

Greater Geelong Planning Scheme

Amendment C466ggee

Explanatory Report

Overview

The amendment applies a Specific Controls Overlay (SCO) to the subject site to facilitate the *'Little River Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) Incorporated Document, March 2025'* that allows the subdivision of land, use and development of land for utility installation (battery) and native vegetation removal.

Where you may inspect this amendment

The amendment can be inspected free of charge at the City of Greater Geelong website at www.geelongaustralia.com.au.

And/or

The amendment is available for public inspection, free of charge, during office hours at the following places:

City of Greater Geelong, 137-149 Mercer Street, Geelong

The amendment can also be inspected free of charge at the Department of Transport and Planning website at <http://www.planning.vic.gov.au/public-inspection> or by contacting the office on 1800 789 386 to arrange a time to view the amendment documentation.

Details of the amendment

Who is the planning authority?

This amendment has been prepared by the Minister for Planning who is the planning authority for this amendment.

The amendment has been made at the request of ACEnergy Pty Ltd.

Land affected by the amendment

The amendment applies to the land at 405-455 Sandy Creek Road, Little River, formally identified as Parish 59 of Lara.



What the amendment does

The amendment applies a Specific Controls Overlay (SCO) to the land at 405-455 Sandy Creek Road, Little River (specifically, Parish 59 of Lara) and introduces an incorporated document into the Greater Geelong Planning Scheme.

The incorporated document titled '*Little River Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) Incorporated Document, March 2025*' facilitates the use and development of land for utility installation (battery), subdivision of land and native vegetation removal.

Specifically, the amendment makes the following changes to the Greater Geelong Planning Scheme:

- Amend the Schedule to Clause 45.12 Specific Controls Overlay (SCO) to introduce SCO17 and the incorporated document titled *Little River Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) Incorporated Document, March 2025*.
- Amend the Schedule to Clause 72.03 – 'What does this Planning Scheme consist of?' to include planning scheme map 7SCO.
- Amend the Schedule to Clause 72.04 – 'Documents Incorporated in this Planning Scheme' to insert the incorporated document titled *Little River Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) Incorporated Document, March 2025*.
- Amend Planning Scheme Map No.07 SCO to insert SCO17 to the subject land.

Strategic assessment of the amendment

Why is the amendment required?

Amendment C466ggee is required to facilitate the use and development of the Little

River BESS development. The proposal could not be considered under a planning permit application pathway because the proposed subdivision creates a lot less than the 80-hectare minimum lot size. All other elements of the proposal are permissible under the Greater Geelong Planning Scheme.

The Incorporated Document '*Little River Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) Incorporated Document, March 2025*' will allow the use and development of land for utility installation (battery) and subdivision, subject to conditions.

The amendment will assist in the long-term stabilisation of the electricity network and the transition to renewable energy in Victoria.

How does the amendment implement the objectives of planning in Victoria?

The amendment implements the objectives of planning in Victoria as set out in section 4(1) and 12(1) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (P&E Act) in the following ways:

- to provide for the fair, orderly, economic and sustainable use and development of land;
- to balance the present and future interests of all Victorians;
- to implement the objectives of planning in Victoria;
- to provide sound, strategic, and co-ordinated planning of the use and development of land.

The amendment will provide for the fair, orderly, economic and sustainable use and development of the land by facilitating the use and development of the Little River BESS facility. The amendment will enable approvals of the facility to be coordinated at a State level by the Minister for Planning. The project will make a contribution to Victoria's energy storage targets whilst also providing the economic benefits of jobs both in the construction and operation of the facility.

How does the amendment address any environmental, social and economic effects?

The amendment will have a net community benefit to the State of Victoria and constitutes an important project that will also have significant economic, social and environmental benefits for the local region.

