



REVISED GRID CONNECTION 'PART 2' FOR THE MILOU BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEM

Planning Statement

Prepared for



Pelagic Energy

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This Planning Statement supports a detailed planning application which has been submitted to Wiltshire Council (WC) by PD688IRO Ltd (hereafter referred to as 'the Applicant'), for the development of an electrical grid connection for their consented Milou Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) facility (WC application ref. PL/2022/00664 and appeal ref. APP/Y3940/W/23/3319392).

1.1.2 This introductory section describes the context for the Proposed Development, provides a brief description of the scheme itself, and describes the full structure and content of the Planning Statement and the overall application.

1.2 Context to the Proposed Development

1.2.1 A planning application for a BESS on land to the west of Pond Lane, Minety (hereafter referred to as the 'Milou BESS') was submitted to WC on 23rd December 2021 (application ref. PL/2022/00664). The Applicant subsequently appealed against the non-determination of the application by WC. The appeal was allowed, and planning permission granted on 20th February 2024 (appeal ref. APP/Y3940/W/23/3319392).

1.2.2 The point of connection for the consented Milou BESS to the electricity grid will be at National Grid's Minety Substation, which sits to the north of the BESS site off the B4040. The Applicant will be delivering the grid connection route via underground cables between the BESS site and the Minety Substation.

1.2.3 The Applicant has already secured planning permission for the full grid connection route. This has been achieved through two separate planning submissions / consents; 'Part 1', under reference PL/2024/03276, and 'Part 2' under reference PL/2024/05031.

1.2.4 The consented route for Part 2 runs under the road verges and existing road surface between the entrance to the consented Milou BESS site off Pond Lane and a point along the B4040 to the north. Part 2 meets the southern end of the consented Part 1 route here.



- 1.2.5 The Applicant has since identified a more favourable solution to deliver Part 2 of the grid connection section. This utilises a more direct and shorter route beneath agricultural land. This planning application seeks to secure permission for this 'revised route'.

1.3 This Document

- 1.3.1 This document is the Planning Statement, submitted in support of the Proposed Development. It is sub-divided into 4 main Sections, following on from this introduction. Section 2.0 describes the development proposals in detail, whilst Section 3.0 provides an appraisal of the environmental effects. Section 4.0 sets out the relevant planning policy context. Finally, Section 5.0 draws concise conclusions.

- 1.3.2 The Planning Statement is submitted in support of the overall planning application which also comprises:

- The requisite planning application forms, certificates and statutory fees; and
- A set of planning application drawings comprising:
 - Statutory Plan (Ref: 3076-02-15);
 - Cable Cross Sections (Ref: 3076-02-16);
 - Existing Site Plan (Ref: 3076-02-17);
 - General Arrangement (Ref: 3076-02-18 Rev B); and
 - Location Plan (Ref: 3076-02-19); and
 - Landscaping Plan (Ref. 3076-02-20).



2.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AND SITE CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 This Section of the Planning Statement describes the site, the development proposal, and the main construction methods.

2.2 Site Context

- 2.2.1 The proposed cable route site sits to the northwest of the consented Milou BESS site (itself sits on land off Pond Lane, near Minety). The site primarily comprises agricultural fields to the south of the B4040 and also a small section of field / linear woodland to the north of the B4040. The existing site is shown on planning drawing 3076-02-17.

2.3 Description of the Proposed Development

- 2.3.1 The Proposed Development comprises sets of electrical cables installed underground. The location is provided on drawing refs. 3076-02-15 and 3076-02-19.
- 2.3.2 The cable route would run from the northwestern boundary of the Milou BESS site across agricultural land and up to the B4040 to the northwest. From here, the cables would run a short section north beneath the B4040 and join the consented Part 1 section of the BESS cable route (ref. PL/2024/03276).
- 2.3.3 The cables would sit within a mechanically dug trench, approx. 13.5m wide. The cables would be split into five separate pipe ducts (250mm in diameter and approx. 2700mm apart) along the proposed route (as illustrated on drawing 3076-02-18). The reason for the five separate cable ducts is due to the multiple 'connections' which the Applicant needs to deliver between the Milou BESS site and the Minety Substation. In short, the battery storage units within the BESS site are essentially split up into five groups, each group requiring a separate connection to the Minety Substation. As such, five sets of electrical cables are required along the route to allow them to operate independently of each other.



