Boston Borough Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Planning Committee** held in the Committee Room - Municipal Buildings, West Street, Boston, PE21 8QR on Tuesday 2nd June 2026 at 10.00 am.

Present:

Councillor Peter Bedford, in the Chair.
Councillors Councillor David Scoot, Alison Austin, John Baxter, Stuart Evans, David Middleton, Barrie Pierpoint, Claire Rylott, Sarah Sharpe, Suzanne Welberry and Stephen Woodliffe.

In attendance:
Councillor James Cantwell (Ward Member)

Officers:
Service Director – Planning & Strategic Infrastructure, Development Manager, Senior Planning Lawyer, Senior Planning Officer and Democratic Services Team Leader.

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Anton Dani and Lina Savickiene.

2 Declarations of Interest

Standing declarations of interest were received for all members of the Council who are also members of:

The South East Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee:
Councillors Bedford, Pierpoint, Scoot and Welberry. Councillor Alison Austin acts as a substitute.

The Internal Drainage Boards: Councillor Bedford, Evans, Rylott, Scoot and Welberry.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 24th March 2026 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 Public Questions

No questions were received.

5 B/25/0224 - Land East of Bicker Fen substation, Bicker Fen, Boston

Application Type: S73 – Major

Proposal: Proposed installation and operation of a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and other ancillary and associated infrastructure B/25/0224

Site: Land East of Bicker Fen substation, Bicker Fen, Boston

The Chairman introduced the application and invited officers to present the report. The Senior Planning Officer presented the application, advising that it sought planning permission for the installation of a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) with an anticipated capacity of approximately 1.2 gigawatts, together with associated infrastructure including up to 1,056 battery units, a substation, access works, landscaping and biodiversity enhancements. The proposal was recommended for approval subject to conditions.

Members were advised that the application had been referred to Planning Committee due to the number of objections received. The Officer outlined the site context, noting its proximity to the existing Bicker Fen substation and the concentration of energy infrastructure within the surrounding area. The rationale for the location was explained as being driven by the requirement for close proximity to grid connection infrastructure.

The Committee was informed that, although the development would result in the temporary loss of agricultural land for a 40-year period, a condition would secure the decommissioning of the site and restoration of the land to its former use. The Officer highlighted that the proposal incorporated biodiversity net gain and mitigation measures, including landscaping and screening.

In respect of highways, Members were advised that a Transport Statement had been submitted and assessed by Lincolnshire County Council Highways, who had raised no objection subject to conditions, including works to widen sections of the local road network. Construction traffic would utilise the established haul road network to minimise impacts on nearby settlements. In relation to residential amenity, a Noise Impact Assessment had been undertaken. Environmental Health had raised no objection, subject to conditions requiring mitigation measures to be implemented.

The Officer concluded that the proposal accorded with relevant local and national planning policies, which provided strong support for renewable and low carbon energy infrastructure, and recommended approval subject to the conditions set out within the report.

The Committee then heard from three registered speakers.

Councillor Paul Locke (objector) addressed the Committee and raised strong objections to the proposal. He argued that the development would result in the permanent loss of best and most versatile agricultural land and represented an industrialisation of the countryside. He expressed concern regarding the cumulative impact of multiple energy developments in the Bicker Fen area, stating that these had not been adequately assessed. He further raised concerns regarding safety, regulatory uncertainty and the absence of a specific national regulatory framework for large-scale battery storage systems. He concluded that the proposal conflicted with both national and local planning policy and should be refused.

Mr Chris McKerrow (on behalf of the applicant) spoke in support of the application. He stated that the proposal had been carefully designed and supported by technical assessments covering noise, highways, landscape and safety impacts. He emphasised the locational requirement for the development to be adjacent to existing grid infrastructure and highlighted the economic benefits, including business rates and job creation. He noted that the scheme would deliver biodiversity net gain and play an important role in

supporting energy security and the transition to renewable energy. He urged Members to support the officer recommendation.

Councillor James Cantwell (Ward Member) addressed the Committee in objection. He referred to the cumulative impact of multiple energy projects in Bicker Fen and the resulting harm to the rural character of the area. He raised concerns regarding traffic, residential amenity, noise and the scale of the development, which he described as the largest in the area. He expressed concern for the wellbeing of local residents and urged the Committee to refuse the application or, alternatively, undertake a site visit if Members were uncertain.

