



## Harthill with Woodall Parish Council



Village Hall  
Winney Hill  
Harthill  
Sheffield  
S26 7YL

17<sup>th</sup> April 2025

Planning Department

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council  
Riverside House  
Main Street  
Rotherham  
S60 1AE

For the attention of Andrew West, Case Officer

Dear Sir,

**Reference: RB2025/0240**

**Land at Hard Lane, Harthill, Sheffield. Proposed Battery Energy Storage Scheme (BESS)**

<http://rotherham.planportal.co.uk/?id=RB2025/0240>

I write in connection with the above mentioned planning application which the Parish council discussed at the meeting held on the 8<sup>th</sup> April 2025.

The Council considered the application and voted unanimously to **OBJECT** to the proposal for the following reasons.

1. **Inappropriate development of the green belt**

Council believes this development represents Inappropriate Development in Green Belt.

Paragraphs 142-160 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) exist to protect Green Belt land.

It aims to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas and prevent neighbouring towns and villages merging into one another.

Kiveton and Harthill are very different villages, in size, appearance and character. Hard Lane acts as buffer, an open-swathe of primarily agricultural land, which has been designated Green Belt and

separates these two villages. The proposed development would represent a significant degradation of this, in both its size and scale, and contribute to the urbanisation of the two villages.

## **2. Detrimental effect on the Openness of the site.**

National planning policy exists to safeguard the countryside from encroachment.

The BESS/developable area would cover approx. 0.79 hectares of the overall site and would comprise 15 pairs of batteries (30 individual battery containers), 30 KNAN transformers, a substation, office container, and a control room.

Council note that it is proposed to elevate the site above the surrounding agricultural land by approximately 1 metre to mitigate the risk of flooding, this will make it more prominent in the landscape.

The BESS would insert relatively significant additional volumetric massing in spatial terms into this openness, notwithstanding the proposed landscaping. The 2.4m high palisade fence enclosing the battery storage would also contribute to this massing as an enclosing feature.

## **3. Detrimental effect on the character of site and approach to the village.**

Hard Lane is the main arterial route in and out of Harthill when accessing work and leisure.

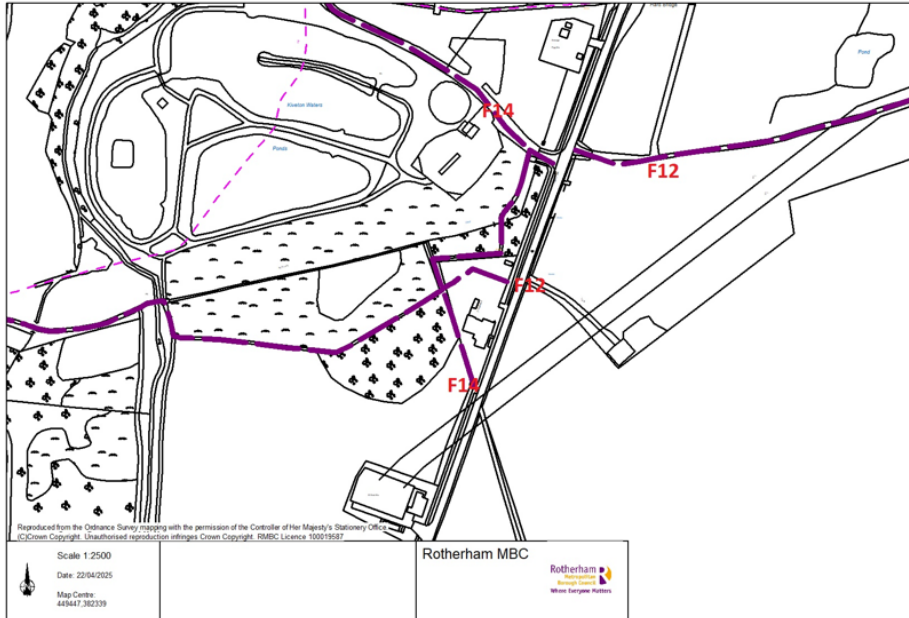
The site is clearly visible from the road, adjoining footpaths and Kiveton Community Woodland (formerly the Kiveton Colliery spoil tip). This community land and associated paths and tracks is a much-loved area, popular with walkers and cyclists of all ages and was a great boost to the landscape and amenity of the area after 100 years of living in the shadow of the “Black Mountain” that once dominated the landscape. Due to the elevated situation of both the road and the Community Woodland no amount of landscaping could screen the site adequately.

