



24/02948/FUL – Land North of Babraham Park And Ride, Cherry Hinton Road, Cambridgeshire

Application details

Report to: Cambridge City Council Planning Committee

Lead Officer: Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development

Ward/parish: Queen Edith's

Proposal: Installation of a 132-33kV substation including 2 grid transformers and raised switch house, incorporating all works ancillary to the development of a substation.

Applicant: Eastern Power Networks PLC

Presenting officer: Mairead O'Sullivan (Principal Planning Officer)

Reason presented to committee: The application has been advertised as a formal departure from the Development Plan policy

Member site visit date: N/A

Key issues: Impact on the Green Belt

Recommendation: **APPROVE** subject to conditions

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1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The application seeks full planning permission for the installation of a 132-33kV substation including 2 grid transformers and raised switch house, incorporating all works ancillary to the development of a substation. The proposed substation would transform electricity from 132kV as supplied by the Fulbourn Grid down to 33kV to then be distributed to another substation which will be proposed in Trumpington. From here the power can be transformed further so it can be distributed to commercial and residential users.
- 1.2 The majority of the site falls within the South Cambridgeshire District Council administrative area and a separate planning application has been submitted to that local planning authority (reference 24/02949/FUL). Part of the area within the red edged plan lies within the Cambridge City Council administrative area. The built elements of the proposal are wholly within the South Cambridgeshire. The areas in the city include tree and hedge planting which is required to mitigate the impact of the development on the landscape character and the openness of the green belt. As the proposal does not represent a *significant* departure, the South Cambridgeshire application has been determined under delegated powers, in accordance with the District Council's constitution.
- 1.3 The site is located within the Green Belt and is not one of the exceptions listed in paragraph 154 or 155 of the NPPF, therefore is considered as harmful to the Green Belt and very special circumstances are required to justify the development.
- 1.4 An Alternative Sites Assessment (ASA) has been provided to support the application. This considered the suitability of sites within an area in proximity to the Fulbourn Grid against a number of suitability criteria. All of the suitable sites were found to be in the Green Belt. The application site was the only site identified as being both suitable and available.
- 1.5 The 2023 National Policy Statements (NPS) for Energy identify an urgent need for electricity network infrastructure to be delivered to meet energy objectives stating that the provision of nationally significant low carbon infrastructure is a critical national priority (CNP). Substantial weight should be given to the provision of CNP infrastructure.
- 1.6 The grid infrastructure will help to meet demand for growth identified by both the Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire Local Plans. It will also help provide capacity to meet with additional demand for electricity

associated with new technologies such as electrical vehicle (EV) charging and electrical heating for domestic and commercial premises.

- 1.7 The submitted Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) identifies locations where the site will be visible and proposes mitigation measures in the form of tree planting and the colour of the units to ensure the development does not impact on the openness of the Green Belt. Although a large area of trees and hedgerows are to be removed to provide access to the site, these will be replaced and substantial additional planting will be provided around the compound and to the north of the site along the field boundary in line with the recommendation of the LVA. Subject to the landscape mitigation the development is not considered to impact on the purpose or openness of the Green Belt.
- 1.8 The submitted BNG assessment shows there will be 9.43% net gain with trading issues regarding high distinctiveness habitats. Therefore some off-site provision is required (0.16 credits). The Biodiversity Officer has no objection to the development subject to conditions. The Highway Officer is satisfied that the proposal would not have an adverse impact on highway safety subject to conditions. The Lead Local Flood Authority are satisfied that the proposal would not have an adverse impact on surface water flooding subject to conditions.
- 1.9 The benefits of the scheme in terms of the provision of CNP and providing electricity grid capacity for planned growth locally are carry considerable social, economic and environmental benefits which are considered to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. The proposal is therefore considered to have demonstrated Very Special Circumstances as required by paragraphs 152 and 153 of the NPPF.
- 1.10 The recommendation is for approval subject to the conditions and informatives as set out below in this report, with authority delegated to officers to carry through minor amendments to those conditions and informatives (and include others considered appropriate and necessary) prior to the issuing of the planning permission.

2. Site description and context

- 2.1 The site lies immediately to the north of Babraham Park and Ride and to the west of Cherry Hinton Road. The site is predominantly in the South Cambridgeshire District Council administrative area however the red line includes an additional area of landscape mitigation to the north of the larger red edged site area which is within Cambridge City Council. Therefore two applications have been submitted but the applications

cover a single development proposal. The areas within the Cambridge City Council's administrative area include tree and hedge planting to mitigate the impact of the built form. The corresponding South Cambridgeshire application (reference 24/02929/FUL) has been determined under delegated powers in accordance with the District Council's constitution.

- 2.2 The site is in the Green Belt and is part of a field that is currently used as an agricultural field of Grade 2 land (Very Good). The site is in Flood Zone 1.
- 2.3 The Gog Magog Hills are located immediately to the east of the site and Beechwood Local Nature Reserve and the Gog Magog golf course SSSI are also to the east on the lower slopes of the Hills. There is a belt of trees and hedges running along the eastern and southern field boundaries that screen the site.
- 2.4 The Gog Magog Hills are located immediately to the east of the site and Beechwood Local Nature Reserve and the Gog Magog golf course SSSI are also to the east on the lower slopes of the Hills. There is a belt of trees and hedges running along the eastern and southern field boundaries that screen the site.
- 2.5 A permitted footpath runs alongside the eastern boundary of the site. The Netherhall Farm and Newbury Farm sites, which have planning consent for new housing, are both located to the west of the site.