2.4 Construction Methods

2.4.1 The five cable connections would sit within pipe ducts laid underground via one of two methods:

1. In a mechanically dug trench using a small digger. These trenches would be approximately 13.5m wide and 0.8-1.5m deep. The five cable ducts would be laid at the bottom of the trench and sit approximately 1.8m apart. There is no requirement for a layer to be installed at the bottom of the trench for the cable ducts to sit on. The trenches would be backfilled with the dug material (making sure to reinstate sub-soils first and then finish with the top-soils) and surfaces reinstated where achievable (discussed further below); or
2. Horizontal directional drilling (HDD). This method consists of setting up a drilling 'send pit' where a machine drills routes underground for the cables to the threaded through. This process minimises disruption to structures or features on the surface, including vegetation and the main roots of trees as the drills go below the main rooting areas. 'Receive pits' are dug where the cable emerges, and from here the trenching method can continue.

2.4.2 The General Arrangement Plan (drawing ref. 3076-02-18) identifies the sitting of the cable ducts along the proposed route and where HDD / trenching would be used for installation. HDD would only be used to route the cable beneath the B4040 and the hedges / vegetation along the side of the road. The HDD section and associated pits (i.e. where the cables would enter and exit) are shown on the General Arrangement Plan.

2.4.3 All other sections of the proposed cable route cross agricultural land and would be installed using mechanically dug trenches (as described above).

2.4.4 The agricultural land along the proposed cable route comprises part cropped and part grassland (this is comprised of grass and clover leys). Where the route crosses the grassed areas, turfs would be temporarily lifted, stored, and then reinstated once the cables had been laid and soils replaced. Where the route crosses cropland, there would have no impact on above ground vegetation i.e. timings for installation works would be arranged with the farmer to avoid interfering with crop cycles.



2.4.5 Along the fields there are two points where the proposed cable route would cross existing hedgerows. The first (roughly centrally in the length of the cable route) has a wide gap serving as an existing farmers access where hedgerow is not present. This gap is sufficiently wide enough to accommodate the cable route trench and thus there would be minimal loss (the edge of the hedges may need trimming back slightly). The second hedgerow would require an approx. 14m section to be removed to accommodate the cable trench. This would be replanted following installation (see Landscape Plan 3076-02-20).

2.4.6 Accordingly, there would be no permanent impact on the biodiversity value of the grassland / cropland or section beneath the B4040 (HDD section). There would be some small hedgerow loss required to accommodate the Proposed Development. The impacts and biodiversity considerations are discussed under Section 3.0.

2.5 Reasons for Revised Cable Route and Benefits

2.5.1 The consented cable route for Part 2 (PL/2024/05031) is shown on the approved planning drawings to route beneath the verges and road surface of the B4040 and Pond Lane. At the time of submission for PL/2024/05031, this was the only viable option available for the Applicant to create a grid connection route. However, the Applicant has now secured a lease agreement from the landowner to use the agricultural fields to the northwest of the Milou BESS site.

2.5.2 This 'revised route' (i.e. the Proposed Development) would remove the need for highways controls along the B4040 and Pond Lane and thus avoid disruption to the highway network. Furthermore, the Proposed Development represents a more direct and significantly shorter route (roughly half) than that consented under PL/2024/05031; approximately 690m versus 1,350m, respectively. As such, the construction period is anticipated to be significantly shorter and thus further reduce the potential for arising disturbances.

2.5.3 The use of HDD beneath the B4040 at the north section would further reduce the impacts of installing the cable (PL/2024/05031 relied entirely on trench installation).

2.5.4 Overall, the revised route represents a more favourable and less impactful solution to delivering Part 2 of the cable connection than the existing consent.



3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain

- 3.1.1 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of the likely ecological effects of the Proposed Development has been undertaken and is provided at Appendix A to the Planning Statement.
- 3.1.2 The PEA included a site walkover survey. No evidence of protected species was found, and the PEA concludes that further surveys would be disproportionate to the baseline findings, and as such unnecessary.
- 3.1.3 The PEA prescribes precautionary working methods to mitigate potential impacts on badgers, hedgehogs, birds, amphibians, reptiles and other small mammals. Such measures could be secured via planning condition through a Construction Management Statement (CMS) (as deemed acceptable by WC through the consented cable route under PL/2024/05031).
- 3.1.4 In terms of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), a BNG Assessment and Statutory BNG Metric have been submitted in support of the application (see appendices B and C respectively). The BNG Assessment and Metric identify that the proposal would only result in the loss of approx. 14m linear units (hedgerow). This would be replanted following completion of the works. All affected grassland turfs would be lifted prior to works and replaced after the trench works completed / backfilled. As such, all other impacts along the route would therefore be temporary (i.e. return to pre-development condition within 2 years).
- 3.1.5 A Landscape Plan (drawing ref. 3076-02-20) has been submitted in support of the planning application and identifies the areas where turfs are to be lifted and where hedgerow is to be replanted (this is discussed further below).
- 3.1.6 The Applicant has explored options to deliver BNG units onsite and offsite and has been unable to secure any additional land to deliver this (outside the planning redline shown on the planning drawings). Accordingly, the Applicant would deliver the required 10% BNG through purchase of biodiversity units via a local habitat bank. The Applicant has already approached such a bank and has received a quote to deliver the necessary BNG units (Wild Capital, quote ref. BNG-A-03117). This would