The view from Hard Lane which will be transformed into an industrial development.

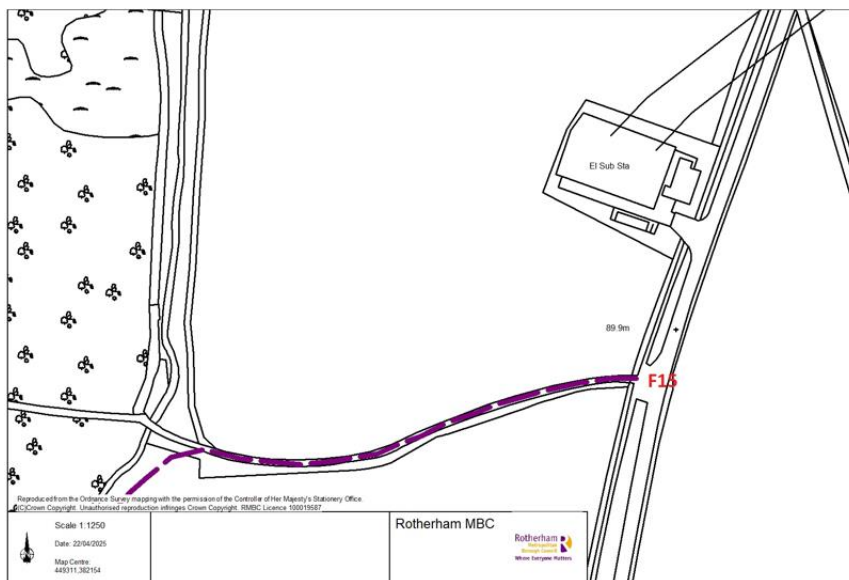


The footpaths in this area have been enjoyed by the people of Harthill and surrounding areas for 100's of years and were confirmed in the definitive maps created in 1949 by The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act.