3. The proposal

- 3.1 The application seeks full planning permission for the installation of a 132-33kV substation including 2 grid transformers and raised switch house, incorporating all works ancillary to the development of a substation. The site will compound is 83.3m x 46.4m and will be surrounded by a 2.4m high weld mesh fence with security lighting and CCTV cameras. The proposed switch house is the most prominent structure being 7.5m in height. The switch house would be clad in a material of a colour to help lend with the landscape.
- 3.2 Tree and hedge removals are required to provide access to the site. Additional planting is proposed along the field boundary to the north of the site to compensate for trees lost to provide access to the site and to help screen the site in views from the north. Planting is proposed around the compound including mixed hedgerow planting around the outer edge. A

mix of evergreen and deciduous tree planting is proposed between the hedge and palisade fence.

- 3.3 The proposed substation would transform electricity from 132kV as supplied by the Fulbourn Grid down to 33kV to then be distributed to another substation which will be proposed in Trumpington. From here the power can be transformed further so it can be distributed to commercial and residential users.
- 3.4 Additional space has been allowed within the compound to cater for an additional grid transformer for future growth or maintenance needs. Additional underground cable work will be needed however this work is permitted development and is not considered as part of the planning application.
- 3.5 The application is supported by the following plans and documents:
- Cover letter
 - Alternative Sites Assessment (ASA)
 - Planning Statement (including VSP case)
 - Landscape and Visual Appraisal and Green Belt Study
 - Landscape Maintenance Plan
 - Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment and metric
 - Preliminary Ecological Assessment
 - Substation noise assessment
 - Transport Statement
 - Construction Traffic Management Plan
 - Flood Risk Assessment (and appendices)
 - Drainage Strategy
 - Arboricultural Method Statement
 - Archaeological Trial Trenching Evaluation Report
 - Visibility Splay Plan
 - Elevations and site plans (including landscaping plans)
 - Visualisations
- 3.6 During the application period the plans have been amended and additional information provided to address comments from the Highway Authority and the Landscape Officer. Amended visibility splays and traffic accident data has been provided to address comments from the Highway Authority. Additional landscape plans showing planting for the whole site and amendments to the planting specifications have been submitted to address comments from the Landscape Officer.
- 3.7 A screening opinion has not been submitted however the application is not considered to be EIA development.

4. Relevant site history

- 4.1 The application is accompanied by a duplicate application to cover the parts of the site within the South Cambridgeshire District Council Area. The details are provided in the below table.

Application ref	Description of development	Outcome
24/02949/FUL	Installation of a 132-33kV substation including 2 grid transformers and raised switch house, incorporating all works ancillary to the development of a substation.	Approved in November 2024

Table 2 Details of site history

5. Policy

5.1 National policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2023

National Planning Practice Guidance

National Design Guide 2021

Circular 11/95 – The Use of Conditions in Planning Permissions (Annex A)

Planning Policy Statement – Green Belt protection and intentional unauthorised development August 2015

Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) (November 2023)

5.2 Cambridge Local Plan (2018)

Policy 1: The presumption in favour of sustainable development

Policy 4: The Cambridge Green Belt

Policy 8: Setting of the city

Policy 28: Carbon reduction, community energy networks, sustainable design and construction, and water use

Policy 31: Integrated water management and the water cycle

Policy 32: Flood risk

Policy 33: Contaminated land

Policy 34: Light pollution control

Policy 35: Protection of human health from noise and vibration

Policy 36: Air quality, odour and dust

Policy 38: Hazardous installations

- Policy 39: Mullard Radio Astronomy Observatory, Lord's Bridge
- Policy 55: Responding to context
- Policy 56: Creating successful places
- Policy 57: Designing new buildings
- Policy 59: Designing landscape and the public realm
- Policy 70: Protection of priority species and habitats
- Policy 71: Trees
- Policy 80: Supporting sustainable access to development
- Policy 81: Mitigating the transport impact of development

5.3 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)

Biodiversity SPD – Adopted February 2022

Sustainable Design and Construction SPD – Adopted January 2020

Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD – Adopted November 2016

6. Consultations

County Highways

- 6.1 No objection: The applicant has provided sufficient information to address concerns raised about visibility splays and the automatic traffic count. A compliance condition in relation to visibility splays is recommended. A construction traffic management plan should be conditioned.

Sustainability Officer

- 6.2 No comments received.

Environmental Health

- 6.3 No objection. Officers from both Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council's Environmental Health Teams have commented on the applications. The officers agree that given the relatively large distances involved to the nearest noise sensitive residential receptors (existing Arthur Rank Hospice situated approximately 240m to the south) the predicted noise levels produced by the substation are below what would reasonably be considered acceptable in this location. A compliance condition is recommended. Conditions are also recommended in relation to construction hours and piling.

