

# **Proposed Battery Plant, IAMP Statement of Community Involvement**

Envision AESC UK Ltd

23 July 2021

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## 1.0 Introduction

### Background

1.1 This Statement of Community Involvement has been prepared by Lichfields on behalf of Envision AESC UK Ltd ('the applicant') to accompany a full planning application for the development of land to the west of International Drive and north of the A1290 at the International Advanced Manufacturing Park ('IAMP'), Washington.

1.2 The description of development is as follows:

*"Erection of industrial unit to be used for the manufacture of batteries for vehicles with ancillary office / welfare floorspace and associated infrastructure provision, accesses, parking, drainage and landscaping."*

### Context

1.3 Envision AESC is a world leading manufacturer of lithium-ion batteries for the automotive industry and has been producing highest quality batteries in Sunderland for the Nissan LEAF electric vehicle for 9 years. The business is headquartered in Japan, but also has manufacturing sites in the United States, China and here in Sunderland where over 300 people are employed.

1.4 As the demand for electric vehicles is forecast to grow significantly over the coming years, supporting the transition to a net zero carbon future, additional capacity for battery manufacturing is needed. To meet this increased future demand, Envision AESC is proposing to invest in a new manufacturing facility that will be capable of producing batteries for more than 100,000 electric vehicles per year.

1.5 This is a unique and most exciting opportunity to help Sunderland and the UK become one of the best international locations for automotive and advanced manufacturing. The proposals will help ensure that Envision AESC, the IAMP and Sunderland are at the forefront of innovations in battery technology and are playing a critical role in leading the de-carbonisation revolution through the promotion of clean energy and new energy electric vehicles.

1.6 The proposals are to relocate the 300 jobs from the existing battery plant at the current Envision AESC facility to a new larger state-of-the art facility, which will employ a total of 1,000 staff (including the existing staff). Subject to planning permission, it is proposed that construction would start in early 2022, with the first battery production in 2024.

### Purpose of the Statement

1.7 Following the introduction of the Government's Localism Act in 2011, greater emphasis has been placed upon increased community involvement throughout the planning process. Furthermore, the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') (revised July 2021) promotes sustainable development through the creation of high-quality and beautiful places which reflect the community's needs and wellbeing. The NPPF further states that early engagement in the planning process has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties.

1.8 Paragraph 132 of the NPPF confirms that:

*“Early discussion between applicants, the local planning authority and local community about the design and style of emerging schemes is important for clarifying expectations and reconciling local and commercial interests. Applicants should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot.”*

- 1.9 In consideration of the above, this Statement sets out the pre-application engagement that has been undertaken in relation to the development proposals, together with the feedback received and the response to the feedback.

## **Structure of the Statement**

- 1.10 This Statement is structured as follows:

- Section 2 outlines the engagement process and exercises which have been undertaken to ensure that the local community have had the opportunity to view and comment on the proposals;
- Section 3 presents the findings from the engagement exercise and provides a response to the feedback received from the local community; and
- Section 4 summarises the findings and concludes the Statement.

## 2.0 **The Process of Engagement**

### **Sunderland City Council Statement of Community Involvement**

- 2.1 The Sunderland City Council Statement of Community Involvement ('SCI') sets out the way in which the Council aims to involve residents, businesses, community groups, investors and other stakeholders on planning matters. The document sets out the strategy to widen access to planning to ensure communities have a voice in shaping places and spaces throughout Sunderland. The Council adopted the SCI in June 2020.
- 2.2 The SCI stipulates that applicants are expected to engage with the local community on major applications as part of the pre-application process. By doing so, local communities are enabled to raise any concerns and help influence development proposals at an early stage.
- 2.3 Where pre-application engagement is undertaken, the Council's SCI confirms that applicants should prepare a report to summarise the type of engagement carried out, the key issues raised, and how the scheme addresses these issues. The report is then to be submitted with any subsequent planning application.

### **Coronavirus Pandemic**

- 2.4 On 14 May 2020, the Government introduced temporary regulations to supplement the existing statutory publicity arrangements for planning applications, listed building consent applications and environmental statements for Environmental Impact Assessment ('EIA') development in response to the coronavirus pandemic. This involved temporary changes introduced through the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure, Listed Buildings and Environmental Impact Assessment) (England) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 to support timely decision-making, and avoid delays to development as a result of the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, while maintaining public participation in the decision-making process.
- 2.5 The Government published Planning Practice Guidance <sup>1</sup>('PPG') to accompany these regulations to highlight what alternative publicity local planning authorities and applicants could undertake. The temporary publicity requirements still require local planning authorities (and in the case of certain applications for EIA development, applicants or recipients of further information) to publicise planning applications so that those with an interest can make representations and effectively participate in the decision-making process.

