

Our Ref: 97237/GM

11 August 2026



Rochdale Borough Council
Planning and Development
No. One Riverside
Smith Street
Rochdale
OL16 1XU

Dear Sir/Madam

**MOTO BIRCH WESTBOUND, M62 WESTBOUND BETWEEN JUNCTION 18 AND 19, HEYWOOD,
LANCASHIRE OL10 2QH
PLANNING APPLICATION FOR THE ERECTION OF SUB-STATION TO SUPPORT EXPANSION OF
ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING HUB**

Introduction

On behalf of the applicant, The Electric Highway Company Ltd (GRIDSERVE), please find enclosed an application seeking planning permission for the erection of a new substation and supporting infrastructure to support the expansion of the existing Electric Vehicle Charging Hub (EV Hub) at the Moto Birch Westbound Motorway Service Station.

The Applicant

GRIDSERVE Sustainable Energy Ltd is a tech-enabled sustainable energy business. GRIDSERVE develop, build, own and operate dependable, low cost, clean energy solutions for critical power infrastructure. To help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as quickly as possible GRIDSERVE deliver net zero carbon solutions for power and transportation which are designed to be better and less expensive than legacy solutions. To facilitate this transition to Electric Vehicles, GRIDSERVE is implementing and building a network of high-power chargers across the country that will provide UK motorists with fast, easy and low carbon charging solutions.

GRIDSERVE is delivering Electric Hubs at strategic locations across the UK, and many are now operational. EV Hubs are typically located at existing destinations such retail parks and garden centres allowing customers to use those amenities whilst being able to access dependable charging infrastructure.

In conjunction with the rollout of EV Hubs across the UK, GRIDSERVE has developed the Electric Forecourt® to meet existing and growing infrastructure demands of electric vehicle users, owners and operators. Designed as the new generation of fuel station, the UK's first Electric Forecourt® opened at Braintree, Essex in 2020 followed by a site in Norwich which opened in April 2022. GRIDSERVE's most recent Electric Forecourt® opened at Gatwick Airport in December 2023, while planning permission for several other sites, including those in Plymouth, Markham Vale and Stevenage has also been secured. Local Planning Authorities have a significant role to play in addressing climate change. The RTPi/ TCPA in its latest Climate Crisis Guide (January 2023) confirmed that decision-makers should recognise that energy technologies are rapidly improving and should be prepared to deal positively with the



implications of new transport and energy technologies. This includes infrastructure for electric vehicles, and the guidance encourages authorities to consider proposals positively.

Application Proposal

This application seeks planning permission for a new substation and equipment cabinets to support the expansion of the existing EV charging hub facility. The proposal is for the installation of a new substation and SCADA cabinet on land adjacent to the parking area to the south of the existing hub, and immediately adjacent to an existing Gridserve equipment cabinet on a grassed area.

Despite a recent expansion of the facility, facilitated by the approval of additional equipment under application 25/00893/FUL, the demand for EV charging in this location has increased further, such that additional capacity is now needed. The proposed substation will facilitate the expansion of the existing EV charging hub, increasing the number of charging points by 12, served from 6 no. new ABB 400 charging upstands.

Since the installation of charging upstands is permitted development, pursuant to Class E of Schedule 2 of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, only the proposed substation, SCADA cabinet and expansion of a concrete base are the subject of this planning application.

The Site

The site forms part of the Birch Westbound Motorway Service Station which is located between Junctions 18 and 19 of the M62. The site is bounded by areas of woodland and open countryside to the east and south, beyond which is the small settlement of Birch.

The main amenity buildings are located to the west of the proposed substation, within the Motorway Service Station site with a petrol station located to the west of these. Car parking is to the north west.

Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework chapter 2 (Achieving sustainable development), published in December 2024, states that the purpose of the planning system is to achieve sustainable development including supporting infrastructure in a sustainable manner (paragraph 7). Paragraph 8 sets out the overarching objectives which contribute to sustainable development:

- **an economic objective** – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure
- **a social objective** – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
- **an environmental objective** – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

In Paragraph 11, the NPPF states that plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development including plan-making that promotes a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to: meet the development needs of their area; align growth and infrastructure; improve the environment; mitigate climate change.

The National Planning Policy Framework chapter 9 (Promoting sustainable transport), states that in decision-making sustainable transport modes should be prioritised (paragraph 115). NPPF paragraph 116 states that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios. NPPF paragraph 117 states that development should be designed to enable charging of plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles in safe, accessible and convenient locations.

The National Planning Policy Framework chapter 14 (Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change), states that the planning system should support the transition to net zero by 2050 and help shape places in ways that contribute to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and supporting renewable and low carbon energy infrastructure (paragraph 161). The National Planning Policy Framework also states within chapter 14 that local planning authorities should give significant weight to the need to support energy efficiency improvements to existing buildings (paragraph 167).

