



Under:
Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017

SITE: Land North-West of Westhide, Herefordshire,

REF: 211629

DATE: 20/7/2021

DEVELOPMENT: Request for a screening opinion for the installation of ground mounted solar photovoltaic array and potential energy storage system, together with associated infrastructure; security fencing; CCTV; associated cable route and landscaping for a period of up to 30 years.

Part II, Regulation 4: **SCREENING DETERMINATION**

**The Regulations – SI 2017/571
National Planning Practice Guidance**

SCREENING OPINION

It is the opinion of Herefordshire Council as Local Planning Authority that the proposal set out above **is NOT** an EIA development under Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 and the indicative criteria/thresholds in the National Planning Practice Guidance

Therefore an Environmental Statement will NOT be required.

REASONS FOR THE OPINION

The development does not fall within the development type listed in Schedule 1. Whilst the type of development is listed in Schedule 2, 3 (a) and exceeds the threshold in terms of site area, the proposal falls just below the threshold set out in the Planning Practice Guidance and does not fall within a “sensitive area” as set in Regulation 2(1). For the reasons set out below the proposed development as outlined within the submission is not considered to give rise to significant environmental effects on the surrounding environment.

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) through its indicative criteria and thresholds states that for projects for Industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam and hot water significant environmental effect is more likely for installations where the thermal output is more than 50MW. However, it states that small stations using novel forms of generation should be considered carefully and that the main matters to be addressed would be :

- Level of emissions to air,
- Arrangements for the transport of fuel; and
- Any visual impact.

The Local Planning Authority has screened the proposal having regard to this advice while noting the context of the site, the surrounding landscape and the nature of the proposal. The Local Authority has considered whether the proposal is likely to have significant environmental effects on the surrounding environment. The checklist is a useful tool for the purposes of identifying a wide range of environmental receptors which could be affected by proposed development. However, a number of the issues identified within the checklist can be relatively insignificant when adopting a more pragmatic approach.

The site is not considered to be particularly environmentally sensitive and the nature of the environmental effects is not considered to be unusually complex or potentially hazardous. The proposal will incorporate a number of ecological enhancement and biodiversity net gain. In addition the proposal will not cause a permanent loss of agricultural land and will have minimal disturbance to natural resources.

The indicative screening thresholds in the National Planning Practice Guidance advise that EIA is more likely to be required for installations with a thermal output of more than 50 MW, with key considerations listed as level of emissions to air, arrangements for the transport of fuel and any visual impact. The proposed solar park would have a thermal output of 49.9 MW and transport and associated emissions would be limited to the construction and decommissioning phases. The landscape and visual impact as well as the impact on biodiversity will be material to the consideration of the planning application, however these impacts are unlikely to be so significant that they would warrant the preparation of a full EIA.

The proposed development falls within the description contained at paragraph 3 (a) 'Industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam and hot water (unless included in Schedule 1)' of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 and meets the criteria set out in column 2 of the table in that Schedule. However, the Local Planning Authority, having taken into account the criteria set out in Schedule 3 of the 2017 Regulations, is of the opinion that it is unlikely the proposed development in isolation or in combination would result in significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location. The proposed development is not of more than local importance in terms of its environmental and ecological effects and would not result in unusually complex or potentially hazardous environmental effects that cannot be assessed and addressed within the normal validation requirements and determination of the planning application. The development would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location.

Accordingly, on balance and based on the assessment above, the Local Planning Authority has adopted the opinion that the development referred to above for which planning permission is sought is **not** EIA development as defined in the 2017 Regulations. The decision is based on the

information known at the time and selection criteria for screening Schedule 2 development (Schedule 3) Planning Practice Guidance (Environmental Impact Assessment). This decision is given without prejudice to any final determination of the planning application.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive 'K' followed by a horizontal line and a small flourish.

**KELLY GIBBONS
DEVELOPMENT MANAGER**

Date: 21st July 2021