Following the public representations, the Chairman opened the item for Member debate.

Members sought clarification on a number of matters within the officer report and presentation. Questions were raised regarding the number and layout of battery units, consultation arrangements and the interaction of construction traffic with other developments in the wider Bicker Fen area. Officers confirmed that the final details of the development, including the number, layout and design of units, would be secured through planning conditions and agreed at a later stage. It was noted that the level of technical detail that could reasonably be included within the committee report was limited and that more detailed technical information, including detailed figures and assessments, was available on the planning register.

Members discussed the anticipated traffic impacts during the construction phase and the cumulative effects arising from multiple schemes within the locality. Officers reiterated that the Highways Authority had raised no objection and that mitigation measures, including routing via the haul road and highway improvements, would be secured through conditions. It was acknowledged that construction impacts would be temporary in nature.

Considerable discussion took place in relation to the long-term management of the site, including decommissioning. Members expressed concern regarding the 40-year lifespan of the development and whether the land would be restored to its former agricultural use. Officers advised that robust conditions, based on Planning Inspectorate precedent, would require the decommissioning of the development and restoration of the land. Whilst recognising the length of time involved, officers confirmed that such conditions were considered enforceable and represented standard practice for renewable energy schemes.

Members raised a number of concerns in respect of fire safety and the potential risks associated with a development of this scale, including the proximity of units and the capacity of local fire services to respond. Officers confirmed that no objections had been raised by Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue and that a comprehensive safety management plan would be required as part of the development. It was noted that detailed design, fire detection, suppression systems and emergency procedures would be secured through condition and agreed in consultation with the relevant authorities prior to the commencement of development.

In response to questions regarding environmental and public safety matters, including concerns raised by objectors about the risk of toxic runoff, officers confirmed that no statutory consultees had raised such concerns and that there was no evidence before the authority to substantiate those claims. It was also confirmed that a safety management plan and appropriate regulatory controls would be secured through condition.

Members also raised queries regarding landscaping and screening, including the type of planting proposed. In particular, clarification was sought as to whether deciduous or evergreen planting would be utilised to ensure effective year-round screening. Officers confirmed that landscaping details would be secured through conditions and that the suitability of planting, including species type, would be considered at the discharge of condition stage.

The Committee gave further consideration to the reliance on planning conditions to secure details post-permission. Officers emphasised that no development could lawfully commence until all pre-commencement conditions had been formally discharged. It was confirmed that the Local Planning Authority would rigorously assess all submitted details in consultation with relevant consultees and that, should the details be found unacceptable, the conditions would not be discharged and the development could not proceed.

Members discussed the adequacy of information provided at this stage and whether further information should be sought. Officers advised that, whilst certain detailed matters would be finalised through conditions, this approach was standard practice for developments of this scale and that sufficient information had been provided to enable the Committee to determine the application.

During the debate, Members identified a number of areas where additional safeguards could be strengthened through planning conditions, including noise mitigation, landscaping, traffic management and long-term site restoration. Officers confirmed that, should the Committee be minded to approve the application, these additional conditions could be incorporated and that all conditions would be reviewed in consultation with the Council's Legal Advisor to ensure that they were robust, enforceable and, where possible, strengthened prior to the issuing of the decision notice.

Whilst some Members expressed continued concern regarding the cumulative impact of development within Bicker Fen and the level of detail available at this stage, others acknowledged the officer advice that the proposal complied with the development plan and national policy, and that refusal would be difficult to defend at appeal.

The application was proposed by Councillor Stephen Woodliffe and seconded by Councillor David Middleton.

Resolved:

That planning permission be granted in accordance with the officer recommendation and subject to the conditions set out in the report, with delegated authority given to officers, in consultation with the Chairman and the Council's Legal Advisor, to review, amend and strengthen those conditions as necessary, and to incorporate any additional conditions considered appropriate, including those

relating to noise mitigation, landscaping and screening, traffic management, site safety and decommissioning, as discussed during the meeting.

[Councillor James Cantwell left the meeting at 10.34am, during consideration of the above item.]

The Meeting ended at 11.43 am.