

Helensburgh Advertiser

Helensburgh battery storage proposal unanimously rejected

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By Andy Galloway, Local Democracy Reporter

PLANS to site a battery storage facility at Helensburgh's Ardencaple Farm have been unanimously thrown out by councillors.

Members of Argyll and Bute's planning, protective services and licensing committee considered the proposal by YLEM Energy at a meeting on Wednesday, October 23.

The committee's chair remarked that it was "astonishing" that the applicants had submitted their proposal for the site "without justification".

Other councillors also expressed the view that there would be better sites for the facility, the proposal for which attracted 62 objections.

Councillor Mark Irvine (Independent, Lomond North) said: "This is a development which, given the current climate emergency, is something we as an authority have made it very clear we do want to prioritise.

"But I am hugely disappointed in the application not exploring alternative sites to the best of their ability, in areas closer to connections.

"It is an area within my reach and there has been lots of local interest."

Councillor John Armour (SNP, South Kintyre) then sought information on whether the farm was a working one and whether there were passing places on the access road.

Planning officer David Moore responded: "I have not seen any machinery, but it is a working farm. There are stables attracting people with horses and there is a dog exercise area.

"There are no formal passing places. The roads engineer did see if we could design some passing places, but a plan was drawn up showing these, and none of the land required is in the control of the applicant.

“There was a draft construction management plan. We would have said something had to be submitted and it would be for the applicant to bring in measures. I think that has been raised by a number of objectors.”

Councillor Gordon Blair (SNP, Cowal) said: “To my mind, this is the wrong type of building in the wrong type of place, and could cause even more hassle for the environmental health officers in the future.

“There must be some brownfield sites in the Helensburgh and Lomond area that could accommodate this. We have to look after our communities.”

Councillor Kieron Green (Independent, Oban North and Lorn) added: “I find it difficult to believe there are not more suitable sites elsewhere. Councillor Irvine said he was disappointed they had not provided justification, but I would go further than that.

“I think it is astonishing that they have submitted the application without justification for this. If you are going to build in a location such as this, you have to have a truly exceptional locational need.

“Battery storage systems will be increasingly important going forward, but there are probably plenty of brownfield sites with good connections which would be far more suitable.”

YLEM Energy has been contacted for comment