### **IAMP Engagement**

- 2.6 Several engagement exercises have previously taken place on the IAMP, which are summarised below.

### **IAMP Area Action Plan**

- 2.7 In 2015, Sunderland City Council and South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council began the first of a series of engagement exercises in respect of the preparation of the IAMP Area Action Plan and its progression through the public examination process. The engagement documents set out the policy and development principles for the IAMP; the most appropriate location for, and size of, the IAMP and the proposed changes to the AAP following examination. Through the adoption of the AAP, the principle of a development of automotive and advanced manufacturing uses on the application site was established.

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<sup>1</sup> Planning Practice Guidance Reference: 15-035-20200513

## **Development Consent Order**

- 2.8 Between November 2016 and January 2017, IAMP LLP consulted on the IAMP when it was the entirety of the IAMP (that is, comprising both 'IAMP ONE' and 'IAMP TWO'). Initial plans and thoughts were shared with the public at exhibitions held at points across Sunderland and South Tyneside, with the purpose of seeking initial views on the Project to begin to inform what the Project might look like. This was the first engagement undertaken on the Development Consent Order ('DCO') (stage 1) and was a non-statutory exercise.
- 2.9 Between March and May 2019, IAMP LLP undertook statutory consultation on IAMP TWO to seek views from the surrounding communities on IAMP TWO, including the preliminary environmental information, a draft Design Code and event materials. Following this date, further discussions have taken place with some parties. The findings and results of the consultation are being considered and recorded in a Consultation Report for submission as part of the DCO process.

## **IAMP ONE**

- 2.10 In December 2017, IAMP LLP undertook engagement on IAMP ONE, with the purpose of gaining feedback to inform the 2018 IAMP ONE planning application, with support from the LLP's development partner HBD. This engagement was undertaken following the IAMP splitting into two Projects (IAMP ONE and IAMP TWO). A total of five feedback forms were completed on the day with a further one submitted via email at a later date. Additionally, two letters were received from owners of land within IAMP TWO.
- 2.11 In early 2018, the Council consulted the landowners, businesses and residents in the area to seek comments on the 2018 IAMP ONE planning application. In response to this engagement, eight letters of representation were received, consisting of one letter of support from Nissan and four objecting to the application (three letters from one owner of land within IAMP TWO, two letters from another owner of land within IAMP TWO, as well as a letter each from the British Horse Society and Plantlife UK).

## **IAMP ONE Phase 2**

- 2.12 Given that extensive engagement has been undertaken in relation to the IAMP, it was agreed with the Council that rather than undertake a further drop-in engagement event, a leaflet could instead be circulated in the local community to provide details of the proposed development and to seek feedback.
- 2.13 Approximately 2,800 leaflets (which included a questionnaire for recipients to complete and return via a free-post address) were distributed in the local area on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2020. The community was given until 21<sup>st</sup> February 2020 to respond. In response, a letter and an email were received from planning consultants acting on behalf of two land owners within IAMP TWO, whilst three comments forms were completed and returned.

## **Envision AESC Battery Plant Engagement**

- 2.14 As part of the preparation of the detailed planning application for the proposed battery plant, and in accordance with the updated legislation, PPG and given the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, it was agreed with Sunderland City Council to undertake a similar engagement exercise as that undertaken for IAMP ONE Phase 2 in February 2020.
- 2.15 A leaflet drop was carried out on 8 July 2021 to publicise the proposed development. Approximately 2,800 leaflets were distributed amongst businesses and households located within a defined consultation zone. This zone is shown on the image provide at Appendix 1. This

is the same consultation zone as that used for the IAMP ONE Phase 2 engagement. The engagement leaflet is provided at Appendix 2.

- 2.16 The leaflet provided details of the proposed development and included a questionnaire for recipients to complete and return via a free-post address. The questionnaire comprised a series of structured questions and included a comments box to allow respondents to submit detailed feedback.
- 2.17 Recipients of the engagement leaflet were advised to submit their questionnaire responses and any other comments by 19 July 2021, at which point the engagement exercised concluded. In total, 33 respondents submitted a questionnaire via free-post.



