



Department for Energy Security & Net Zero

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Our ref: 2322u
Your ref: JO/CHRI E9L5 Town Common North

10th December 2025

Dear Mr 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 Town Common North

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 six electricity poles supporting an 11kV overhead line spanning approximately 893 meters.



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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 Christ 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 Town Common SSSI, Dorset Heathlands RAMSAR, SAC and SPA.
4. The Applicant consulted the LPA, which completed its review and confirmed that the proposed development is not considered an 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 20 February 2025. The assent is valid from 1 September to 28 February 2026 and 1 September 2026 to 28 February 2027.
6. The Applicant consulted the County Archaeologist, who responded on 27 February 2025. The archaeologist advised that the Dorset Historic Environment Record notes cropmarks of former field systems near the pole sites, but these appear relatively modern. Given the limited ground disturbance, the proposed works pose no significant archaeological concerns.
7. An ADAS Ecological Constraints Report was issued on 3 July 2025 by RSK ASDAS Limited. The survey identified heath habitats suitable for Dartford Warbler, Woodlark, Nightjar and Hobby. The site includes areas of bracken, scrub and small patches of woodland, offering potential for Hazel Dormouse nesting. Sandy substrates with scrub and scattered woodland provide habitat for Badger setts.
8. The site Town Common SSSI and Dorset Heathlands SAC supports all six native reptile species; an Adder and a Slow worm were observed during the survey. Heath, scrub and woodland also offer nesting



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opportunities for birds. Rhododendron, an invasive species under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) was present on site.

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 and storing them separately on ground matting adjacent to the excavation. After completion, soils and turf will be reinstated in reverse order. All excavations will be closed the same day; none will remain open overnight.
13. Works will occur outside the bird breeding season, although some breeding birds may persist if weather conditions allow. Vehicles will use the proposed access route, avoiding significant vegetation. Where vegetation cannot be avoided, or near poles, the attending ecologist will conduct visual assessments to ensure no breeding birds are present.
14. All vehicles and machinery will be refuelled off-site and equipped with spill kits. Only essential vehicles will enter designated habitats; support vehicles will park at suitable locations on the site periphery.
15. To protect reptiles, works are planned from mid-October when hibernation is likely. If October weather is unsuitable, works may start in September 2025. Before works begin, the ecologist or ARC representative will visually inspect all access routes and work areas. If reptiles are found, their advice will be followed. Excavations will be opened and closed the same day to prevent animals from becoming trapped.



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16. Lifting operations near trees will be coordinated to avoid damage. All redundant materials will be removed after works. No materials will be stored on the SSSI before or after works, except bog mats as described above.
17. 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.
18. The proposed development is a minor modification to an existing infrastructure and is not likely to have a significant effect on the National Landscape in which it is located.

Yours sincerely,

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