Footpath 12 on the North side of the development



Footpath 15 to the South side of the development

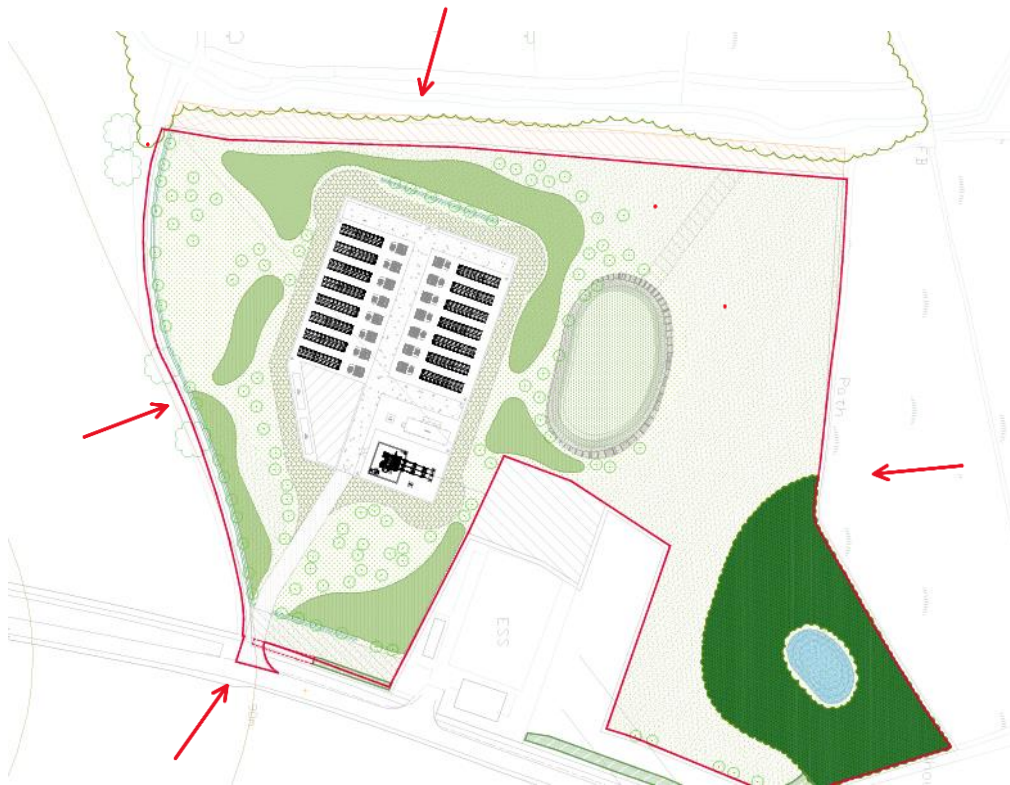




## Current Views



The Landscape Strategy outlined in the planning application (extract below), is to plant intermittent trees to shield the development. The development will be clearly visible through the trees and will not mitigate the harm caused by the development, which fills an open space with a large industrial mass.



Local landscape is very important to the local community for its scenic beauty, wildlife and historic interest and the contribution it makes to the area's distinctiveness and charm. Harthill is known for its beauty. Enthusiastic volunteers work with the Parish Council on projects to enhance the footpaths, maintain planters and develop wildflower areas. Harthill and Woodall achieved a Gold Award in the Yorkshire in Bloom competition and will compete this year to be the Yorkshire Rose Regional Winner. The beauty of the Parish and our green spaces are all part of the overall reason that people visit our village from surrounding areas and why it is so loved by the people that live here.

Fundamental to the culture of the villages of Harthill and Woodall is the ability to follow our 6 walking maps and take in the beauty of the area. The development will be perceived as an out of place industrial intrusion into the countryside.

This is an approach taken by the Planning Inspector LN Hughes in Planning appeal APP/R1038/W/24/3353898 relating to land to the west of Dyche Lane and to the south of New Leaf Plant Centre, Coal Aston S18 3AA. The inspector concluded that "I find overall that the benefits of the proposal are cumulatively insufficient to clearly outweigh the extent of the harm to the Green Belt and the other harm I have identified." "It would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, which is harmful by definition, and to which I attach substantial weight as required by the Framework paragraph 153."

Council believes that this proposal, for a Battery Storage facility on Hard Lane, will have a detrimental effect on the character and openness of the green belt as well as reducing enjoyment of the views from the surrounding area.

#### **4. The detrimental effect on wildlife and biodiversity.**

The site proposed is currently a mixture of agricultural and scrub land. This obviously has agricultural value, but the scrub also represents a significant wildlife habitat with reported sightings of frogs, newts, kingfishers, bats, deer, and owls to name but a few.

The area immediately to the west has two wildlife ponds specifically constructed to provide habitat for Great Crested Newts.

#### **5. Flooding**

The site sits on low lying land adjacent to Broad Bridge Dyke. This area has been known to flood on a number of occasions. The dyke is a major “feeder” to the Chesterfield Canal. Any contamination of the water in it would affect not only the immediate area but the canal and ultimately the River Trent where the canal terminates at West Stockwith.

Council notes the attempts to mitigate this by raising up the site, but, as previously mentioned, this makes the screening of the site even less practical and also significantly adds to the amount of material to be brought onto the site.

#### **6. Nuisance by way of Noise and Light**

The site is close to two residential properties and closely overlooked by another two. It is proposed that the site will be remotely operated, and security will be by way of CCTV cameras. There is concern that remotely operated or movement triggered lighting will cause significant nuisance to adjoining properties as well as disturbance to wildlife.

By their very nature the Battery Storage Units emit noise and vibration, primarily from cooling fans which operate when the batteries are charging and discharging. This noise would represent a significant nuisance to the adjacent properties, as well as residents trying to enjoy the amenities set out above.