## 3.0

## Findings from the Engagement






## 3.1

This section of the Statement provides an analysis of the feedback and responses from the public engagement exercise.

## 3.2

In total, 33 feedback forms were completed during the engagement period. The overall feedback is summarised below:




### Question 1. The proposed battery plant is welcomed as part of the continuing development of IAMP for advanced manufacturing and automotive uses

1. The proposed battery plant is welcomed as part of the continuing development of IAMP for advanced manufacturing and automotive uses. do you:			Response Percent	Response Total
Answer Choices				
1	Strongly Agree		45.45%	15
2	Agree		33.33%	11
3	Neutral		3.03%	1
4	Disagree		3.03%	1
5	Strongly Disagree		15.15%	5
			answered	33
			skipped	0

## 3.3

79% (26/33) of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that the proposed battery plant is a welcome continuation of the IAMP development for advanced manufacturing and automotive uses. 3% (3/33) of respondents answered neutral, and 18% (6/33) respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement.






### Question 2. The site is a suitable and sustainable location for this development

2. The site is suitable and sustainable location for this development. Do you:			Response Percent	Response Total
Answer Choices				
1	Strongly Agree		51.52%	17
2	Agree		30.30%	10
3	Neutral		0.00%	0
4	Disagree		0.00%	0
5	Strongly Disagree		18.18%	6
			answered	33
			skipped	0

## 3.4






82% (27/33) of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that the site is a suitable and sustainable location for the development. 0% (0/33) of respondents answered neutral, and 18% (6/33) respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement.

**Question 3. The proposed battery plant will support the transition to electric cars and will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions**

3. The proposed battery plant will support the transition to electric cars and will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Do you:			
Answer Choices			Response Percent
			Response Total
1	Strongly Agree		50.00%
2	Agree		31.25%
3	Neutral		6.25%
4	Disagree		0.00%
5	Strongly Disagree		12.50%
			answered
			32
			skipped
			1

- 3.5 81% (26/32) of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that the proposed development would support the transition to electric cars and would help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. 6% (2/32) of respondents answered neutral, and 13% (4/32) respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement. 1 respondent did not provide an answer to this question.

**Question 4. The proposed battery plant will create/sustain a substantial number of local jobs in the area**

4. The proposed battery plant will create/sustain a substantial number of local jobs in the area. Do you:			
Answer Choices			Response Percent
			Response Total
1	Strongly Agree		60.61%
2	Agree		21.21%
3	Neutral		6.06%
4	Disagree		0.00%
5	Strongly Disagree		12.12%
			answered
			33
			skipped
			0

- 3.6 82% (27/33) of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that the proposed battery plant would create/sustain a substantial number of local jobs in the local area. 6% (2/33) of respondents answered neutral, and 12% (4/33) respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement.

## General Comments / Concerns

3.7 In total, 15 general comments were submitted via the comments box included at Question 5 of the engagement feedback form. Reviewing the submitted comments provided further insight on the above results, with 6 positive comments, 7 negative and 2 neutral.

3.8 The positive comments are provided in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Positive Comments

Positive Comments	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brilliant for our area! Well done!</li> <li>• Brilliant addition for high-tech engineering and manufacturing to this area</li> <li>• Full support – get it done asap</li> <li>• Great news</li> <li>• This is a very welcome investment in the North east which will go a long way in sustaining the livelihood of the community and the UK economy at large</li> <li>• This is what we want not ridiculous incinerators</li> </ul>

3.9 Grouping the negative and neutral comments by theme revealed the key issues and concerns raised by the local community. These are summarised in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Concerns / comment raised by the community and responses from the project team

