



Department for
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& Net Zero

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Our ref: 2547u
Your ref: JJ-SAND E5

14 August 2026

Dear Mr Johnson,

**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: JJ-SAND E5

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 six existing 11kV wooden pole structures;
- Remove four existing 11kV wooden pole structures;



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- Re-conductor approximately 570m of existing 11kV overhead line

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 Hart District Council (“the LPA”). In reaching her 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 Castle Bottom to Yateley and Hawley Commons Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Thames Basin Heaths Special Protected Area (SPA).
4. The Applicant consulted with the LPA who had no objection to the development on 17 October 2025 (planning reference: 25/01840/OHL).
5. An ecology survey was conducted at the site of the proposed development on 21 March 2025 and the subsequent “Ecological Constraints Report” was issued on 9 April 2025 by ADAS Ltd (reference: BRT69105-1521 (00)). The survey identified several ecological constraints and sensitivities. Several trees were located in close proximity to poles, with roots that could be affected by excavation works. The site contained three priority habitats listed under UK Biodiversity Conservation Plan, and the invasive non-native plant species variegated yellow archangel was recorded. Two ponds were present within 250m of the site, with suitable terrestrial habitat present for Great Crested Newts. Poles 11679 and 38551A contained woodpecker holes, and were assessed as having PRF-I suitability, while poles 38551, 38552 and 38553 could not be fully assessed for roosting potential. Two disused mammal burrows were identified within 30m of pole 11679. The heathland, woodland and scrub within the site provide sheltering opportunities for hedgehog, badger, reptiles and nesting birds. A number of recommendations to mitigate the limited impacts on protected species and habitats were outlined; these will be followed by the Applicant during the proposed development.
6. Wessex Archaeology produced an Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording in August



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2025, which outlined procedures for identifying, recording, and assessing any archaeological remains encountered during the works.

7. A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) was completed in March 2026 by ADAS Ltd.
8. The Applicant commissioned ADAS Ltd to prepare a Non-licensed Method Statement for Protected Species, dated 20 March 2026, detailing the working practices that will be adopted during the proposed works to minimise the risk of offences being committed in relation to Great Crested Newts, Sand Lizards, Smooth Snakes and other widespread reptiles.
9. Natural England (NE) was consulted regarding the designated sensitive areas and on 22 May 2026 granted unconditional assent to the development from the period between 1 September 2026 and 1 March 2027 (reference: 1305261317MH).
10. Having considered the HRA and Ecological Constraints Report, the Secretary of State is satisfied that there will be no likely significant effects on any National Site Network site under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. This is due to the proposed works taking place outside the main breeding bird season and therefore do not present a risk to breeding birds.

Yours sincerely,

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