Planning Considerations

The principle of electrical infrastructure supporting the EV charging hub has previously been accepted on the site through the grant of planning permission under application 25/00893/FUL. In determining that application, the Council concluded that the associated electrical infrastructure did not result in unacceptable harm to the openness of the Green Belt, was appropriate within the established motorway service area, and supported the expansion of EV charging infrastructure and the wider decarbonisation of transport. The proposed substation and SCADA cabinet perform a similar function by providing the electrical capacity necessary to facilitate the next phase of expansion of the EV hub and should therefore be considered acceptable in principle.

The Unitary Development Plan (UDP) was adopted in June 2006. It is noted that the UDP will remain in place until the Allocation Development Plan is adopted. This plan is still under review. The Rochdale Local Plan Core Strategy (CS) was adopted in October 2016 and The Places for Everyone Development Plan Document, a joint plan covering 9 out of 10 of the Greater Manchester local authority areas, took effect in March 2024. The Development Plan includes objectives and planning policies that will be used in the determination of planning applications, and which will shape the quality of new development. The policies of most relevance to this application are:

- UDP Policy G/D/2 – Green Belt
- UDP Policy D/5 – Infilling at Major Existing Developed Sites in the Green Belt
- UDP Policy NE/3 – Biodiversity and Development
- CS Policy SD1 – Delivering Sustainable Development
- CS Policy G4 – Protecting Green Belt
- CS Policy T1 – Delivering Sustainable Transport
- CS Policy T2 – Improving Accessibility
- CS Policy DM1 – General Development Requirements

The Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan Document for Bolton, Manchester Oldham, Rochdale Salford, Tameside and Wigan was adopted in March 2024. The Policies of most relevance to this application are:

- Policy JP-Strat14 – A Sustainable and Integrated Transport Network
- Policy JP-S1 – Sustainable Development
- Policy JP-S2 – Carbon and Energy
- Policy JP-S5 – Clean Air
- Policy JP-G9 – The Green Belt
- Policy JP-C1 – An Integrated Network

Set against the above policy background, the development is minor in nature. It meets a genuine need for development in the green belt which is locationally specific to this site – it cannot be located in an

area outside of the green belt because it is intrinsically and locationally linked to the provision of EV charging facilities in the service area. Located immediately adjacent to the existing equipment cabinet, the development has been carefully designed to minimise the impact on the openness of the green belt.

The development would constitute 'not-inappropriate' development, in accordance with paragraph 154(h)(iii) of the NPPF in that it is local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a green belt location. Since the development is not inappropriate, it is not necessary to demonstrate very special circumstances. However, even if the demonstration of very special circumstances was required, this could clearly be achieved in that the substation is essential for the provision of EV charging facilities, necessary to support the transition to electric vehicle adoption being promoted by successive governments.

Biodiversity

The development affects an area well below the new national statutory BNG threshold of 0.2ha. As such, it is not subject to any statutory biodiversity net gain. We recognise, however, that Policy G7 of the Rochdale Core Strategy states that no development should result in a net loss of biodiversity or geodiversity interest in the borough and overall development in the borough should result in a net gain.

The proposed development removes a small section of an existing grassed area. Taken by itself, the small section required to facilitate the installation of the substation and equipment cabinet has very limited biodiversity value. Any grassed areas required to be dug for the installation of cables will be reinstated as grass, post development. Whilst no specific landscape or ecological enhancement features are included within the scheme, it is entirely relevant to consider that development helps to facilitate the transition to electric vehicles. The increased availability of EV charging infrastructure supports the transition towards lower-emission vehicles and has the potential to contribute to improved air quality over time. In turn, this will lead to improved air quality which, naturally, will have a positive impact on the health of all living things. To that end, there is an indirect positive for biodiversity.

Application Submission

The application comprises the following documents:

- Completed planning application form and certificates
- Planning Statement (this letter)
- Application Drawings:
 - Location Plan (dwg no. 26080_01)
 - Existing Block Plan (dwg no. 26080_02)
 - Proposed Block Plan (dwg no. 26080_03)
 - Elevations as Existing (dwg no. 26080_04)
 - Elevations as Proposed (dwg no. 26080_05)

The application fee of £309 has been paid to the local planning authority via the Planning Portal.

Conclusions

The proposed substation and SCADA cabinet comprise essential infrastructure required to facilitate the continued expansion of the existing EV charging hub at Birch Westbound Services. The development would support sustainable transport objectives and contribute towards the transition to lower-emission vehicles, consistent with the aims of the NPPF, Places for Everyone Policy JP-S1 and Rochdale Core Strategy Policy T2.

The proposal is modest in scale, located adjacent to existing EV charging infrastructure within an established motorway service area and would not materially harm either the openness or purposes of the Green Belt. Furthermore, the principle of comparable electrical infrastructure has already been accepted by the Council on the site. Given its functional necessity, limited visual impact and acceptable

environmental effects, the proposal accords with the development plan and should be granted planning permission.

Yours faithfully
For ALDER KING LLP

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'G. Morris', with a stylized, flowing script.

GARY MORRIS
Partner

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