Ecology Officer

- 6.4 No objection: The applications secure 9.43% BNG on site therefore some off-site provision is required. Conditions are recommended requiring a CEMP, ecological enhancements and details of BNG.

Landscape Officer

- 6.5 No objection: The revised landscape plans show the entire scope of the planting around the substation and field boundaries. A revised planting schedule and specification has also been provided which address previous concerns. Conditions are recommended requiring further detailing of hard and soft landscape, a maintenance plan, replacement planting and further information about materials to be used on the switch house and fence.

Tree Officer

- 6.6 No objection: The application requires 35m of hedging and trees to be removed along Cherry Hinton Road. To mitigate this loss, a landscape scheme has been proposed. There are no arboricultural concerns.

Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team (Archaeology)

- 6.7 No objection: The proposed development is in an area of very high archaeological potential with late Neolithic and Bronze age deposits and features found just to the southwest during the excavation of the Park and Ride. An archaeological evaluation has been undertaken at the site to test the potential and found a limited level of archaeological activity therefore no further action is needed.

Lead Local Flood Authority

- 6.8 No objection in principle: Conditions requiring further details of surface water drainage for the construction phase and operational phase of development are requested.

Cadent Gas

- 6.9 Comments. The engineering team are reviewing the application as it is in the vicinity of a gas asset therefore placing a holding objection on the application. The applicant has amended the landscape design in response to these comments.

Cambridge Airport

- 6.10 The proposal doesn't conflict with any airport safeguarding criteria. Advice is provided in relation to cranes.

7. Third party representations

- 7.1 A neutral representation has been received from Cambridge Past, Present and Future on the accompanying application for South Cambridgeshire District Council (24/02949/FUL).

- 7.2 The neutral representation can be summarised as follows:

- Suggest changes to the planting palette
- Request specification for the reuse of topsoil
- Rabbit fencing (or alternative) will be required
- More detailed watering specifications are needed.

- 7.3 The above representation is a summary of the comment that has been received. Full details of the representation can be inspected on the application file.

8. Member Representations

- 8.1 No representations have been received.

9. Planning Background

- 9.1 The application has been subject to pre-application advice as part of a Planning Performance Agreement.

- 9.2 The application has been advertised as a formal departure from the Development Plan policy which requires the application to be determined at Cambridge City Planning Committee. The wording of the South Cambridgeshire scheme of delegation differs from the city. As the proposal does not represent a *significant* departure, the South Cambridgeshire application has been determined under delegated powers.

10. Assessment

- 10.1 From the consultation responses and representations received and from an inspection of the site and the surroundings, the key issues are:
- Principle of development
 - Design, layout, scale and landscaping
 - Trees

- Biodiversity
- Water management and flood risk
- Highway safety and transport impacts
- Amenity/ Environmental Considerations
- Third party representations
- Other matters
- Planning balance
- Recommendation
- Planning conditions

11. Principle of Development

- 11.1 The site lies within the Green Belt and on Grade 2 land (Very Good) agricultural land.
- 11.2 Paragraph 152 of the NPPF states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.
- 11.3 Paragraph 153 states that local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt and that 'very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason on inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. Very special circumstances are not defined in national planning policy as it is for the individual decision maker to assess each case on its merits and give relevant circumstances their due weight
- 11.4 Paragraph 154 states that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate, however, it does allow the provision for exceptions. The development does not fall within any of the exceptions.
- 11.5 Paragraph 155 states that other forms of development are not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. The development is not one of the forms of development listed in paragraph 155.
- 11.6 Policy 4 of the Cambridge Local Plan (2018) aligns with the NPPF advice.
- 11.7 As the proposal is not one of the exceptions listed in paragraph 154 or 155, and therefore is considered harmful to the Green Belt, very special circumstances are required to justify the development.

11.8 Policy 8 of the Cambridge Local Plan requires that development on the urban edge of Cambridge responds to conserves and enhances the setting and special character of the city in accordance with the Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment 2003, Green Belt assessment, Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy and their successor documents, safeguards the best agricultural land unless sustainable development overrides the need for it to be protected and requires landscape improvements that strengthen the well defined and vegetated urban edge, improve visual amenity and enhance biodiversity.

11.9 The majority of the sites falls within the remit of South Cambridgeshire District Council. The areas that lie within Cambridge City Council comprises landscape mitigation to the northern parts of the site which are needed to screen the development.

Assessment of need

11.10 The application is accompanied by an Alternative Sites Assessment (ASA) which addresses the need for the substation and also considers a number of alternative sites against suitability criteria (see below). The ASA details that the need for the substation arises from a number of different factors. These are existing planned growth, expected future growth and changes to the way consumers use electricity in line with national policy increasing existing demand.

