



EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Further to your information request FOI/EIR 21/22-123 please find your question and our response below.

Request:

This FOI is in connection with a recent approval of a 49.9 MW battery installation at Burwell (East Cambridgeshire District Council planning reference 17_02205). I understand that a concern had been raised by the Environment Agency regarding a secondary containment system to ensure that, in the event of a fire at this facility, the firewater would not contaminate the surrounding environment. As you are aware, Lithium ion battery fires are a well-known, and well documented hazard.

Following various exchanges, it seems that this condition was discharged and ECDC subsequently approved the battery installation in the form as proposed by the developer. Please can you tell me:

- 1) What specific fire prevention measures provided by the applicant and/or their representatives gave ECDC sufficient re-assurance that a battery fire would be unlikely to happen?
- 2) What specific details provided by the applicant and/or their representatives gave ECDC sufficient re-assurance that if a battery fire was to occur, any hazards arising from this would be minimised (in terms of toxic gas emissions, explosions and also contamination of the surrounding area)?
- 3) What specific details provided by the applicant and/or their representatives resulted in ECDC considering it appropriate to discharge the condition that a secondary containment system was needed? i.e. What provided the re-assurance that a fire incident would be contained and that a secondary firewater containment system was not necessary after all?
- 4) Who reviewed this information on behalf of ECDC (i.e. what is the job title/position of the member/s of staff who reviewed this information)?
- 5) What qualifications does the member/s of staff at ECDC who reviewed this information hold?
- 6) How much experience/ expertise in lithium ion battery installations does this member of staff have?
- 7) Has ECDC had further input into the fire safety management plan for this (now approved) battery facility?

Response:

1) Please see condition 22 (still awaiting discharge) on planning application reference 17/02205/FUL, which can be viewed at <https://pa.eastcambs.gov.uk/online-applications/>

2) Please see details submitted, considered and determined under planning reference 17/02205/DISF, which can be viewed at <https://pa.eastcambs.gov.uk/online-applications/>

The EA had raised the issue that in the event of a fire, large quantities of water or foam might be needed to put the fire out, that this fire water might be contaminated, and if it were not adequately contained it could cause water pollution. The applicant subsequently provided information to demonstrate that an automatic fire detection and suppression system would be in place which would release an aerosol to quickly extinguish a fire without creating firewater; and so, the risk of water pollution and land contamination would be very low. Both the EA and the ECDC Scientific Officer stated that they were satisfied with this response. The comments from ECDC's Scientific Officer and the EA Groundwater and Contaminated Land team are limited to pollution prevention issues.

3) See response to Q2

4) Emma Barral, Planning Officer, was the case officer for 17/02205/DISF. Richard Fitzjohn, Senior Planning Officer was the case officer 17/02205/FUL (Please note: 17/02205/FUL was determined at Planning Committee, not by Planning Officers). Peter Ord was the Scientific Officer.

5) This information is refused under Section 40 (2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Personal Information. Please see the refusal notice below.

We can confirm that all the Officers involved in reviewing this information have relevant qualifications (to MSc level). Their qualifications are in their own field of responsibility. They do not have qualifications or expert knowledge in fire safety, power generation or lithium ion battery technology, etc.

6) The Council Officers involved do not have expertise in fire safety or power distribution technology. They are not required to have this expertise and it is outside of their remit. These are specialist fields and the council would consult and take advice from the relevant authorities.

7) We are awaiting the discharge of condition of condition 22. Please see the attachment for additional information we have received.

In respect of those requests that were answered in full or partially and the total refused please take this as notice under FOIA, that we:

a) Consider the information as exempt from disclosure under the Act;

b) Claim exempt under sections of the Act:

Section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000

c) State why the exemption applies:

Section 40 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 states the following:

1) Any information to which a request for information relates is exempt information if it constitutes personal data of which the applicant is the data subject.

**2) Any Information to which a request for information relates is also exempt information if –
a. it constitutes personal data which do not within subsection (1), and
b. either the first or the second condition is satisfied.**

As disclosure of the information would contravene the first data protection principle, where information should be processed (defined to include obtained) fairly and lawfully, this information is exempt from disclosure under Section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

This concludes your request FOI/EIR 21/22-123

If information has been refused please treat this as a Refusal Notice for the purposes of the Act.

If you disagree with our decision or are otherwise unhappy with how we have dealt with your request in the first instance you may approach foi@eastcambs.gov.uk and request a review. A request for review must be made in no more than 40 working days from the date of this email.

Should you remain dissatisfied with the outcome you have a right under s50 of the Freedom of Information Act to appeal against the decision by contacting the Information Commissioner, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow SK9 5AF.