



Department for
Energy Security
& Net Zero

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Our ref: 2417u

Your ref: 105154-111 Standford Hill, Isle of Sheppey –
Sittingbourne Feeder

18 May 2026

Dear Mr Dunn,

**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: HMP Standford Hill – 33kV OHL Upgrade –
Sittingbourne Feeder**

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:

- Refurbish approximately 2,500 metres of existing 33kV overhead line by replacing 19 poles, replacing steelwork and restringing with 200mm AAAC 200mm cable
- The development also includes the installation of underground cabling – while this is not consented under Section 37 of the Electricity Act, it has been considered as part of this EIA screening decision



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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 South Eastern Power Networks PLC (“the Applicant”) in relation to the impacts on the environment of the proposed development and the views of Swale Borough Council (“the LPA”). 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 The Swale Special Protection Area (SPA), Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Ramsar site, and the Medway Estuary & Marshes SPA, SSSI and Ramsar site.
4. The Applicant consulted with the LPA who raised no objection to the proposed development on 2 February 2026.
5. A Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) and Appropriate Assessment were completed on 19 December 2025 by Arcadis UK on behalf of the Applicant and submitted to Natural England (“the HRA”).
6. Natural England concurred with the Applicants Appropriate Assessment and issued assent on 15 January 2026 for the proposed development to be carried out between 1 May 2026 and 31 July 2026 (reference: 2212251340AS).
7. An ecology survey was conducted in February 2024 by Arcadis UK on behalf of the Applicant, and the subsequent “Rapid Ecology Assessment” report was issued in April 2024 (reference: 30191766-ARC-ISHE-RP-EC-83-Isle of Sheppey Constraints Report). The survey identified grassland, cropland and watercourse habitats suitable for nesting birds, reptiles, great crested newt, water vole and otter, as well as more than 100 rabbit burrows and warrens. A number of recommendations to mitigate the limited impacts on protected species and habitats were outlined.
8. Water Vole surveys were conducted in April 2026 by Arcadis UK on behalf of the applicant and the subsequent Water Vole Survey Report Addendum was issued in May 2026 (reference: 30265735-ARC-ISHE-RP-EC-386-Isle of Sheppey Water Vole Survey Report Addendum).



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The surveys identified good habitat suitability for water vole at poles 682582, 682594 and 682595 – water vole are likely to be present in the wider ditch corridor but not within the works area and therefore precautionary working methods and the supervision of an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) will be required.

9. An ecological method statement (EMS) was prepared by Arcadis UK on behalf of the Applicant in May 2026 (reference: 30265735-ARC-ISHE-RP-385-Isle of Sheppey Ecological Method Statement). This outlined the roles and responsibilities of the ECoW as well as the precautionary working methods to be followed in respect of birds, rabbits, reptiles, great crested newts, water vole, otter and other small mammals.
10. Having considered the Rapid Ecology Assessment Report, Water Vole Survey Report Addendum, EMS and 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 the potential impacts on waterbird assemblages, bird species and botanical and invertebrate features due to habitat loss/damage and disturbance of avian fauna. The Secretary of State has considered whether there could be an Adverse Effect on Integrity of the protected site. The risks will be mitigated by:
 - undertaking the works during of bird breeding season to avoid impacts to the wintering and on-passage bird assemblages
 - the relatively short and localised nature of the proposed development – works are anticipated to take a total of 8 weeks to complete
 - all vegetation clearance and tree trimming will be carried out in line with a method statement under the supervision of a suitably qualified ECoW – due to the minor nature of the vegetation clearance required it is likely to rapidly regrow following completion of the proposed development
 - vehicles will follow pre-defined routes within the SPA/SSSI/Ramsar site to avoid habitat damage. The works are to carried out between May – July so it is anticipated that ground conditions will be suitable for vehicles – if ground conditions are soft the route will be accessed on foot to determine the conditions, and if unsuitable for vehicles the site will be accessed by foot only
 - if off-road vehicle access is necessary, the routes will be first walked by the ECoW to ensure to negative effects to ground-nesting birds and their associated habitat



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- all works will be carried out in line with the working methods outlined in the EMS

These mitigations are secured by condition 4 of the associated consent granted under section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989

11. In light of 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

Yours sincerely,

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