11.11 The development is infrastructure to reinforce the electricity grid and create additional capacity. In January 2023 a suite of National Policy Statements (NPS) for Energy came into force. These recognise that there is an urgent need for new electricity network infrastructure to be delivered to meet energy objectives. The overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) explains that the provision of nationally significant low carbon infrastructure is a critical national priority (CNP). It goes on to elaborate that this doesn't extend the definition of nationally significant infrastructure (as set out in the Planning Act 2008) but highlight what low carbon infrastructure for the purpose of this policy means. For electricity grid infrastructure it includes network reinforcement and upgrade works and associated infrastructure such as substations. This is not limited to those associated specifically with a particular generation technology, as all new grid projects will contribute towards greater efficiency in constructing, operating and connecting low carbon infrastructure. Substantial weight should be given to the provision of CNP infrastructure.

11.12 The adopted Cambridge Local Plan provides for 14,000 additional homes and 22,100 jobs. The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan provides for 19,500 new homes and 22,000 additional jobs. A significant amount of

this growth has been planned to the south of the city with additional housing development in Trumpington and employment floorspaces in Cambridge Biomedical Campus. The latest Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) shows that over 20,000 new dwellings were completed in the first 12 years of the plan period (2011-2023). This means that an additional 13,000 dwellings are anticipated to be completed in the final 8 years of the plan period. The ASA highlights that the provision of electrical infrastructure in the area will help facilitate this planned growth.

- 11.13 In addition to committed and proposed development, as part of national changes to reduce the use of greenhouse gases and goals to reach Net Zero Carbon by 20250 there is an increased demand for electricity. Some of the drivers for this increased demand are electric vehicles and a move towards alternatives to gas boilers to heat homes and businesses.

Alternative sites considered

- 11.14 The ASA provides details of the sites considered for the development. A suitable site needs to be less than 10km from the Fulbourn Grid site as some power is lost in the heat of the cable meaning distances need to be kept to a minimum. The site also needs to be close to end users and should be 7km or less is preferable. These overlapping constraints result in a search area made up of the south western part of the city and an area of Green Belt to the south of the city. To provide sufficient space for the compound the site needs to be approx. 100 x 150m. The site also needs to be generally flat and be capable of providing vehicular access for construction and operational purposes.

- 11.15 The ASA identified sites based on a hierarchy of being: 1. In Flood Zone 1, 2. Brownfield Land, 3. Alternative to brownfield land, 4. Preferable outside of the Green Belt, 5. If agricultural land, not classified as Grade 1, 2 or 3a.

- 11.16 Considering all of the above requirements, 9 potential sites were identified and assessed in greater detail. All 9 sites are in the Green Belt and no sites were found that met the requirements which were outside of the Green Belt. Four of the sites were considered suitable but only the proposed site was both suitable and achievable as the other sites were not available.

Purpose of the Green Belt

- 11.17 Paragraph 143 of the NPPF details that the Green Belt serves five purposes which are: (a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; (b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another; (c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; (d) to preserve

the setting and special character of historic towns; and (e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- 11.18 The proposed development would result an adverse impact on the surrounding rural landscape through the introduction of built form however mitigation is proposed in the form of hedgerow and tree planting immediately around the compound and in an area to the north of the compound. The proposal is not considered to cause urban sprawl or the joining of two neighbouring towns. The mitigation measures assessed in the Context of site, design, external spaces and landscape mitigation section below mean that over time the development will be screened to ensure that the visual impact on the countryside is minimal. There are no historic assets in close proximity to the site and the mitigation measures are such that the development is not considered to result in an adverse impact on the setting of Cambridge City. The ASA demonstrates that no suitable sites are available outside of the Green Belt.
- 11.19 Subject to the proposed mitigation measures and conditions which are detailed in the Context of site, design, external spaces and landscape mitigation section of the report below, the proposal is not considered to conflict with the conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt.

12. Design, layout, scale and landscaping

- 12.1 Paragraph 142 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that the government attaches great importance to Green Belts. 'The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.
- 12.2 Policies 55, 56, 57 and 59 of the Cambridge Local Plan (2018) seek to ensure that development responds appropriately to its context, is of a high quality, reflects or successfully contrasts with existing building forms and materials and includes appropriate landscaping and boundary treatment. Policy 71 requires development proposals to preserve, protect and enhance trees and hedges with amenity value, provide appropriate replacement planting where felling is required and provide sufficient space for trees to mature. Policy 8 requires that developments on the edge of Cambridge are in accordance with their landscape character and conserve the setting of the city including landscape improvements to strengthen the green edge of the city, improve visual amenity and enhance biodiversity.

