



Department for
Energy Security
& Net Zero

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Our ref: 1994u
Your ref: Fernhurst to Midhurst (Second Line)

05 September 2024

Dear Miss Pain,

**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: FERNHURST TO MIDHURST 33KV (SECOND LINE)

Decision:

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.

Screening decision for a proposed development (“the proposed development”) to:

- Replace two H poles as part of a 33kV 750 metre line



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Secretary of State considerations:

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 Southern Electric Power Distribution (“the Applicant”) in relation to the impacts on the environment of the proposed development and the views of South Downs National Park Authority (“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 in several sensitive areas;
3. The proposed development falls within the Woolbeding and Pound Commons Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), South Downs National Park, and Woolbeding Common.
4. The Applicant consulted with the LPA who had no objection to the development and concluded that an EIA is not required as the proposed development would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment on 5 June 2023 (planning reference: SDNP/23/01668/SCREEN).
5. The Applicant consulted with the County Archaeologist who confirmed in communications on 25 May 2023 that they had no objections to the proposed development “on the basis that the replacement poles will occupy the same footprint as the existing”.
6. The Applicant submitted a method statement and requested for assent from Natural England (NE). On 8 May 2024, NE granted assent to the development from 1 September 2024 to 31 December 2024 (reference: 2204241436NG). The method statement detailed mitigations such as following scheduling works to be carried out in dry weather, installing plant nappies under relevant machinery when stationary to prevent polluting the open waters and canal areas and upon completion the site will be assessed, and an action plan has been agreed with the Sussex Wildlife Trust to restore and reinstate any damaged areas.
7. As the development is in a SSSI, the Secretary of State requested the Applicant to produce an Ecology Survey to explore any possible risk and mitigation to the sensitive area.
8. An Ecology Survey was carried out at the site of the proposed development on 17 July 2024 and the subsequent “Preliminary Ecological Appraisal” was issued on 13 August 2024 by Growing



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Native Ltd (reference: GNP3913). The survey determined the site fell within an important area of Lowland Heathland and identified that the areas around the poles mainly consisted of gorse and bracken, making it a sub-optimal habitat for reptiles, Hazel Dormice and invertebrates. The gorse heathland habitats within the proposed works area have the potential to support nesting birds such as Dartford warbler and Woodlarks, mitigation measures in place to minimise the potential impact on these species are any vegetation clearance to be undertaken outside of nesting bird season and if the clearance is scheduled within the nesting bird season a fingertip search should be conducted by a suitably qualified Ecological Clerk of Works prior.

Yours sincerely,

John McKenna
Head of Network Planning team
Energy Infrastructure Planning Delivery Team