

The battery site: what the Council's own advice says

Xlinks describes the Nexus 1 energy storage system to residents by its capacity, 1.8 gigawatts for eight hours, and its role in storing renewable electricity. Before residents heard of it, Xlinks had asked Torridge District Council for its view. The Council's pre-application advice of 6 November 2025, since released under the Environmental Information Regulations, sets out what its own planning officers made of the site. This sheet reports what it says, in the Council's words.

1. What is actually proposed

The Council's letter records the scheme as described in the applicant's own engineering document:

- **39 hectares** (about 96 acres) of agricultural land between Higher Darracott Farm and Knockworthy Bottom, west of Huntshaw Wood and south of Huntshaw.
- Containerised battery units, each **13.7 metres long and 3.4 metres high**, with the site plan showing that "most of the site would be covered by the containerised battery units." Xlinks has since told the Group the full site would hold **1,720 battery and inverter containers**.
- A 400kV substation with a switchgear hall of around **2,250 square metres** and a maximum height of around **13.5 metres**, six 400MVA supergrid transformers, a control building and other buildings.
- Around **3.5 kilometres of underground cable** to reach Alverdiscott substation.
- The applicant's own documents call it "one of the largest BESS developments globally." It would need **up to 20 employees**.

2. The Council questions the choice of site

The Council's central concern is that this is the wrong place for a standalone battery:

- On the 3.5 kilometres of cabling: "the effects are clearly avoidable, because a stand-alone project of this nature could be sited closer to the Grid, and this would remove the need for any underground cabling."
- On the elevated position: "there are likely to be less prominent sites throughout the district which could accommodate the project."
- On its own past decisions: "the Council's Plans Committee has previously refused BESS developments which were less prominent, less harmful, and closer to the grid when considered solely in isolation."
- The Council requires a sequential site assessment showing "a careful and robust approach has been taken towards site selection beyond land ownership," and a full agricultural land classification report.
- It also notes that "significant works to Alverdiscott Substation are required to facilitate a connection," which "appears to be key to the viability of the project overall."

3. Landscape: "unnatural and incongruous"

The Council's landscape assessment values this area for its Culm grassland, small fields enclosed by Devon banks, isolated farmsteads and "high levels of tranquillity and remoteness." Having visited the site, its officers wrote:

- "The development would represent an unnatural and incongruous feature in the local landscape, and result in a significant impact to the wider rural setting of the area, affecting its tranquillity and other special qualities to all users that encounter the site or are within proximity to it."
- Parts of the site "would be highly visible from longer distances," with views from Monkleigh, Huntshaw and Frithelstockstone and the surrounding countryside.
- The layout "aims to use the entire site" for battery equipment, which "leaves little room for the landscaping required." The battery units "are likely to appear as alien in this landscape, particularly given the scale and amount of battery units proposed."

Key point: The Council's own conclusion, before any application has been made, is that it "would have potential significant concerns as it stands," given the site's distance from the grid and its elevated position, and that the benefits are "likely to be more nuanced, with less specific and direct benefits for the local area to weigh against the noted harms."

Sources: Torridge District Council pre-application advice, Battery Energy Storage System (ref FPEM/0587/2025, 6 November 2025), released by Torridge District Council under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (ref #11154, response dated 18 August 2026); Xlinks letter to the Action Group, 10 August 2026 (1,720 containers). Pre-application advice is not a formal decision of the Council and its weight declines over time.