



Department for  
Energy Security  
& Net Zero

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Our ref: 2435u  
Your ref: JO/CHRI E10L5/Sopley Common

22 May 2026

Dear Mr 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 E10L5/SOPLEY COMMON**

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 three wooden poles forming part of a 247 metre, 11kV overhead 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 Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole 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 Town Common Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Dorset Heaths Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Dorset Heathlands Special Protected Area (SPA), and Dorset Heathlands Ramsar.
4. The Applicant produced a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) in February 2025 which provided details on the working method, risks to protected sites, and proposed mitigation measures.
5. Natural England (NE) was consulted on the designated sensitive areas and granted unconditional assent for the development for the periods 1 September 2025 and 28 February 2026 and 1 September 2026 and 28 February 2027 (reference: 2102250749JC).
6. An ecology survey was conducted at the site of the proposed development on 16 and 17 April 2025 and the subsequent “Ecological Constraints Report” was issued on 3 July 2025 by ADAS Ltd (reference: BRT69105-1535 (00)). The survey identified that in relation to poles P25, P26 and P28 (E10L5) in Figure 5, the heath habitat is suitable for Dartford Warbler, Woodlark, Nightjar and Hobby. Bracken and scrub, with surrounding woodland, provide suitable conditions for Hazel Dormouse nesting, while sandy substrate with scrub cover and scattered woodland offers potential for badger setts. Heath, scrub, and woodland habitats also provide suitable shelter, foraging and hibernation opportunities for reptiles, and support bird nesting. To mitigate ecological impacts, works should the period March to August



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to prevent disturbance during the main bird breeding season. A Non-Licensed Method Statement (NLMS) covering mitigation for Great Crested Newt, sand lizard, smooth snake, hazel dormouse, badger, and Schedule 1 birds should be implemented and followed throughout works. A method statement should also be prepared setting out appropriate working methods for widespread reptile species and the management of rhododendron.

7. The Applicant consulted with the LPA who had no objection to the development on 22 January 2026 (planning reference: P/25/03806/PDNOT).
8. 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 potential disturbance to bog marshes, heath scrub, coniferous habitats, and breeding birds, as a result of excavations and vehicle movements. 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:
  - scheduling the works outside of the bird breeding season
  - undertaking works from mid-October, when reptiles there is a greater likelihood of reptiles being in hibernation
  - an attending ecologist will carry out a visual assessment of all access routes and work areas prior to the works if works are due to be undertaken in September as a result of poor weather
  - undertaking works during a period of dry weather
  - only vehicles required for the pole replacement will be permitted on the designated habitats, with spill kits readily available in the event of fuel loss
  - all excavations will be opened and closed in the same day to avoid reptiles and mammals getting stuck

These mitigations are secured by condition three of the associated consent granted under Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989.

9. In light of the proposed mitigations, 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.



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Yours sincerely,

John McKenna  
Head of Network Planning team  
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