopted policy should be implemented.*

Stage 2: Consulting on proposed changes. *Where a local planning authority considers that changes are necessary, the proposals should be issued to the local community, including applicants and agents, for consultation.*

Step 3: Finalising and publishing the revised local list. *Consultation responses should be taken into account by the local planning authority when preparing the final revised list. The revised*

local list should be published on the local planning authority's website.

- 7.11 It is considered that Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service should be engaged and consulted with as part of any review.
- 7.12 On reviewing the availability of information relating to renewable energy developments, officers have also suggested that a 'renewables register' could be developed. The register would be a central web page setting out details of all renewable energy development proposals in the district, making it easier for our communities and stakeholders to see at a glance current development proposals. The register will be in place by the end of the calendar year and all members will receive an update via the Members Newsletter.