



Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

By email only: iangrimshaw@tep.uk.com

Mr Ian Grimshaw
National Grid Plc
Genesis Centre
Garrett Field
Birchwood Science Park
Warrington
WA3 7BH

**Department for Business, Energy &
Industrial Strategy**

Level 3, Victoria 1

1 Victoria Street,
London SW1H 0ET

T: +44 (0)300 068 5672

E: francesco.marolda@beis.gov.uk

S37-wayleaves@beis.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/beis

Our ref: 1413U

Your ref: ENO/900000-000002/202219

20 December 2021

Dear Mr Grimshaw

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

SCREENING DECISION BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE.

Thank you for your letter of 8 July 2021 in which you requested a screening decision by the Secretary of State under Regulation 10(1) of the 2017 Regulations on behalf of National Grid Plc (“the Applicant”) for a proposed development to divert 1.9 kilometres of a 275 kilovolt (kV) overhead line, install seven (7) steel lattice pylons with a height of 50 metres and remove the existing line of approximately 1080 metres including four steel lattice pylons at the International Advanced Manufacturing Park (IAMP) site, Sunderland (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 within the supplied documentation (“the Application”) in relation to the impacts on the environment of the proposed works and the views of the Sunderland City Council. 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);



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- The proposed works fall 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;
- The proposed works are to divert and extend an already existing section of overhead line;
- The existing line and the proposed diversion do not cross any sensitive area as defined under Paragraph 4 of Schedule 2 of the 2017 Regulations, nor are there any such areas adjacent or close to the proposed works;
- The proposed works are at 10 kilometres from the closest statutory designated nature conservation sites, the Northumbria Coast Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar and the Durham Coast Special Area of Conservation (SAC), and are not located within the impact risk zones defined by Natural England for these areas, therefore there is no likelihood of impacts arising from the proposed works to these sites;
- Fourteen (14) non-statutory designated Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) are located within 2 kilometres of the proposed works. However any potential effects to these sites and in particular to the closest two, the Usworth Burn proposed LWS and River Don proposed LWS, will be mitigated subject to the implementation of adequate measures as detailed in a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) being submitted to and approved in writing by the Sunderland City Council prior to start of the proposed works. The CEMP will include (but not limited to) all measures identified in the Project Description and Appraisal and Biodiversity Appraisal reports submitted by the Applicant;
- The Application indicates that some sections of hedgerow will be removed, and that one tree was identified with a potential to support roosting bats. However any potential impact to protected species and breeding birds will be mitigated via ground and arial inspections being carried out by a competent ecologist prior to the start of the proposed works. The ecologist shall advise the Applicant on species-specific working method statements (in agreement with the Sunderland City Council) should any evidence of the above species be found;
- The Application further states that a strategy will be agreed with the Sunderland City Council to ensure that a minimum of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) will be achieved in line with Paragraph 174 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Further Natural England has welcomed this commitment in their letter of 1 September 2021, ref. 365674;
- The Application does not suggest there will be any cumulative adverse effects given that the proposal is to divert an existing section of overhead line which will be removed after the proposed works are completed, the new lines and pylons will be of similar size and structure to the existing ones;
- The proposed diversion does not pass through any designated heritage assets. The closest grade II-listed building is 275 metres from route of the new line at its closest point and no harm is anticipated to arise from the proposal to the heritage significance of this building. In addition, the proposed overhead line diversion passes through an area with a moderate potential for postmedieval and modern agricultural remains. The Applicant will be required to agree with the Sunderland City Council an archaeological watching brief programme prior to the works commencing to ensure that any archaeological remains which may be disturbed are appropriately recorded and protected;
- Sunderland City Council have considered the proposal not to be EIA development, subject to the submission by the Applicant of a Drainage Strategy and an updated Flood Risk Assessment which shall be agreed in writing by the Sunderland City Council prior to



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the commencement of the proposed works (Form B dated 12/10/2021, ref. 21/01670/S37);

- Natural England considers that the proposed works will not have significant adverse impacts on statutorily designated nature conservation sites or landscapes and has no objection. Further, based on the considerations set out in Schedule 3 of the 2017 Regulations, Natural England considers the proposal not to be EIA development (letter dated 01 September 2021, ref. 365674);
- The Environment Agency have no outstanding concerns regarding flood risk (email dated 28 October 2021) since reviewing an updated Flood Risk Analysis report (report dated 21 September 2021, ref. 807102-WOOD-XX-XX-RP-OW-00001_S3_P01.2);
- Historic England does not consider the proposed works would result in heritage impacts significant enough in themselves, to classify the proposal as EIA development (letter dated 9 July 2021, ref. PL00483019).

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 Sunderland City Council for information.

Yours sincerely,

Gareth Leigh
Head of Energy Infrastructure Planning