

ACS Submission: Solar on car parks and electric vehicle charging

The Association of Convenience Stores (ACS) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Consultation on Solar on car parks and electric vehicle charging. ACS represents a wide range of petrol forecourt operators, including Motor Fuel Group, Rontec, BP, Shell and thousands of independent retailers.

We value the opportunity to share our members views, particularly in relation to Section 2 of the consultation, which focuses on EV charging. Our members broadly support measures that introduce greater flexibility and planning freedoms to help businesses in our sector play a more active role in the UK's transition to electric vehicles.

Q: Are the current planning rules, included planned changes, around charging on private land appropriate? Are there further potential changes that could be made to the planning system in relation to EV charging installations and the associated site in residential and commercial settings, including listed buildings? What evidence can you provide that would support this position?

Q: Are the current and planned planning rules around equipment, housing and energy storage systems (i.e. batteries), and the use of solar appropriate? Are there further changes to the planning system that could accelerate the installation of energy storage systems to support chargepoint installations? What evidence can you provide that would support this position?

Discussions with our members indicate general satisfaction with current planning rules and systems. For fuel retailers to fully support the transition to zero emission vehicles (ZEVs) and UK's Net Zero ambitions, it is key that planning policies enable the rapid and efficient deployment of EV charging infrastructure and continues to evolve in line with technological developments and market needs.

ACS welcomes recent changes to permitted development rights (PDRs) which help streamline planning processes, reduce administrative burdens, and accelerate business growth and infrastructure rollout.

We encourage government and local planning authorities to continue working in close consultation with industry to ensure planning frameworks remain flexible, responsive, and fit for purpose. Continued collaboration and clarity in planning policy will be essential to empowering fuel retailers to invest confidently and contribute meaningfully to the UK's low-carbon future.

Q: Overall, and having regard to the contents of this call for evidence are there any other comments you wish to include in the role of highways permitting and licencing or national planning policy / guidance in better planning for and delivering electric vehicle charging infrastructure? What evidence can you provide to support this position?

In addition to planning reforms, it is equally critical that retailers can connect EV chargers to the electricity grid promptly. Grid connection delays remain a key barrier to progress, and addressing this issue must go hand in hand with improvements to planning policy.

ACS supports the government's ambition to expand EV charging infrastructure and appreciates the efforts to simplify planning processes to facilitate this. Our members are committed to playing a key role in the UK's journey to Net Zero and are ready to invest in the infrastructure required.

We look forward to continued engagement with the Department on these important issues, please contact Alexandra.margetts@acs.org.uk for any further information on this submission.