be formally accepted following determination of the planning application (and to discharge the associated 'BNG condition' applied to the decision notice).

- 3.1.7 Accordingly, the Proposed Development would not cause significant impacts to biodiversity and would deliver necessary BNG in line with statutory requirements.

3.2 Arboriculture

- 3.2.1 The redline boundary for the Proposed Development (as shown on the planning drawings) includes small sections of hedgerow and woodland. As described under the construction methods in Section 2.0 of this Statement, the cable route would be installed via HDD beneath the section of woodland by the B4040 so have no impact. The HDD lines would be drilled at a suitable depth to avoid impact on the main rooting areas of existing trees / hedges here.
- 3.2.2 The Proposed Development would require the removal of a circa 14m section of hedgerow along one of the field boundaries. This has been assessed in the PEA as having no significant biodiversity value and no protected species were identified here. There are no trees present within the hedgerow to warrant a tree survey.
- 3.2.3 Accordingly, it is considered that an arboricultural survey is not necessary to support the application.

3.3 Flood Risk and Drainage

- 3.3.1 A review of the Government's Flood Map for Planning website reveals that the entirety of the proposed cable route lies within Flood Zone 1 and is not within an area at risk of surface water flooding.
- 3.3.2 Due to the nature of the development (an underground electricity cable), there would be no net loss in flood storage capacity or impact on movement of floodwater across the site. Conveyance routes (flow paths) would not be blocked or obstructed.
- 3.3.3 As such, the Proposed Development would have no negative impact on flood risk and a flood risk assessment is not considered necessary.
- 3.3.4 The Proposed Development would not introduce any impermeable surfacing to the site as the cables would simply be laid at the bottom of the trench dug (no liner is



necessary) and therefore site drainage would continue to function at existing greenfield rates post-completion of the cable's installation.

3.4 Air Quality

- 3.4.1 Impacts on local air quality (e.g. emissions from traffic and dust from the construction phase) would not be significant due to the scale and nature of the Proposed Development.
- 3.4.2 Suitable mitigation measures could be implemented to mitigate potential for dust from the trenching earthworks. These could be secured through a CMS (secured via a suitably worded planning condition).
- 3.4.3 Accordingly, the Proposed Development would not give rise to any unacceptable environmental effects with regards to air quality.

3.5 Noise

- 3.5.1 Construction noise would only be temporary and local to the site. This would primarily be associated through the use of machinery to dig the trenches and the HDD pits. The majority of the site is isolated from nearby receptors. There are properties along the B4040 to the west of the site boundary, however any noise impacts would be temporary and short-lived.
- 3.5.2 Accordingly, it is not anticipated that there would be any unacceptable noise impacts as a result of the Proposed Development and there would be no significant impact on local amenity.
- 3.5.3 Should a Construction Management Statement for the scheme be considered necessary by Wiltshire Council (to be secured via planning condition), measures could be included to mitigate noise impacts where possible.

3.6 Traffic

- 3.6.1 Due to the nature of the proposal, construction traffic would be minimal. The Applicant is likely to use the consented Milou BESS site as a means for construction workers and vehicles to park. Accordingly, there would be very minimal disruption to the local road network as a result of the Proposed Development.



- 3.6.2 No road closures or diversions are anticipated to be required during the construction of the Proposed Development.

3.7 Landscape and Visual

- 3.7.1 The Proposed Development would be situated entirely underground and therefore have no visual impact once constructed. The construction works would be temporary. Accordingly, no permanent adverse landscape and visual impacts would occur as a result of the Proposed Development.

- 3.7.2 A Landscape Plan (drawing ref. 3076-02-20) has been submitted in support of the application and sets out the landscaping measures / additional planting along the proposed cable route. These measures seek to prioritise restoration of the site to its existing condition once the cable installation has been completed.