Concerns / Comments	Responses
<b>Principle of the Development</b>	
Destruction of green space between Sunderland and Washington.	This is an allocated employment site. The principle of the loss of this green space was considered through the preparation and adoption of the IAMP Area Action Plan.
Destruction of Green Belt.	The proposed development lies on an allocated employment site. As the Green Belt lies to the north, the proposals will not destroy the Green Belt.
Brownfield sites should be prioritised.	As this is an allocated employment site, there is no planning requirement for alternative sites to be considered at this stage. Alternative sites were considered as part of the preparation of the AAP. IAMP was identified as the most appropriate location for a large-scale development of advanced manufacturing and automotive uses to meet identified needs.
Factory should be built elsewhere.	
Creation of a concrete jungle over the last 52 years.	It is recognised that new development has taken place over time to meet the needs of both the economy as well as the needs of communities for more housing.
<b>Traffic / Highways</b>	
It is hoped the A1290 will be widened to accommodate the increase in trucks and cars.	Minor widening of the A1290 has already taken place as part of the first phase of the IAMP ONE development. No further works are necessary to deliver the proposed battery plant; however, the A1290 needs to be dualled before any further development could take place.
Increased traffic and disruption which will massively increase when the plant opens.	The Transport Statement and Access & Transport Chapter of the Environmental Statement (ES) demonstrate that the increase in vehicle movements will not have any

Concerns / Comments	Responses
	significant adverse effects and can be accommodated on the highway network.
<b>Biodiversity</b>	
Development should provide net biodiversity gain.	A biodiversity net gain calculation has been undertaken which demonstrates that the proposals will provide net biodiversity gain.
In view of the decline in Swift numbers, some provision for nesting for these birds would be appreciated.	The ecological survey work has not identified the presence of swifts; however, Envision AESC has agreed to provide a series of swift boxes in response to this comment.
Raptors have regularly been recorded and provision of some "facility" for nesting on the building would be welcome.	Opportunities for including a Kestrel box will be investigated.
Provision for birds is important and has not been fully taken on board in recent years and modern building design to exclude nesting birds is at least partly responsible for the decline in populations of raptors and swifts.	The proposals include swift boxes. A separate planning application is being considered for the demolition of West Moor Farm. The proposals include the erection of three barn owl boxes, at least 30 days prior to any demolition; one in a mature tree a short distance away and two within Hylton Bridge Farm (stables and barn). The two boxes at Hylton Bridge Farm have already been installed.
Reduction in territory for local and migrating wildlife.	The Biodiversity Chapter of the ES considers the impact of the proposals on wildlife. It is considered that appropriate mitigation is provided for wildlife.
<b>Climate Change</b>	
Concerns that the economy is not green given that products like batteries are mined for their components. This has effects on greenhouse gas emissions.	This is a wider issue and is not a material consideration in the determination of this planning application.
The batteries weigh more than those in conventional engines and so increases the amount of pollution from tyre and break wear.	This is not a material consideration in the determination of this planning application.
Why do those in power, politically or through businesses never seek alternative climate data which refutes the "climate emergency" narrative.	Sunderland City Council has recognised that there is a Global climate change emergency: <a href="https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/lowcarbon">https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/lowcarbon</a> . This emergency is recognised in the Climate Change Chapter of the ES.
Emissions from traffic.	There is not an air quality issue in this area and the Air Quality Chapter of the ES has not identified any harmful effects as a result of the proposed development.
<b>Noise</b>	
Constant noise from machinery and factories.	A noise assessment has been undertaken and has not identified any noise issues. An issue was identified in relation to the potential effects of noise from the proposed car park on the occupiers of North Moor Farm. Acoustic fencing is proposed to provide mitigation.
<b>Other Matters</b>	

Concerns / Comments	Responses
Less trees and shrubbery will lead to more soil erosion.	The proposals include tree and shrub planting as discussed in the landscape strategy section of the Design and Access Statement.
Washington is a town in its own right.	We recognise that Washington is a town in its own right.
Electric vehicles are unaffordable but people are being forced to buy them.	This is not a material consideration in the determination of this planning application. The prices will drop once their production increases.
Electricity is becoming unaffordable.	This is not a material consideration in the determination of this planning application.

## **4.0 Conclusion**

- 4.1 This Statement of Community Involvement has summarised the engagement process undertaken in relation to the proposals for the development of land at IAMP in Washington for a proposed battery plant. The engagement process has been carried out in such a way that meets the requirements and recommendations of the Localism Act, the NPPF and the Council's own SCI.
- 4.2 The engagement exercise produced the following headline results:
- Approximately 2,800 leaflets were distributed to residents and businesses in the local area;
  - A total of 33 comments forms were returned;
  - The majority of the 79% (26/33) of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that the proposed battery plant is a welcome continuation of the IAMP development for advanced manufacturing and automotive uses. 3% (3/33) of respondents answered neutral, and 18% (6/33) respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement;
  - In total, 15 general comments were provided. Of these, 6 were positive comments, 7 were negative and 2 provided neutral comments;
  - The positive comments supported proposals and the investment in the economy; and
  - The concerns raised generally related to the principle of the development, the loss of green space, increased traffic on the A1290, increased noise and disturbance, the impact on biodiversity and the implications on climate change.
- 4.3 A response to the comments and concerns is provided in Section 3.0 of this report.
- 4.4 The next stage of the engagement process will comprise a statutory exercise undertaken by the Council upon validation of the planning application, whereby the local community and other interested parties will have a further opportunity to comment on the development proposals.