- 12.3 The application is supported by a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA). The viewpoints that form part of the LVA were agreed as part of the pre-application process. The Landscape Officer is satisfied that the LVA includes a thorough assessment of the impact of the proposed development.
- 12.4 The assessment shows that the development will theoretically be visible from areas to the north, east, west, southeast, northeast and northwest but not visible from the south. Three viewpoints were agreed in these locations from the north, northeast and northwest of the site that reflect public areas where the site will be most visible. The views show that the development would be visible to future users of the open space on the west edge of the Newbury Farm development site.
- 12.5 The proposed landscape design has considered this impact. Tree and hedge planting is proposed which will soften views and eventually over time screen views of the site from this area of open space. The switch house is the most prominent structure on site. This would be clad in a colour to help blend with the landscape. Details of this colour are required by condition. Details of the colour of the boundary fence are also required to ensure this will blend suitably with the environment.
- 12.6 The Landscape Officer considers that although the development would have an adverse impact on the surrounding rural landscape through the introduction of built form, this would be mitigated by the proposed planting which will soften views and eventually screen the compound.
- 12.7 The Landscape Officer requested further information on the extent of the northern planted area and a plan showing all of the proposed planting as this was shown over multiple plans in the original submission. These details have been provided and the Landscape Officer has no objection to the proposed development subject to a number of conditions.
- 12.8 Conditions are recommended requiring further details of boundary treatment (**condition 13**), a landscape maintenance and management plan (**condition 14**) and further information of the colour of the façade of the switch house and the compound fencing (**condition 15**).
- 12.9 Subject to the mitigation measures and conditions, the proposal is not considered to result in the loss of openness of the Green Belt and is compliant with Policies 8, 55, 56, 57, 59 and 71 of the Cambridge Local Plan (2018) and the NPPF.

13. Trees

- 13.1 Policy 71 of the Cambridge Local Plan (2018) seeks to preserve, protect and enhance existing trees and hedges. Para. 131 of the NPPF seeks for existing trees to be retained wherever possible.
- 13.2 The proposal which involve the removal of 35m of hedging and trees along Cherry Hinton Road; this element of the proposal is wholly within South Cambridgeshire. No tree removals are proposed within Cambridge City's administrative area. Additional tree and hedgerow planting is proposed along the northern field boundary to aid with screening the development from the road. Much of this tree planting is within the South Cambridgeshire areas of the site.
- 13.3 The proposal would accord with policy 71 of the Cambridge Local Plan (2018) and the NPPF.

14. Biodiversity

- 14.1 The Environment Act 2021 and the Councils' Biodiversity SPD (2022) require development proposals to deliver a net gain in biodiversity following a mitigation hierarchy which is focused on avoiding ecological harm over minimising, rectifying, reducing and then off-setting. This approach accords with policies 69 and 70 of the Cambridge Local Plan (2018) which outlines a primary objective for biodiversity to be conserved or enhanced and provides for the protection of Protected Species, Priority Species and Priority Habitat. Policy 8 of the Local Plan requires that developments on the urban edge of Cambridge provide landscape enhancements to, amongst other things, enhance biodiversity.
- 14.2 The Ecology Officer has confirmed that although the site is within the Impact Risk Zone of nearby protected sites, it doesn't meet the criteria to require consultation with Natural England. Although there is no evidence that a protected species license will be required, the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) recommends method statements are provided to remove any residual risk of harm or disturbance to protected and priority species.
- 14.3 The submitted BNG assessment shows there will be 9.43% net gain with trading issues regarding high distinctiveness habitats. Therefore some off-site provision is required (0.16 credits) either through the creation of habitat on land owned by the applicant or through purchasing credits from a local Habitat Bank. Given the very limited off-site provision, the

Biodiversity Officer confirms that monitoring can be done via a condition and a s106 agreement will not be needed.

14.4 The Construction Ecological Management Plan (CEMP) condition is recommended to protect ecology on site during the construction phase of development. The ecology enhancement condition is recommended to ensure the enhancements recommended by the PEA are implemented. The BNG condition is recommended to provide further details of both on site and off site BNG provision to comply with national policy.

14.5 In consultation with the Council's Ecology Officer, subject to an appropriate condition, officers are satisfied that the proposed development complies with policies 69 and 70, the Biodiversity SPD 2022, the requirements of the Environment Act 2021 and 06/2005 Circular advice.

15. Water management and flood risk

15.1 Policies 31 and 32 of the Cambridge Local Plan (2018) require developments to have appropriate sustainable foul and surface water drainage systems and minimise flood risk.

15.2 The site is in Flood Zone 1 and is therefore considered at low risk of flooding. As the site is less than 1ha a Flood Risk Assessment is not required.

15.3 The LLFA have no objection to the proposed applications subject to further details of surface water drainage during the construction phase and operational phase of the development. Both conditions have been recommended. **(Condition 16 & 17).**

15.4 Subject to conditions, the proposals accords with Policies 31 and 32 of the Cambridge Local Plan, and the NPPF.

16. Highway safety and transport impacts

16.1 Policy 81 of the Cambridge Local Plan (2018) states that developments will only be permitted where they do not have an unacceptable transport impact.

16.2 The Local Highway Authority have been consulted on the application and they have not raised any objections subject to conditions in relation to the provision of visibility splays, drainage of the highway, hours of servicing of the site by HGVs and a construction traffic management plan (CTMP) **(conditions 5 and 10-12).** A CTMP has been provided as part of the

applications but the Highway Officer has confirmed that this is not adequately specific and it contains irrelevant information therefore an amended CTMP will be required by condition.

- 16.3 The application is considered to accord with Policy 81 of the Cambridge Local Plan (2018) and is compliant with NPPF advice, and is not considered to cause a significant adverse impact upon the highway safety.

