



Department for
Energy Security
& Net Zero

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Our ref: 2012u
Your ref: AM/BALH E2L5 INKPEN COMMON SSSI

18th December 2024

Dear Mr Monk,

**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: AM/BALH E2L5 INKPEN COMMON SSSI

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 (2) 11kV electricity wood poles**



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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 PLC (“the Applicant”) in relation to the impacts on the environment of the proposed development and the views of West Berkshire Council (“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 a sensitive area.
3. The proposed development falls within North Wessex Downs National Landscapes and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zone associated with Inkpen Common SSSI.
4. The Applicant consulted the LPA. The LPA responded on 20 June 2024 advising “the proposed poles would be like-for-like replacements and therefore it is considered the proposal would not be harmful to the rural character, nor natural beauty, of the setting which is within the open countryside. The LPA had no objections to make on the proposed development.
5. The Applicant consulted Natural England (NE) 2 April 2024. NE responded on 30 April 2024, granting assent covering the period 1 September 2024 to 31 October 2024. The Applicant consulted with NE on 23 October 2024 requesting for an extension to 31 March 2024. NE responded via email on 5 November 2024 advising that if the Applicant undertakes the works at the later time with no addition changes to the original plan there will be no further damage or impact to the SSSI. The Secretary of State agrees that an extension to NE's assent will not result in any additional damage or disturbance to the notified features of special interest, and therefore no section 28H extension is necessary.
6. The Applicant consulted the County Archaeologist (CA) on 1 May 2024. The CA responded on 10 May 2024 confirming that there are no known archaeological features located near the proposed development and have no objections. The CA advised that “the area Commons often contain relicts of earlier activity though (Hungerford Common in particular has earthworks from later prehistoric, medieval and Second World War activity) so we generally advise that care should be taken when crossing the land with heavy machinery.”



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7. An Ecological survey was carried out on 13 August 2024 by RSK ADAS Limited. Subsequently, an ADAS Ecological constraints report was issued on 29 August 2024 (reference: 1050155). The survey determined that the woodland area located near the proposed works provided suitable habitat for nesting birds, Hazel Dormouse, bats reptiles, Roman Snail and Badger. The Ecological constraint report outlined mitigations which will be followed by Applicant to minimise the risk of impacts on these species.
8. The proposed development is a minor modification to an existing piece of infrastructure and not likely to have a significant effect on the Natural Landscape.

Yours sincerely,

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