## **Appendix 1 Consultation Zone**



## Envision AESC – Proposed Battery Plant at IAMP Proposed Consultation Zone





## **Appendix 2 Engagement Leaflet**

# ENVISION AESC PLAN FOR DEVELOPMENT ON IAMP

## PUBLIC CONSULTATION



**Envision AESC is a world leading manufacturer of lithium-ion batteries for the automotive industry and has been producing highest quality batteries in Sunderland for the Nissan LEAF electric vehicle for 9 years.**

The business is headquartered in Japan, but also has manufacturing sites in the United States and here in Sunderland where over 300 people are employed.

As the demand for electric vehicles is forecast to grow significantly over the coming years, supporting the transition to a net zero carbon future, additional capacity for battery manufacturing is needed. To meet this increased future demand, Envision AESC is proposing to invest in a new manufacturing facility that will be capable of producing batteries for more than 100,000 electric vehicles per year.

The business is seeking planning permission for this facility, and we would welcome your views on the proposal.





## LOCATION – IAMP, SUNDERLAND

The site lies to the north west of Nissan and the current Envision AESC plant within IAMP at Washington, Sunderland. The site already has planning permission for automotive and advanced manufacturing uses and three bespoke manufacturing buildings have been completed.

The proposal will help ensure that Envision AESC, the IAMP and Sunderland are at the forefront of innovations in battery technology and will help Sunderland and the UK become one of the best international locations for automotive and advanced manufacturing.



## THE PROPOSAL

The proposal is for Envision AESC UK Ltd., the applicant, to invest and build a new battery plant. The manufacturing plant would have a maximum annual production capacity of 9GWh. The battery modules would be primarily used in electric vehicles.



The planning application will be accompanied by a range of documents including an Environmental Statement and Transport Assessment, as well as drawings of the site layout and the building itself.

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

Envision AESC UK Ltd. is proposing to invest £450m in the facility, and the key headlines for the project are as follows:



Capacity to produce 9GWh of batteries per year



Construction is planned to start in early 2022, with the first battery production in 2024 (subject to planning permission)



Once operational the site will employ over 1,000 people, of course drawing on the significant skills and experience of the existing workforce



Facility to be powered by 100% renewable energy, including a proposal for on-site generation from solar panels



Confirms Sunderland as the heart of automotive electrification activities in the UK, building on both Nissan's and Envision AESC's initial investments in LEAF and the current battery plant



Provides opportunities for the materials used in battery production to be sourced from local suppliers, further enhancing the benefits for the North East and UK economies



The factory would be situated on the International Advanced Manufacturing Park (IAMP), in Sunderland – adjacent to the Nissan site, and less than 1 Km from the current Envision AESC battery plant

## WE WANT YOUR VIEWS

We would like to hear your views on the proposal. Please complete the questionnaire below, cut along the dotted line and return the form by **Monday 19th July 2021** using the freepost address overleaf.

- 1 The proposed battery plant is welcomed as part of the continuing development of IAMP for advanced manufacturing and automotive uses. Do you:
- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
- 

- 2 The site is a suitable and sustainable location for this development. Do you:
- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
- 

- 3 The proposed battery plant will support the transition to electric cars and will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Do you:
- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
- 

- 4 The proposed battery plant will create / sustain a substantial number of local jobs in the area. Do you:
- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
- 

- 5 Any other comments:

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Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners Limited ("Lichfields") is registered with the Information Commissioners Office (registration number Z6193122). Your responses will be analysed by Lichfields on behalf of our client: Envision AESC UK Ltd. It is not envisaged that any personal data will be supplied by virtue of completion of the survey, but in the event that any personal data is supplied, it will be disregarded and deleted without undue delay. Responses to this consultation may be made publicly available.

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