17. Amenity/Environmental Considerations

- 17.1 Policies 35 and 36, sets out that proposals must protect the health and amenity of occupiers and surrounding uses from development which would create unacceptable impacts such as noise, vibration, odour, emissions and dust.
- 17.2 There are no residential dwellings immediately adjacent to the site. The nearest residential receptors are 240m to the south at the Arthur Rank Hospice therefore the proposal would not have any overbearing or light impacts to any residential properties. The primary concern in terms of residential amenity is the impact from noise disturbance associated with both construction and operation of the substation.
- 17.3 The Environmental Health Officers at both councils have reviewed the applications and confirmed that the predicted noise levels are below what would be considered suitable in this location. A condition requiring compliance with the submitted noise assessment is recommended **(condition 3)**. Conditions are also recommended in relation to construction noise impacts from piling and hours of construction **(condition 4 and 6)**.
- 17.4 The proposal adequately respects the amenity of its neighbours. Subject to conditions, the proposal is compliant with policy 55 of the Cambridge Local Plan (2018). The associated construction and environmental impacts would be acceptable in accordance with policies 33, 34, 35, and 36 of the Local Plan.

18. Third party representations

- 18.1 A neutral representation has been submitted by Cambridge Past, Present and Future on the accompanying application for South Cambridgeshire District Council (24/02949/FUL). The representation raises the following points:
- Suggest changes to the planting palette

- Request specification for the reuse of topsoil
- Rabbit fencing (or alternative) will be required
- More detailed watering specifications are needed.

18.2 The planting schedule has been agreed with the landscape officer and is considered acceptable.

18.3 There is no specific policy requirement for reusing topsoil. The Landscape Specifications states that all topsoil will conform with the relevant British Standards.

18.4 The Landscape Specification has been updated to include rabbit proof fencing around young trees.

18.5 Additional landscape maintenance details have been provided during the course of the application and the Landscape Officer is satisfied with the additional information; this detail includes an amendment to the specifications to highlight that larger trees will require watering during the establishment period.

19. Other Matters

19.1 Cadent Gas

19.2 The plans have been amended since submission in response to comments from Cadent Gas to remove a section of planting that was on top of Cadent Gas asset. This part of the site falls wholly within South Cambridgeshire.

19.3 Archaeology

19.4 The Historic Environment Team note that although the development is in an area of very high archaeological potential, the archaeological evaluation undertaken found a limited level of archaeological activity therefore no conditions are required.

19.5 Airport safeguarding

19.6 Cambridge Airport has confirmed that proposal doesn't conflict with any airport safeguarding criteria. Their recommended informative regarding crane advice is included.

20. Planning balance

20.1 Planning decisions must be taken in accordance with the development plan unless there are material considerations that indicate otherwise

(section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and section 38[6] of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

- 20.2 The proposed development would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt which is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.
- 20.3 The NPPF is clear that, when considering any application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
- 20.4 The development is considered to be suitably screened subject to the mitigation measures, including hedgerow and tree planting around the compound and in the northern red edged area adjacent to Worts Causeway, combined with the colours to be used in the switch house façade and compound fencing (details of both to be confirmed by condition). Therefore the development is not considered to conflict with the purpose of the Green Belt or impact on the openness of the Green Belt in this location.
- 20.5 The National Policy Statements for Energy detail that the provision on low carbon infrastructure is a critical national priority (CNP). This planning application brings forward development proposals that would help address an existing CNP and this should be afforded substantial weight in planning terms. The National Policy Statements for Energy states that with projects which qualify as CNP Infrastructure, it is likely that the need case will outweigh the residual effects in all but the most exceptional cases.
- 20.6 It is clear from the case made in the ASA that there is a need for additional capacity in the electricity grid locally to cope with planned growth and additional demand through a growing need for electrification to meet net zero carbon priorities.
- 20.7 The proposal would provide electricity capacity for planned business and residential growth locally. This is considered a significant economic and social benefit which is attributed significant weight. The proposal would be CNP which would contribute towards greater efficiency in constructing, operating and connecting low carbon infrastructure which is considered a substantial environmental benefit which attracts great weight.

- 20.8 The proposed site selection process is considered to be robust. None of the suitable sites identified were outside of the Green Belt. The benefits of the scheme in terms of the provision of CNP and providing electricity grid capacity for planned growth locally are carry considerable social, economic and environmental benefits which are considered to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. The proposal is therefore considered to have demonstrated very special circumstances as required by paragraphs 152 and 153 of the NPPF.
- 20.9 The proposal is considered to have an acceptable impact on residential amenity. Subject to conditions to proposal would achieve 10% BNG through a combination of on and off site credits. Conditions are recommended in relation to sustainable drainage measures. The development would not have any adverse impact on highway safety subject to conditions.
- 20.10 In weighing the overall planning balance, it is considered that the very special circumstances would outweigh the harm by reason of inappropriateness as required by paragraph 153 of the NPPF.
- 20.11 Having taken into account the provisions of the development plan, NPPF and NPPG guidance, section 70 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, section 38[6] of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and the views of statutory consultees and wider stakeholders, as well as all other material planning considerations, the proposed development is recommended for approval subject to conditions.

