



UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council Offices, London Road, Saffron Walden, Essex CB11 4ER
Telephone (01799) 510510, Fax (01799) 510550
Textphone Users 18001
Email uconnect@uttlesford.gov.uk Website www.uttlesford.gov.uk

Mr J Ellis
Pegasus Group
First Floor
South Wing
Equinox North
Great Park Road
Alondbury
Bristol
BS32 4QL

Date: 20/01/2022

Our Ref: UTT/21/3379/SCO
Your Ref: TB/P20-1300

Please ask for: Chris Tyler on
[REDACTED]

Dear Jack Ellis

EIA Screening Opinion,

Land Near Pelham Substation, Maggots End Road, Manuden

Request for a screening opinion for a proposed solar farm with battery storage.

This letter provided a screening opinion for the above proposal, as required by Regulation 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) regulations 2017 (as amended). The purpose of the screening opinion is to clarify whether the proposal is "EIA development" requiring the submission of an Environmental Impact Assessment.

The assessment of the proposal outline in this letter is also in conjunction of the details set out in the attached Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 Screening Matrix.

It is first necessary to establish whether the proposal is "Schedule 1 development" or "Schedule 2 development". The proposal falls within the description of Schedule 2, paragraph 3(a) Industrial installation for the production of electricity, steam, and hot water (unless in Schedule 1). The proposal exceeds the threshold of 0.5ha as the size of the site exceeds 5ha, however the site is not located in wholly or partly within a sensitive area as defined in the Regulations.

Regulation 6(4) of the Act sets out how a screening request, where relevant, must take into account the criteria set out in Schedule 3 which consider the characteristics of development, the location of the development and the types and characteristics of the potential impacts. Schedule 3 of the Regulation sets out the separate headings and I shall deal with each in turn.

Characteristic of Development

The site consists of approximately 79 hectares of land near Pelham Substation, Maggots End, Bishop's Stortford. A project of this scale would require the use of natural resources, most notably the use of agricultural land and an application for this proposal is of such a scale that Natural England would likely need to be consulted, specifically on the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land.

In regards to the location of the site and the current use of the land, the proposal is likely to result in may not result in any significant harm to biodiversity however and the proposal may in fact have the opportunity to have significant net increase in biodiversity net gains and when taking into consideration appropriate mitigation of the proposal.

In terms of cumulative developments, this proposal would need to be considered in relation to existing and approved development taking into consideration the location of the development. Although a number of nearby screening opinions have been submitted to the Council the only current nearby solar farm application currently submitted is UTT/21/3356/FUL and the East Herts application 3/21/2781/FUL which considers a small part of the development outside the Uttlesford District.

The production of waste is unlikely to be significant. Noise, dust and vibrations nuisances are highly probable during the construction phase and during the decommissioning of the development. Some of the impacts can be mitigated by way of a Construction Management Plan, although this hasn't been included in the screening opinion. Noise will be generated as part of the operational phase, but is unlikely to be significant.

The risks of accidents should be low given the nature of the development. The site is not located within or adjacent a high risk flood zone and therefore, subject to appropriate to mitigation measures, should not give rise to increase flooding risks. Nonetheless due to the area coverage of the site a Flood Risk Assessment would need to be submitted together with any planning application.

The risks of accidents is considered to be low, however the risks to human health are required to be considered as part of the screening process. Whilst risks arising from potential pollution or water contamination are likely to be low, the main impact is likely to arise from noise during the operational phase. As noted above, the impact are likely to be low, but nonetheless considered during the assessment of any planning application.

Location of the Development

The site consists of approximately 79 hectares and comprises mainly of a large agricultural fields which provides habitat for certain species of wildlife particularly along margins of the site. A full Ecological Assessment would need to be submitted as part of any planning application.

The impacts of the proposals on these landscape elements will need to be considered as part of the application process, although they are not envisaged to be significant. However, careful consideration of the layout and ensuring appropriate buffer zones to the most sensitive areas should be considered to help provide appropriate mitigation of any potential impacts. It is likely it will be necessary to also provide sufficient information on non-significant impacts on Protected and Priority species and habitats at submission. This is necessary in order that the LPA has certainty of all likely impacts, not just significant ones, from the development and can issue a lawful decision with any mitigation and compensation measures needed to make the development acceptable, secured by condition.

It should be noted that the surrounding the development area there are potentially significant archaeological remains and a Scheduled Ancient Monument in relatively close proximity to the site. The known heritage assets would not in its own right require an EIA, however, it is recommended that an Archaeological Desk Based Assessment is undertaken to support any EIA or outline application. As part of this document there should be a detailed assessment of

the proposed construction technique proposed to be used for the development. The retention of all cables above ground can significantly reduce the heritage impact on below ground deposits for instance. This will clarify the significance of any archaeological deposits affected by the development and inform the planning application.

Built Heritage Assets

The location of the site is in close proximity to some built heritage assets and as such it is considered the proposal are likely to not result in any significant impact to heritage assets (listed buildings).

Aerodrome Safeguarding

In regards to aerodrome safeguarding and the proposal has the potential to conflict aerodrome safeguarding, there are two aspects of concern that will need to be scrutinised:

- The potential for the solar array to create a Glint and Glare hazard to pilots – we will need the developer to supply a Glint and Glare assessment from an aviation (Stansted Airport) perspective.
- Solar arrays are known to be attractive sites for birds. Manchester Airport Group (Stansted) would need to be consulted of the plans and any planning application to ensure that this problem is mitigated.

However due to the location of the development site and distance from airports it is likely that may not be any risk of solar glint or glare however statutory advice during the submission of a planning application would be taken into consideration and could be mitigated through the use of planning conditions.

Types and characteristics of the potential impact

The impacts are predicted to be localised, although cumulative visual impacts could arise from various vantage points within the landscape, in particular from the public rights of way. Although there would be some impact with the use of landscape mitigation this may not significant in terms of EIA impacts. No transboundary effects are envisaged. However nonetheless a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment could be beneficial as part of any application submission.

CONCLUSION:

Given the location of the proposal and taking into consideration the potential of cumulative impacts arising, it is considered that the proposals would not give rise to significant adverse effects. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Assessment is NOT required to be submitted with the application.

This Screening Opinion is given on the basis of the documents listed in the Screening Opinion request being submitted with the application.

In addition, you should ensure that you submit the documents required to be submitted in line with the Council's Validation Checklists.

Yours Sincerely



Interim Director of Planning