Economic and Social Effects

The amendment supports a project that will provide significant benefits to the electricity network by supplying local customers with electricity at peak times, increase the capacity for the connection of renewable sources of electricity and help to reduce transmission loss in the network during low-demand periods. By storing electricity during low demand times and discharging during high demand times, the BESS reduces wastage, increases security of supply and avoid blackouts on periods of very high demand.

The project has also been identified as helping alleviate network constraints in the Keilor-Deer-Park-Geelong 220kV Transmissions Lines, potentially reducing the need for augmentation of the network, further supporting reduction in electricity prices.

The BESS will also provide employment opportunities, both during the construction and operation period. Significant economic and social benefits for Geelong, the wider G21 Region and the state of Victoria will be achieved by the project.

Environmental Effects

The amendment supports a project that plays an important role in facilitating additional renewable energy connections to the grid and will have flow-on benefits, including a reduction to carbon emissions and providing a reliable electricity supply to businesses and homes. In particular, this proposal will help to achieve Victoria's storage targets of at least 2.6 GW of energy storage capacity by 2030 and at least 6.3 GW by 2035. Removal of native vegetation as part of this project is minimal and will be appropriately offset. The facility has been designed to include visual landscape buffers to ensure amenity impacts on the surrounding area are minimised.

Does the amendment address relevant bushfire risk?

The amendment applies to a site entirely within a Bushfire Prone Area and partially located within the Bushfire Management Overlay.

A Bushfire Assessment has been prepared and accompanies this proposed Planning Scheme Amendment.

The BESS facility has been designed in accordance with the CFA Design Guidelines and Model Requirements for Renewable Energy Installations to minimise bushfire risk.

The CFA has been consulted in relation to this proposal and provided conditions which have been included in the incorporated document to address bushfire risk.

Does the amendment comply with the requirements of any other Minister's Direction applicable to the amendment?

Ministerial Direction on the Form and Content of Planning Schemes

The proposed amendment is consistent with the Ministerial Direction on the Form and Content of Planning Schemes under section 7(5) of the P&E Act.

Ministerial Direction No.11 Strategic Assessment of Amendments

The amendment complies with Ministerial Direction No. 11: (Strategic Assessment of Amendments) under section 12 of the P&E Act.

The explanatory report provides a comprehensive strategic evaluation of the amendment and the outcomes it produces.

Ministerial Direction No.15 The Planning Scheme Amendment process

The proposed amendment has been prepared having regard to the Ministerial Direction No. 11 – Strategic Assessment of Amendments and Planning Practice

Note 46: Strategic Assessment Guidelines for Planning Scheme Amendment.

How does the amendment support or implement the Planning Policy Framework and any adopted State policy?

This amendment is consistent with and gives effect to the following provisions of the Planning Policy Framework:

Clause 12 (Environment and Landscape Values)

The amendment supports a project that has been sited to ensure native vegetation and the site's biodiversity will not be impacted. *Clause 12.01-1L Protection of biodiversity*, *Clause 12.01-2S Native Vegetation Management* and *Clause 12.01-2S Landscapes* are relevant planning policies that the proposal has sought to address. In line with *Clause 12.03 Water Bodies and Wetlands* the proposed BESS units and inverters have been set back a minimum of 50 metres from the water corridor that abuts the western boundary to mitigate flood risk to the site and avoid altering water flows further downstream to Hovell Creek.

The amendment supports a project that will not have a significant adverse impact upon the natural beauty and rural scenic quality of the area. The proposed landscaping is likely to improve the rural and natural features of the site and surrounds, noting that the site is currently cleared of most vegetation and immediately abutting the northern and eastern boundaries of the site are a landfill and quarry.

Clause 13 (Environmental Risks and Amenity)

The amendment supports a project that has been designed to ensure that the objectives of *Clause 13.05-1S* regarding the control of noise effects on sensitive land uses are met. Consideration of potential noise impacts relative to the Noise Assessment Criteria defined within the framework of the *Environmental Protection Act 2017* addresses the requirements of the planning scheme.