3.8 Agricultural Land

- 3.8.1 The Proposed Development would be laid entirely underground and therefore have no negative effect on the ability of the land to be continued use as agricultural purposes. As such, there would be no loss of agricultural land and an Agricultural Land Classification Assessment is not considered necessary to support the planning application.

3.9 Summary

- 3.9.1 In summary, the technical reports and details set out above demonstrate that the Proposed Development would have no unacceptable environmental impacts.



4.0 PLANNING APPRAISAL

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The principle of a cable route connection for the Milou BESS has been established through the existing consent (ref. PL/2024/05031). This should be taken into consideration throughout the policy appraisal. This section appraises the Proposed Development against the same Development Plan policies.

4.1.2 In appraising the Proposed Development, it is also important to understand that the cable is an essential component of the Milou BESS scheme, which itself will support the deployment of renewable energy generation by storing the excess energy they produce and importing it back into the grid when demand requires. The benefits of this are:

- Providing National Energy System Operator (NESO) with balancing services to help accommodate the increasing level of renewable energy generation;
- By importing excess renewable energy from the grid and storing it, batteries can capture energy that would otherwise be lost / unutilised;
- During situations when primary power sources (e.g. traditional power stations) are interrupted, BESS can bridge the gap in production, thus avoiding potential blackouts;
- BESS are able to respond more rapidly than other types of balancing services, as they have no start-up delays. As such, BESS can balance the real-time requirements of the national grid more efficiently;
- Assisting in the delivery of essential clean energy generating infrastructure and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions required to mitigate the UK's contribution to climate change;
- Contributing to achieving net zero targets; and
- Reducing the UK's requirement to import fossil fuels from less secure sources.

4.1.3 These development characteristics and benefits must be borne in mind when identifying the policy context and undertaking a planning appraisal of the Proposed Development.



4.2 Planning Policy Context

4.2.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 require planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

4.2.2 In the case of the Proposed Development, the statutory Development Plan comprises:

- The Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015); and
- Saved Policies of the North Wiltshire Local Plan (2011).

4.3 Planning Policy Appraisal

Wiltshire Core Strategy

Core Policy 2 'Delivery Strategy'

4.3.1 Core Policy 2 'Delivery Strategy' sets out that; *'other than in circumstances permitted by other policies within the Core Strategy (identified in paragraph 4.25), development will not be permitted outside the limits of development, as defined on the policies map'*. The Proposed Development is not covered by the development types contained within paragraph 4.25; however it is necessary that the Proposed Development is located where it is to provide a connection between the consented Milou BESS and the Minety Substation.

4.3.2 The Applicant already has planning consent to construct a grid connection route for the Milou BESS site, however the Proposed Development represents a more direct and shorter solution to the consented road route.

Core Policy 50 'Biodiversity and Geodiversity'

4.3.3 Core Policy 50 seeks to ensure that development proposals demonstrate how they protect features of nature conservation and geological value. In addition, the policy identifies that all development should seek opportunities to enhance biodiversity.

4.3.4 The PEA (Appendix A) concludes that the Proposed Development would not result in any unacceptable impacts on biodiversity or designated nature conservation sites.



- 4.3.5 As discussed previously, ecological impacts in routing the cable over the agricultural land would be temporary. There would be some minor loss in linear (hedgerow) units, although this would be replanted. There is no available land onsite to deliver BNG gains and as such, the Applicant has sought a quote from a local BNG unit provider to ensure that 10% gains would be delivered through offsite unit purchase. Construction activities would be minor and localised.
- 4.3.6 Specific habitat and species protective measures are set out within the PEA and these would be adopted during construction to minimise ecological impacts. Such measures could be set out within a CMS, secured via a suitably worded planning condition.
- 4.3.7 In light of the above, the proposal is considered to accord with this policy.

Core Policy 51 'Landscape'

- 4.3.8 Core Policy 51 seeks to protect, conserve and enhance landscape character. Any negative impacts must be mitigated as far as possible through sensitive design and landscape measures. The Proposed Development would be entirely underground and therefore have no impact on landscape character. The submitted Landscape Plan (ref. 3076-02-20) demonstrates that all existing landscaping would be restored following the works. As such, the Proposed Development accords with this policy.