#### **7. Risk Of Fire**

Council noted the contents of The House of Commons Briefing Paper entitled Battery Energy Storage Systems, dated 19<sup>th</sup> April 2024. Section 3.2 states that “there has only been one documented incident of a BESS fire in the UK”. It goes on to say that “a report by EPRI states that the global failure rate for grid-scale BESSs has decreased significantly since 2018, from almost 10 failure events per GW of storage per year, to less than one failure event per GW per year since 2020.”

Council believes this risk should now be reviewed as recent events would indicate that this report underestimated the risk of fires at these facilities.

It is proposed that the site will house a large number of Lithium-ion batteries (30), which, if damaged, improperly maintained, or exposed to extreme temperatures, can lead to thermal runaway—a process where a battery overheats and ignites. Such fires can be difficult to contain, and release toxic gases during combustion. It was generally claimed by the industry that such fires were rare and so the risk was low, but there have now been a number of such fires in the UK, so this argument would appear to be flawed.

These recent fires include:

**Carnegie Road, Liverpool (September 2020)**

**Statera BESS Project, East Tilbury, Essex (February 2025)**

**Witpit Lane, Preston, (March 2025)**

As previously mentioned, this site is close to a number of residences as well as the Electricity Substation that supplies the adjacent villages. Any such fire would pose a risk to the residents, the substation which is part of the area's critical infrastructure, and the environment, especially if runoff from any attempts to fight the fire was to enter Broad Bridge Dyke.

#### **8. Subsidence from disused mine workings**

The site is immediately adjacent to the site of the now closed Kiveton Colliery. The colliery took significant quantities of coal from seams at 275m, 370m and 640m down. This has resulted in significant subsidence, and ground movement still occurs. Council is concerned that any bunding installed to mitigate the contamination of Broad Bridge Dyke, from surface water or run off from attempts to fight any fires, could be subject to this movement and therefore rendered ineffective.

#### **9. Archaeology**

The site is of some considerable archaeological interest. There is believed to be a medieval watermill at the site which requires further investigation and as such the site has been submitted to the South Yorkshire Local Heritage List and recommended for local listing as it is a heritage asset of regional importance.

#### **10. Hardstanding**

The applicants Design and Access statement refers to Hard Standing already in existence at the site – “portions of the site forming existing hardstanding areas towards the entrance”. It should be noted that Council understood that this was placed there on a temporary basis by Northern Power Grid as part of their works in 2024. Council is unclear why this has not been removed.

#### **11. Capacity**

The fire strategy document states “Harmony Energy Limited (the Client, the Developer) is developing a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) with a maximum power of up to 40 MW (the Project). The Project is located off Hard Land, Kiveton Park, Sheffield, England (the Site)”.

This is the only reference to the capacity that Council have been able to establish in the application. It is not in the application description, the application form, or the Design and Access Statement. Council would like to see this clarified prior to any decision being taken on the proposal.

### **Summary**

In summary, Council strongly believes that this development represents inappropriate development in Green Belt and disagree with the comments in the developer's design and access statement 6.17. It is also unclear why the applicant seeks to describe the land as “grey belt”. The application site is

part of a largely agricultural area, characterised by openness. It clearly is not “previously developed land”.

Council do not believe any harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the proposal.

The benefits of the proposal would appear to be to help in achieving the greater goal of Net Zero, a clear government priority, but this site is not unique in achieving that goal and any benefit could equally be achieved by placing the battery storage on any number of industrial areas throughout the area. It is therefore hard to see how the benefits outweigh the damage that will undoubtedly be done.

It is also important to note that this is not a public initiative where profits will be ploughed back into providing a more robust infrastructure and cheaper energy prices. This is a commercial company who will make profit from the scheme for their own investors. During meetings with Harmony Energy, they were very clear that this site was chosen as it was the most cost-effective option for them. Not because there were no other viable sites.

For these reasons Council ask that this application is **REFUSED**.

Please note that our submission is in respect of the proposed development. While we have taken every effort to present accurate information for your consideration, as we are not a decision maker, we cannot accept any responsibility for unintentional errors or omissions, and you should satisfy yourselves on any facts before reaching your decision.

Yours Sincerely,

  
  
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