

# Electric battery firm AESC submits plans for third gigafactory in Sunderland

Electric battery firm AESC has submitted plans for a third electric battery gigafactory in Sunderland, as construction gains momentum on its second plant.

The Japanese tech company – Nissan’s battery partner – started the year with a £200m loan from the UK Infrastructure Bank to support the current development of its new 15.8GWh gigafactory. It has already spent 12 years on Wearside, producing batteries for vehicles rolling off the production line at the neighbouring motor manufacturer.

Now the company says it has submitted a planning application for a third gigafactory at its Washington site, as part of a strategic feasibility study into the potential expansion of its UK operations. The submission is for an additional 12GWh plant, marking the latest stage of a study announced last year into increasing capacity to meet rising demand for its batteries.

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AESC said it has been working closely with Sunderland City Council and other local stakeholders on the application, which outlines proposals for the third plant alongside an office block and additional manufacturing space. It said work on the feasibility study into ramping up its UK operations will continue while it awaits the result of the planning application.

Derek Benfield, VP manufacturing and supply chain at AESC UK said: “The planning application for plant 3 is the latest

stage of our feasibility study into expanding our UK operations. AESC's track record of quality and commitment to safety has helped make us a leader in high performance electric vehicle batteries."

The global business opened the first electric vehicle battery gigafactory in Europe when production started on its 1.8GWh in 2012. The £450m second UK plant, meanwhile, is now under construction and will have an installed capacity of 15GWh once up and running, while also creating hundreds of new jobs to add to its existing workforce of 470 employees.

The second plant will be the equivalent of 23 football pitches and will use 14,000 km of mains cables – enough to stretch to the AESC head office in Japan – and will create and support more than 1,000 jobs once operational.

Moves to create a third plant come five months after Nissan affirmed its commitment to EV production in the North East with the plant producing its new electric Qashqai and Juke models – a project is said would also see the construction of a new gigafactory to produce batteries for the vehicles, all of which will be powered by renewable energy.

As part of the announcement, AESC confirmed it was collaborating with Nissan in the development of its electric vehicle platforms, initiating the feasibility study to explore potential further gigafactory investments in the UK.