

Goodrest Farm BESS Approval 9th October

The Goodrest Farm BESS application was unanimously approved last night with just one abstention. The end result of a yearlong campaign, and it was becoming clear that this would be the likely outcome despite all our best efforts. Last night Alex Perry gave a presentation on BESS oversupply against the government targets and why we believe this BESS site is simply not needed. I focused on the fire safety issues and not to approve the application by adding conditions to the approval.

There was much debate between committee members about both of these issues, and after the 29th July meeting it was clear that only fire safety issues were preventing approval. There was some nuanced debate about what constituted two access points and container distance separation, but once again the main focus was on whether conditions could be appropriate or manageable.

In the end the committee thought that it was better to approve the application with the fire safety conditions attached rather than it be granted on appeal by the Planning Inspectorate, with no conditions attached. Then there was the added complication of Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) having final say when approving these conditions, which would leave Bromsgrove Council with no overall control. It was agreed to word the conditions so that Bromsgrove Council retains control.

As an aside, I was particularly annoyed that “grey belt” was conveniently defined to suit the situation. Ruth Bamford said the green belt was there to prevent urban sprawl between built up areas and that Hunnington was not a built-up area, so Goodrest Farm was grey belt. This completely overlooks the fact that the green belt is there to prevent urban sprawl between the Black Country (Halesowen) and Bromsgrove. Hunnington just happen to sit in it. It’s difficult to listen to this bilge when you are not allowed to say anything.

It was also annoying to hear once Planning Committee member say, “I wouldn’t want this next to me, but I see no reason to refuse it”. To this I would say don’t give up your day job as politics is not your strong point.

But all is not lost as things are changing nationally and regionally. The National Energy System Operator (NESO), in cooperation with Ofgem, began implementing “Connection Reform” in 2024. This reform grants NESO authority to determine which projects proceed to connection agreements and which are deferred or removed from consideration. The forthcoming “Strategic Spatial Energy Plan” will further define capacity requirements by region and technology, **introducing a more centralised control**. As a result, it is likely that many BESS projects will not be granted connection, especially those further down the connection queue.

At the Kitwell Green substation, Grenergy are 6th in a queue of 11, of which 9 are BESS sites, leaving Kitwell with a connection capacity of zero. There is a chance that Grenergy will ultimately not get a national grid connection. Our delaying tactics have hopefully pushed them further down the queue!

Finally, I want to say thank you for all your kind words, we did try our best between us. Finally, Thanks to Alex Perry, thanks to residents for all your support, your efforts with the poster campaign and attending our meetings.

Ian McGregor

Vice Chair, Hunnington Parish Council