The amendment will ensure that an appropriate balance is achieved between safeguarding community amenity while facilitating appropriate development that will provide a net community benefit, in accordance with *Clause 13.07-1S Land use compatibility*.

Clause 14 (Natural Resource Management)

The amendment supports a project that has been designed in accordance with *Clauses 14.01-1S Protection of agricultural land* and *Clause 14.01-2S Sustainable agricultural land use*. The subdivision seeks to create a 17.99ha site for the BESS facility, with the remainder of the 93.3ha site being used for ongoing agricultural activity. A BESS facility is compatible with surrounding agricultural uses. It is not considered to detract from the ongoing use, or potential use of nearby land for

agricultural purposes.

The setback of the equipment and buildings from the waterway, existing transmission lines and planting of additional landscaping around the facility will also ensure the proposal will not result in unreasonable impacts on the natural environment and water course.

The BESS facility will be decommissioned once the life span of the batteries and site operations has ceased and agricultural practices can resume on the former development area (Lot 1) and the lot potentially amalgamated with Lot 2 once again. The decommissioning of the site and rehabilitation of the land for agriculture use is a condition of the Incorporated Document.

Clause 19 (Infrastructure)

The amendment supports a project which will enable the connection of more sustainable energy sources to the electricity grid and provide a valuable resource to augment power supplies when Victoria's electricity supply is at peak demand, in accordance with *Clause 19.1-1S Energy supply* and *Clause 19.01-2S Renewable energy*.

How does the amendment support or implement the Local Planning Policy Framework, and specifically the Municipal Strategic Statement?

As discussed throughout this report, the amendment supports the relevant local planning policy and the Municipal Planning Strategy at Clause 2.0 by supporting local job opportunities and the development of sustainable infrastructure.

How does the amendment support or implement the Municipal Planning Strategy?

The amendment is supporting a project that is consistent with strategic directions set out in Clause 02.03 of the Greater Geelong Planning Scheme, including:

- Protecting indigenous species and biodiversity of land, including natural waterways and the rural landscape in accordance with *Clause 02.03-2 Environmental and Landscape Values*.
- Minimising bush fire risk by adopting a range of mitigation techniques, including fire suppression systems, buffers and water storage in accordance with *Clause 02.03-3 Environmental risks and amenity*.
- Facilitating a project that expects to create up to 55 construction jobs and approximately 5 ongoing operation and maintenance jobs with flow on economic effects onto Lara Township and boarder Greater Geelong region, in accordance with *Clause 02.03-7 Economic development*.

Does the amendment make proper use of the Victoria Planning

Provisions?

The amendment makes proper use of the Victoria Planning Provisions by applying the Specific Controls Overlay which is the appropriate tool to identify land subject to specific controls designed to achieve a particular land use and development outcome through an Incorporated Document.

How does the amendment address the views of any relevant agency?

Between 7 August 2024 and 28 September 2024, consultation under 20(5) of the P&E Act was carried out to owners and occupiers of adjoining land, community interest groups, and relevant government agencies, including Geelong City Council, AusNet, Country Fire Authority (CFA), Corangamite Catchment Management Authority, WorkSafe, EnergySafe Victoria, Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, Powercor and First Peoples - State Relations.

Country Fire Authority (CFA), Corangamite Catchment Management Authority, and First Peoples - State Relations provided submissions of conditional support for the proposal. The views of potentially affected parties are considered known and adequately addressed through conditions of the incorporated document.

Does the amendment address relevant requirements of the Transport Integration Act 2010?

There are no significant impacts on the transport network as a consequence of the amendment.

Resource and administrative costs

What impact will the new planning provisions have on the resource and administrative costs of the responsible authority?

The Minister for Planning is the responsible authority for approvals required under the incorporated document except where City of Greater Geelong is expressly required to endorse, approve or done to the satisfaction of council.

It is anticipated that the amendment will not have a significant impact on the administrative costs or resources of the responsible authority by introducing streamlined planning controls for the site.