21. Recommendation

21.1 **Approve** application 24/02948/FUL subject to:

- (i) The conditions and informatives as set out below in this report, with authority delegated to officers to carry through minor amendments to those conditions and informatives (and include others considered appropriate and necessary) prior to the issuing of the planning permission.

22. Planning conditions

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: In accordance with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance

with the approved plans as listed on this decision notice.

Reason: In the interests of good planning, for the avoidance of doubt and to facilitate any future application to the Local Planning Authority under Section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

3 Prior to the commencement of operation of the site, the approved

Substation Noise Assessment, Cambridge East Grid (Project Ref: CAMBRIDGE EAST GRID, Report Ref: RP01-24082-R0 dated 09 April 2024) prepared by Cass Allen Associates Ltd shall be fully implemented and thereafter retained for the life of the development.

Reason: In the interest of residential amenity (policies 35, 55 and 56 of the Cambridge Local Plan (2018))

4 No construction or demolition work shall be carried out and no plant or

power operated machinery operated other than between the following hours: 0800 hours and 1800 hours on Monday to Friday, 0800 hours and 1300 hours on Saturday and at no time on Sundays, Bank or Public Holidays, , unless otherwise previously agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To protect the amenity of the adjoining properties. (Cambridge Local Plan 2018 policy 35).

5 No construction or demolition vehicles with a gross weight in excess of 3.5 tonnes shall access the site other than between the following hours: 0930 hours and 1530 hours on Monday to Friday excluding Bank of Public Holidays.

Reason: for the safe and effective operation of the highway(Cambridge Local Plan 2018 Policy 81).

6 In the event of piling, no development shall commence until a method statement detailing the type of piling, mitigation measures and monitoring to protect local residents from noise and/or vibration has been submitted to and approved in writing

by the Local Planning Authority. Potential noise and vibration levels at the nearest noise sensitive locations shall be assessed in accordance with the provisions of BS 5228-1&2:2009 Code of Practice for noise and vibration control on construction and open sites. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved statement.

Reason: To protect the amenity of the adjoining properties. (Cambridge Local Plan 2018 policy 35)

7 No development shall commence (including demolition, ground works) and no vegetation clearance shall occur, until a Construction Ecological Management Plan (CEcMP) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The CEcMP shall include the following: a. Risk assessment of potentially damaging construction activities. b. Identification of biodiversity protection zones. c. Practical measures (both physical measures and sensitive working practices) to avoid or reduce impacts during construction (may be provided as a set of method statements). d. The location and timings of sensitive works to avoid harm to biodiversity features. e. The times during construction when specialist ecologists need to be present on site to oversee works. f. Responsible persons and lines of communication. g. The role and responsibilities on site of an ecological clerk of works (ECoW) or similarly competent person. h. Use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs if applicable. The approved CEcMP shall be adhered to and implemented throughout the construction period strictly in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that before any development commences appropriate construction ecological management plan has been agreed to fully conserve and enhance ecological interests. (Cambridge Local Plan 2018 policies 57, 59 and 70).

8 No development above ground level shall take place until an ecological enhancement scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme shall include details of bat and bird box installation and other ecological enhancements. The approved scheme shall be fully implemented prior to first occupation or in accordance with a timescale agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: To conserve and enhance ecological interests in accordance with Cambridge Local Plan policies 57, 59 and 70 and the Greater Cambridge Planning Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (2022).

9 No development shall commence, apart from below ground works and demolition, until a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Scheme, which shall include details of purchase and monitoring of the offsite biodiversity units, a biodiversity metric for the site,

costings and appropriate legal agreements to guarantee third party delivery of ongoing habitat management requirements has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The BNG Scheme shall include:

- i. Identification of receptor site or sites with associated plans;
- ii. Details of the offsetting requirements of the development in accordance with current DEFRA biodiversity metric, which has been calculated at biodiversity units;
- iii. The provision of evidence of arrangements to secure the delivery of offsetting measures, including a timetable of delivery; and
- iv. A Management and Monitoring Plan, to include for the provision and maintenance of the offsetting measures for a period of not less than 30 years from the commencement of the scheme and itself to include:
 - a. Description of all habitat(s) to be created / restored / enhanced within the scheme including expected management condition and total area;
 - b. Review of Ecological constraints;
 - c. Current soil conditions of any areas designated for habitat creation and detailing of what conditioning must occur to the soil prior to the commencement of habitat creation works;
 - d. Detailed design and working methods (management prescriptions) to achieve proposed habitats and management conditions, including extent and location of proposed works;
 - e. Type and source of materials to be used, including species list for all proposed planting and abundance of species within any proposed seed mix;
 - f. Identification of persons responsible for implementing the works;
 - g. A timetable of ecological monitoring to assess the success of all habitats creation enhancement. Ecological monitoring reports should be submitted to the Local Planning Authority every 5 years.

h. The inclusion of a feedback mechanism to the Local Planning Authority, allowing for the alteration of working methods / management prescriptions, should the monitoring deem it necessary.

i. The agreed fee and timetable for payment of the agreed fee which shall be paid to the Council in respect of monitoring the biodiversity habitat over a period of 30 years.

