



Department for Energy Security & Net Zero

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Our ref: 2320u
Your ref: JO/CHRI E9L5 Marsh Farm

3rd December 2025

Dear John O'Reilly,

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: JO/CHRI E9L5 Marsh Farm

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:

- The replacement of two wooden electricity poles supporting an 11kV overhead line spanning approximately 113 meters within the Avon Valley SSSI at Marsh Farm.



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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 Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole 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 is located within the Avon Valley (Bickton to Christchurch) SSSI, Ramsar site, Special Protection Area, as well as Registered Common Land and an Impact Risk Zone.
4. The Applicant consulted the LPA, which completed its review and confirmed that the proposed development is not considered EIA development. The LPA advised that, provided the works are undertaken during daytime hours and residents are informed of potential noise disturbance, it has no objections. This advice was issued on 19 August 2025.
5. The Applicant consulted Natural England, which granted unconditional assent on 21 February 2025. The assent is valid from 1 September 2025 to 31 December 2025.
6. The Applicant consulted the County Archaeologist, who responded on 27 February 2025, advising that the limited ground disturbance involved poses no significant archaeological concern.
7. An ADAS Ecological Constraints Report was issued on 30 June 2025 by RSK ASDAS Limited. The survey identified habitats supporting protected species. Reeds, bramble scrub, and willow provide nesting sites for Cetti’s Warbler, a Schedule 1 species recorded on-site and included within the Avon Valley (Bicton–Christchurch) SSSI. Ditches and wet grassland offer suitable conditions for Great Crested Newt, while grassland, ditches, and hedgerows provide habitat for reptiles, particularly Grass Snake. Water Vole are likely present in the River Avon, and wet ditches near P18 (E9L5) and P18 (E10L5) contain grasses suitable for foraging.



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8. At P19 (E9L5), contained a woodpecker hole which may support nesting birds, and surrounding grassland offers winter foraging opportunities, with willow scrub and grassland providing additional nesting potential. P19 was also assessed as PRF-M (potential roost feature for multiple bats). The pole sits within a hedge bank between wetland and adjacent grassland, with vegetation dominated by bracken, abundant bramble, frequent nettle and Yorkshire Fog, and occasional cleavers. East of the pole, White Willow and wetland scrub of birch and willow species occur within the wider area.
9. The proposed development is likely to adversely impact the Ecology of the site in the absence of mitigations. It is therefore recommended that the Applicant follows the recommendations outlined in the Ecological Constraints Report to minimise the risk of impacts on Wildlife and protected species.
10. The Applicant provided a Habitats Regulation Assessment (“the HRA”) which was carried out 17 February 2025, the document provided details on work methods, risks to the protected sites and proposed mitigation measures.
11. Having considered the HRA the Secretary of State considers there may be likely significant effects on a National Site Network site under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. This is due to excavation and vehicle movement causing disturbance to habitats and possible disturbance to species located in/around the proposed site. The Secretary of State has considered whether there could be an Adverse Effect on Integrity of the protected site.
12. The Applicant has provided appropriate mitigations on the HRA advising the works will involve excavating turf and soil in the correct layer order, storing them on ground matting adjacent to the excavation, and reinstating them in reverse order after completion. Excavations will be opened and closed on the same day to prevent wildlife entrapment; no excavation will remain open overnight. The project is expected to take up to two days and will be scheduled outside the bird breeding season (from 1 September 2025). However, if conditions allow for late breeding, an ecologist will visually inspect any vegetation on the access route or near poles before works proceed. If reptiles are encountered, the ecologist's advice will be followed. Works may coincide with overwintering species, but given the short duration, proximity to residential areas, and the extensive surrounding habitat, no significant effects are anticipated. Vehicles will use the designated access route, avoiding major vegetation stands. Non-essential vehicles will park at suitable locations on the site periphery. All machinery will



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be refuelled off-site and equipped with spill kits. No materials will be stored on the SSSI before or after works, except for bog mats. All redundant materials will be removed upon completion.

13. Considering the proposed mitigation, the Secretary of State is satisfied that there will be no Adverse Effect on Integrity of the protected site, and this is beyond all reasonable scientific doubt.
14. 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