Saved Policies of the North Wiltshire Local Plan 2011

Saved Policy NE14 'Trees and the Control of New Development'

- 4.3.9 Saved Policy NE14 'Trees and the Control of New Development' seeks that development proposals avoid the loss of trees, hedges, or other important landscape and ecological features.
- 4.3.10 The General Arrangement Plan (drawing ref. 3076-02-18) and PEA (Appendix A) show that no trees would be lost as a result of the Proposed Development. A short section (approx. 14m) of native hedgerow would be removed to accommodate the Proposed Development, however this would be replanted following the works. Over time, this would regrow and the hedge gap would refill.
- 4.3.11 The proposal would also deliver additional offsite hedgerow provision via the BNG units sought. Accordingly, whilst there would be some loss initially, this is



unavoidable (it is not feasible to HDD this section), the proposal can be considered neutral against this policy.

4.4 Material Planning Considerations

Wiltshire Council Climate Emergency

4.4.1 In February 2019, WC resolved to acknowledge a climate emergency and a commitment was subsequently set to make the county carbon neutral by 2030. A new carbon reduction strategy is to be prepared to enable WC to meet these commitments.

4.4.2 The Proposed Development (by virtue of supporting the delivery of the consented Milou BESS) would help deliver WC's carbon neutrality commitments, in that would support the delivery of existing and future renewable energy schemes in the county. This will enable more homes and businesses in the county to be powered with renewable energy and reduce the use of fossil fuels, which would ultimately cut down on carbon emissions.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

4.4.3 As established by the consented grid connection, the proposal would have clear environmental, economic and social benefits. As such, it can be quite properly described as sustainable development; and thus sit in line with key policies of the NPPF.

4.4.4 The Proposed Development is an essential component of the consented Milou BESS scheme, which will assist the UK in achieving its renewable energy targets in accordance with the NPPF, as well as its net zero targets.

Emerging Local Plan

4.4.5 WC is currently in the process of a Local Plan Review. At time of writing, the Planning Inspector appointed to examine the Local Plan had set out concerns with the draft, advising Wiltshire Council it should be withdrawn from examination or else the Inspector would recommended non-adoption. In light of this, it is unclear how much weight the draft planning policies are being applied and thus have not been considered further in this appraisal.



- 4.4.6 Notwithstanding, the Proposed Development would help deliver on the clear message set out in the Local Plan Review that the delivery of low-carbon and renewable energy development is important.

4.5 Summary

- 4.5.1 The planning appraisal has shown that the Proposed Development accords with the relevant policies of the statutory Development Plan and supports the delivery of low carbon energy in line with national and emerging planning policy.
- 4.5.2 Ultimately, the principle of a cable route supporting the Milou BESS scheme has already been approved by WC (PL/2024/05031). The Proposed Development represents a much shorter and overall more favourable solution to delivering the cable connection for the Milou BESS scheme than the consented road route.



5.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1.1 This Planning Statement supports a detailed planning application which has been submitted to Wiltshire Council (WC) by PD688IRO Ltd (the Applicant), for the development of a section of electrical cable to connect their consented Milou Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) facility with the Minety National Grid Substation.
- 5.1.2 The point of connection for the consented Milou BESS to the electricity grid would be at the Minety Substation on land north of the B4040. The Proposed Development is for part of the grid cable route, referred to as 'Milou BESS Grid Connection Part 2'. This part of the route already benefits from planning permission under ref. PL/2024/05031. The revised route represents a shorter, more direct, and less impactful solution.
- 5.1.3 The Proposed Development would connect to the consented 'Part 1' of the cable route under ref. PL/2024/03276,
- 5.1.4 The cable route would be laid either via HDD underground, or within a mechanically excavated trench.
- 5.1.5 The Proposed Development is an essential component of the consented Milou BESS scheme, which would provide the National Energy System Operator (NESO) with balancing services to help accommodate the increasing level of renewable energy generation, and assist the UK in achieving its renewable energy targets and net zero targets, in accordance with national policy and strategy.
- 5.1.6 Accordingly, the Proposed Development clearly aligns with the key facets of sustainable development and should benefit from a presumption in its favour.
- 5.1.7 As identified in the preceding sections, the Proposed Development would not give rise to any unacceptable environmental impacts in respect of landscape and visual, ecology, flood risk, air quality, noise, trees and hedgerows, traffic, or local residential amenity. BNG would be delivered through offsite unit purchase, which the Applicant has already secured a preliminary quote for.
- 5.1.8 No material planning considerations have been identified which would indicate that the planning application should be determined other than in accordance with the Local Development Plan, indeed they reinforce the logic for doing so.



- 5.1.9 Based upon the foregoing, it is demonstrably the case that the planning application should be approved without delay.