The BNG Scheme shall be implemented in full and subsequently managed and monitored in accordance with the approved details. Monitoring data shall be submitted to the LPA in accordance with DEFRA guidance and the approved monitoring period / intervals.

Reason: To provide ecological enhancements in accordance with the NPPF 2023 para 174, Cambridge Local Plan 2018 policies 59 and 69, and the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Biodiversity SPD 2022.

10 Notwithstanding the details shown on the submitted plans, no demolition or construction works shall commence on site until a traffic management plan has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The principal areas of concern that should be addressed are:

- i) Movement and control of muck away vehicles (all loading and unloading should be undertaken where possible off the adopted public highway)
- ii) Contractor parking, with all such parking to be within the curtilage of the site where possible
- iii) Movements and control of all deliveries (all loading and unloading should be undertaken off the adopted public highway where possible.) iv) Control of dust, mud and debris, and the means to prevent mud or debris being deposited onto the adopted public highway.

The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that before development commences, highway safety will be maintained during the course of development. (Cambridge Local Plan 2018 Policy 81).

11 The access shall be constructed so that its falls and levels are such that no private water from the site drains across or onto the adopted public highway.

Reason: for the safe and effective operation of the highway(Cambridge Local Plan 2018 Policy 81).

12 The two inter vehicle visibility splays as shown on drawing number 29858-HYD-XX-XX-M2-TP-0004-P02-0004 be provided prior to the first use of the site and retained clear of all obstructions exceeding 0.6m in height above the level of the carriageway thereafter.

Reason: in the interests of highway safety (Cambridge Local Plan 2018 Policy 81).

13 No development above ground level, other than demolition, shall commence until there has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority a plan indicating the positions, design, materials and type of boundary treatments to be erected. The boundary treatment shall be completed in accordance with the approved details prior to the first occupation of the development and retained as approved thereafter.

Reason: To ensure an appropriate boundary treatment is implemented in the interests of biodiversity and visual amenity (Cambridge Local Plan 2018 policies 55, 57, 59 and 70).

14 Before the development is first occupied or brought into use a landscape maintenance and management plan, including long term design objectives, management responsibilities and maintenance schedules for all landscape areas, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The landscape management plan shall be carried out as approved.

Reason: To ensure that before any development commences an appropriate landscape and ecological management plan has been agreed (Cambridge Local Plan 2018 policies 57, 59 and 70).

15 Prior to the commencement of above ground works, details of the facade material for the switch room and the palisade fence shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The materials shall be installed and retained thereafter in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interest of visual amenity (Cambridge Local Plan 2018 policies 55, 56, 57 and 59)

16 No laying of services, creation of hard surfaces or erection of a building shall commence until a detailed design of the surface water drainage of the site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Those elements of the surface water drainage system not adopted by a statutory undertaker shall thereafter be maintained and managed in accordance with the approved management and maintenance plan.

The scheme shall be based upon the principles within the agreed Drainage Strategy prepared by Arcadis (ref: 30191766-ARC-CEG-RP-FR-129 Rev P01) dated 23 May 2024 and shall also include:

- a) Full results of the proposed drainage system modelling in the QBAR, 3.3% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) (1 in 30) and 1% AEP (1 in 100) storm events (as well as 1% AEP plus climate change), inclusive of all collection, conveyance, storage, flow control and disposal elements and including an allowance for urban creep, together with an assessment of system performance;
- b) Detailed drawings of the entire proposed surface water drainage system, attenuation and flow control measures, including levels, gradients, dimensions and pipe reference numbers, designed to accord with the CIRIA C753 SuDS Manual (or any equivalent guidance that may supersede or replace it);
- c) Full detail on SuDS proposals (including location, type, size, depths, side slopes and cross sections);
- d) Details of overland flood flow routes in the event of system exceedance, with demonstration that such flows can be appropriately managed on site without increasing flood risk to occupants;
- e) Demonstration that the surface water drainage of the site is in accordance with DEFRA non-statutory technical standards for sustainable drainage systems; f) Full details of the maintenance/adoption of the surface water drainage system; g) Measures taken to prevent pollution of the receiving groundwater and/or surface water.

Reason: To ensure that the proposed development can be adequately drained and to ensure that there is no increased flood risk on or off site resulting from the proposed development and to ensure that the principles of sustainable drainage can be incorporated into the development, noting that initial preparatory and/or construction works may compromise the ability to mitigate harmful impacts. (Cambridge Local Plan (2018) policies 31 and 32)

17 No development, including preparatory works, shall commence until details of measures indicating how additional surface water run-off from the site will be avoided during the construction works have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The applicant may be required to provide collection, balancing and/or settlement systems for these flows. The approved measures and systems shall be brought into operation before any works to create buildings or hard surfaces commence.

Reason: To ensure surface water is managed appropriately during the construction phase of the development, so as not to increase the flood risk to adjacent land/properties or occupied properties within the development itself; recognising that initial works to prepare the site could bring about unacceptable impacts (South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018) policies 31 and 32)