

Georgina Wright
Wiltshire Council
(Sent via email)

Reference: WX-2026-139611/02
Customer reference: PL/2025/10020

02 April 2026

Dear Georgina,

Vary condition 2 (Approved Plans) relating to application PL/2022/06298

CHICKLADE EV SERVICE STATION, CHICKLADE

Thank you for reconsulting the Environment Agency on the above application.

The recently submitted documents do not overcome our previous objection. We therefore **maintain our objection** and ask that you refer to our previous response dated 02 March 2026 (ref: WX/2026/139611/01-L01) copied below for ease.

Environment Agency position

*We **object** to the planning application, as submitted, because the risks to groundwater from the development are unacceptable. The applicant has not supplied adequate information to demonstrate that the risks posed to groundwater can be satisfactorily managed. We recommend that planning permission should be refused on this basis in line with paragraph 187 of the NPPF.*

Reason(s)

Groundwater is particularly sensitive in this location because the proposed development site is located upon a high vulnerability principal aquifer within Source Protection Zones (SPZ) 2 and 3 for a Public water supply.

We consider that the proposed development poses an unacceptable risk of causing a detrimental impact to groundwater quality because there is potential for pollution of the water environment due to abnormal and emergency situations at Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) developments, in particular fires. This would be exacerbated in a vulnerable groundwater location. There is a risk that highly polluting chemicals in batteries could enter groundwater in firewater or rainfall. Applicants should assess risks to groundwater and ensure mitigation is in place for containment of this water.

While in the event of a fire at a BESS, it is accepted best practice to let the containers on fire burn out, it is likely water will be used to cool neighbouring containers. This water could enter burning containers through surface run off or directly from spray cooling neighbouring containers. Furthermore, during or following a fire at a BESS development, rainwater could enter exposed containers during the period of time it takes to remove, or cover burnt out containers.

In this case position statement 'G10 - Developments posing an unacceptable risk of pollution' applies. We consider that the proposed development poses an unacceptable risk of causing a detrimental impact to groundwater quality because it involves the uncontrolled discharge of contaminated surface water and firefighting effluent into the ground.

Overcoming our objection

The applicant should provide a detailed drainage plan for the BESS units. This information must satisfactorily demonstrate that the risks to controlled waters have been fully understood and can be addressed through appropriate measures.

In accordance with Environment Agency guidance, a sealed drainage system would be required to capture and contain contaminated runoff, with sufficient storage capacity to accommodate firefighting water during a worst-case event. The system must ensure that no contaminated water can infiltrate to ground.

The sealed drainage system must have controllable outfalls to contain and/or control the flow of contaminants. The drainage system should feed into a sealed drainage feature with a controllable outflow, this outflow should be controlled to regulate the level of water in the drainage feature and should be closable in the event of a fire to contain all the effluent generated during a fire / firefighting event.

Additionally, these drainage features should be designed and controlled to ensure that they have a sufficient capacity/headroom to contain all of the possible contaminated surface water run-off and firefighting effluent generated during periods of intense rainfall.

Advice to the Applicant

The Environmental Permitting (England & Wales) Regulations 2016 make it an offence to cause or knowingly permit a groundwater activity unless authorised by an environmental permit which we will issue. A groundwater activity includes any discharge that will result in the input of pollutants to groundwater.

We advise that the applicant developed and maintains a close working relationship with the Fire & Rescue Service and develop a workable and comprehensive risk management plan and an emergency response plan as detailed in the NFCC

document “Grid Scale Battery Energy Storage System planning – Guidance for FRS”.

Our approach to groundwater protection is set out in ‘The Environment Agency’s approach to groundwater protection’ In implementing the position statements in this guidance we will oppose development proposals that may pollute groundwater especially where the risk of pollution is high and the groundwater asset is of high value.

Note to LPA

If you are minded to approve the application contrary to our objection, we request you contact us prior to a decision being made to allow us to make further representations.

If you have any queries regarding our response, please get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

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