



Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

Miss Georgia-Rose Shepperd
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Our ref: 12.04.09.05-1550u
Your ref: ETG127

10 June 2022.

Dear Miss Shepperd,

**SCREENING DECISION BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE UNDER THE
ELECTRICITY WORKS (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT)
(ENGLAND AND WALES) REGULATIONS 2017 (“THE 2017
REGULATIONS”)**

NAME OF SCHEME: ETG127 – Watermead

A screening decision is required for a proposed development for the like for like replacement for one HV pole and Pole Mounted Transformer (PMT) and one new span of high voltage overhead line (OHL) with a voltage of 11kv, at, and in the vicinity of, Spelsbury Road, Charlbury, West Oxfordshire, OX7 3LR (the “proposed works”)

The proposed works require Section 37 consent under the Electricity Act 1989 and are subject to the 2017 Regulations.

The Secretary of State has considered the factors set out in Schedule 3 of the 2017 Regulations, together with the information supplied by Dalcour Maclaren Limited, on behalf of Southern Electric Power Distribution Plc (“the Applicant”) in relation to the impacts on the environment of the proposed works and the views of the West Oxfordshire District Council (“the LPA”). In particular, in reaching his decision the Secretary of State notes the following factors:

- The proposed works do not fall within Schedule 1 (mandatory EIA);
- The proposed works fall under Schedule 2 of the 2017 Regulations as the electricity line is to be installed above ground in a sensitive area;



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- The Secretary of State notes that proposed works are within the Cotswolds Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) However, due to the minor changes to the the existing overhead electricity line, the application does not suggest that there will be any adverse effects to the landscape elements and character of the AONB and the LPA did not raise any concerns.
- However, the Secretary of State informed the applicant on 30 May 2022, that Annex A of the Form b was not included with the LPA's original Form b reply. The Secretary of State notes that the applicant went back to the LPA and a completed Annex A was returned to the Secretary of State on 1 June 2022; the LPA stated in Annex A that in their opinion the proposed works did not constitute an EIA.
- The applicant sought the views of Natural England, who in their reply, dated 27 October 2021, raised no concerns but advised the applicant to seek the views of the Cotswolds Conservation Board (CCB) due to the fact the proposed works were in the Cotswolds AONB. The views of the CCB were sent to the Secretary of State on 8 June 2022.
- The CCB made the following observations:
 - As the statutory undertaker, Southern Electric Power Distribution has a statutory duty under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to have regard to the purpose of the designation of the Cotswolds AONB (i.e. conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB) As such, following best practice relating to this 'duty of regard', we would advise that Southern Electric Power Distribution, when considering this request, has regard to the potential impacts of the scheme on the natural beauty of the AONB and how any adverse impacts would be: (i) avoided; and (ii) mitigated.
 - A key consideration would be whether the new infrastructure would be more visually intrusive than the current infrastructure. This should include consideration of views from: Public rights of way including local footpaths such as 156/7/10 which runs to the east, 156/6/10 to the south and 156/5/10 to the north.
 - Consideration should also be given to the Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment and the Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines, particularly with regards to Landscape Character Type (LCT) 16, in this instance section 16.5.
 - The Board would also ask whether consideration could be given to undergrounding at least some of the infrastructure.



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- In their response to these points, the applicant stated the following:
 - We do not believe that the new apparatus will be any more visually intrusive due to the installation being an additional span of 150m on existing 2 phase apparatus.
 - Regarding the Board's query on undergrounding of existing OHL, we believe this would not be practical for the following reasons:
 - The plant and disturbance to the environment involved in removing the OHL and excavating trenches in arable land within the AONB.
 - Greater disturbance to local residents and wildlife and natural beauty.
 - Affected landowners have raised no objection the additional span proposal and have willingly entered into the appropriate legal consents for its installation.
 - The works are privately funded by a local resident and would become significantly more expensive and prolonged to the individual by undergrounding.
 - We perceive very low impact on natural beauty caused by the addition of one extra span.
- The Secretary of State has considered these points and is content with the replies provided by the applicant.
- In regard to any archaeological issues, Oxfordshire County Council's Planning Archaeologist, in their response dated 5 April 2022, stated that there are no archaeological constraints to this proposed scheme.

Taking account of the abovementioned factors and information received, the Secretary of State concludes that the proposed works are not EIA development under the 2017 Regulations and do not require a statutory EIA as they are unlikely to have significant effects on the environment due to their nature, location and size. A copy of this letter has been sent to the LPA for information.

Yours sincerely,

John McKenna

Head of Network consents.

Energy Infrastructure Planning team.