



Department for
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Our ref: 1617U
Your ref: NATI-26629

04 October 2022

Dear Mr Senior

**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: Littlebrook Substation – ZBG13 Replacement Overhead Line

LOCATION: Littlebrook Manor Way, Dartford, Kent, DA1 5PS.

Screening decision for a proposed development (“the proposed Development”) to reconfigure the overhead lines from Tower ZBG13 into a new substation, involving:

- a temporary work area at Tower ZBG13;
- removal of two circuits (approximately 46 metres each) of existing overhead line between Tower ZBG13 and the existing National Grid substation;
- replacement with two circuits of 400 kilovolt of approximately 64 metres and 36 metres of overhead line conductors between ZBG13 and new gantries located entirely within the new substation site; and
- the use of an overhead tractor mounted winch will pull through the existing overhead line conductors and will be used to install the new overhead line, between Tower ZBG13 and the new substation site. Medium sized plant will enter the tower area, including an 11 metres truck-mounted access platform.

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

On 13th November 2019, Dartford Borough Council (the Local Planning Authority “LPA”) granted planning permission under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to National Grid for a new



Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy

400kV substation at the above address (application no. DA/18/01017/ FUL). The new 400kV substation is located directly south of the existing 400kV Littlebrook Substation on a rectangular shaped piece of land. The southern boundary of the site is formed by Rennie Drive and the northern boundary is formed by the existing 400kV GIS substation. The overhead line electricity works for which Section 37 consent is sought are required to connect the new substation to the existing electricity network.

The Secretary of State has considered the factors set out in Schedule 3 of the 2017 Regulations, together with the information within the supplied documentation (“the Application”) by National Grid Electricity Transmission plc (“the Applicant”) in relation to the impacts on the environment of the proposed Development and the views of the LPA. In particular, in reaching his decision the Secretary of State notes the following factors:

1. The proposed Development does not fall within Schedule 1 (mandatory EIA).
2. The proposed Development falls under Schedule 2 of the 2017 Regulations as the electricity line is to be installed above ground with a voltage of 132 kV or more.
3. The proposed Development does not involve works to tower foundations or breaking ground.
4. The proposed Development does not cross any sensitive area as defined under Paragraph 4 of Schedule 2 of the 2017 Regulations, with the nearest statutorily designated site located roughly 1620 metres northeast of the proposed works.
5. Tower ZBG13 is located within a reptile receptor area, which is known to support common lizard and hosts four artificial hibernacula and one log pile. The Applications states that some de-vegetation works may be required within an area of approximately 5 to 10 metres around the tower base. The proposed works are expected to last approximately 2 weeks and are programmed to take place in October 2022.
6. A method statement is provided with the Application which details an Ecological Clerk of Works (“ECoW”) to oversee vegetation clearance. This involves establishing a watching brief and an appropriate scheme of hand searches and checks to avoid significant harm to reptiles. The proposed Development must be carried out in accordance with the method statement.
7. The Ecology Report included with Application (report dated September 2021, ref. 39671-WOOD-XX-XX-RP-OE-0003_S0_P03.1) states that the proposed Development would be completed under an Ecological Method Statement (“EMS”), which will detail the pre-works checks, mitigation measures and good practice to minimise the risk of impacts to species. This includes, for example, the erection of reptile exclusion fencing, the reinstating of any temporarily damaged habitats and the coordination of works where possible to minimise disturbance within the reptile receptor area.
8. Regarding breeding birds, the Ecology Report states that the EMS would include a pre-works check where necessary and general good practice measures to minimise the risk of impacts to breeding birds. Any vegetation clearance should be completed outside the breeding bird season (March – September) where possible. Should this not be possible, vegetation clearance should be preceded by a nesting bird check and be carried out under direct supervision of a suitably qualified ecologist. If evidence of nesting birds is found, an appropriate buffer (dependant on species) would be established, and works within this buffer zone would be delayed until young birds have fledged.
9. The EMS must include, but not be limited to, all mitigation measures identified in the Ecology Report and must be agreed with the LPA prior to commencement of the proposed Development.



Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

10. In light of measures which will be contained within the EMS, the Application states that no significant effect on any ecological features are expected.
11. The Application states that the development site does not contain any known heritage assets of significance and the proposed Development will not have an effect on any designated or non-designated heritage assets.
12. The Application states that the minor change to the overhead lines to connect to the new substation would have no significant impact on the townscape or views given the scale of existing industrial development and the context within which the proposed works would be viewed.
13. The Dartford Borough Council (Form B dated 09 August 2022, ref. 22/00656/SCREEN) consider that the proposed Development is not EIA development. The LPA states that: *“This is a relatively minor scheme that is located within an existing commercial/industrial area and the works proposed are related to consent granted by the LPA for re-location of the sub-station.”*
14. The LPAs agreement to the proposal is not subject to modification or conditions being applied to the consent. However, the LPA states that the advice provided by Kent County Council Biodiversity should be followed. Kent County Council Biodiversity (report dated 20 June 2022) consider that the proposed works are not EIA development, but stated: *“The [reptile] receptor site area **must not** be used as a storage compound”*.
15. The Secretary of State considers that a condition prohibiting the storage of materials/machinery within the reptile receptor area is appropriate, to help avoid direct injury and disturbance impacts on reptiles, which are expected to be present in the area.
16. Natural England was consulted (email dated 22 Jun 2022, ref. 395594) and considered that significant effects on statutorily designated nature conservation sites or landscapes are unlikely.
17. Historic England was consulted (email dated 19 May 2022, ref. s37lettscr/lbrook) and did not raise any concerns.
18. The Application does not suggest there will be any cumulative adverse effects, and the Applicant states that works will be coordinated to minimise disturbance where possible.
19. Overall the Secretary of State is content that the avoidance and mitigation measures committed to by the Applicant and secured with the consent are sufficient, such that there are no likely significant effects on the environment resulting from the proposed Development.

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 Braintree District Council for information.

Francesco Marolda

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Energy Infrastructure Planning