

Subject: EIA Screening request for a proposed Solar PV farm development on land near Beacon House Farm, Wedgwood Lane, Gillow Heath, Stoke-on Trent, ST8 6RQ

Dear Sir/ Madam,

I am writing to request an EIA Screening opinion for a proposed Solar PV farm development on land near Beacon House Farm, Wedgwood Lane, Gillow Heath, Stoke-on Trent, ST8 6RQ as shown on the attached plan, which is sufficient to identify the land to which this screening request relates. The ground is currently used for grazing, is Grade 4 agricultural land and is approximately 9.3 hectares in area.

Development Proposal

The proposal is for the temporary erection of multiple rows of Solar PV arrays similar to those shown in the attached diagram, for a duration of up to 25 years. The approximate maximum installed capacity we are looking to develop would be 4.6MWp though this is subject to detailed design and site layout. The PV arrays will be ground mounted and are not expected to exceed 3m in height.

Site access will be taken via existing field access gates. The proposals will require the installation of a number of inverter cabinets and a power transformer cabin, in order to convert the generated electricity to be compatible with the nearby 3 phase power system.

In order to secure the site, we propose to install a new 2m deer fence with associated access gates within the field boundaries. However, the proposals will allow for the opportunity to graze sheep on the land, if so required by the land owner.

Proposed Planning Application Data

Subject to the feedback received from this communication, it is our intention that a subsequent detailed planning application will be accompanied by the following information and studies:

- Site Location Mapping
 - Planning, Design & Access Statement
 - Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
 - Flood Risk Assessment
 - Consideration of Heritage Issues (indirect impacts on setting)
 - Public Consultation Report
 - Site Specific Layout Plan
 - Sample Elevation details of key components (Solar PV and Fencing)
 - Photomontages
 - Phase 1 Ecology Report

It is considered that the above information would enable the assessment of the application, but we would welcome the opportunity to discuss submission requirements as need be.

On Assessing the Town & County Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England & Wales) Regulations, under Regulation 5, our opinion is that the site's Screening Opinion Checklist would result in the following responses:

- 1) Is this a Schedule 1 Development No
- 2) Is this a Schedule 2 Development Yes
 - a. Is the site in a 'sensitive location' No
 - b. Is any of the applicable threshold or criterion in the table in Schedule 2 met or exceeded Yes

- 3) Would the development site be likely to have significant effects on the environment (nature, size, location) No

Our opinion of the responses for the Schedule 2 conclusions would be:

1) Characteristics of the Development

a. The size of the development - the proposals are for an independently deployed solar farm of up to 9.3 hectares in size. When deployed this will generate approximately 4.1GWh per annum. The panels will stand between 0.6 and 3m off the ground and the site will be secured by a secure deer proof fence, which will be 2m high and set back at least 3m from the existing field boundary/ hedge lines, which will allow access around the site. The site lies outside of the Flood Zone however, a detailed Flood Risk Assessment will still be undertaken and mitigation measures included as necessary.

b. The commutation with other developments – We are not aware of any other solar farms in the close vicinity which would cause a cumulative impact. The planning application will provide visualisations and statements which are not anticipated to be significant due to the height of the panels being restricted to only 3m above ground level (see attached elevation), the relatively flat nature of the site and the resultant benign nature of the development in terms of other potential environmental impacts.

c. The use of natural resources - The development seeks to utilise sunlight, a renewable resource, to generate electricity and therefore assist the UK in meeting its renewable energy objectives. While other natural materials would be involved in the construction works, these are of limited quantities. The site is Grade 4 agricultural land, indicating its suitability in terms of avoiding best and most versatile agricultural land.

d. The production of waste – There would be minimal, if any, waste generated by the operation of the deployment and as such no significant impact would arise.

e. Pollution and noise – Potential nuisance from the development would be limited to some noise, vehicle movement and dust created during the construction phase. The proposal does not require significant earth works and the site will be self-contained. Once in place, the main issue relates to landscape visual impact, which would be assessed / addressed as part of the formal planning application process. It would be normal practise that the potential nuisances through the construction phase would be controlled via planning conditions attached to any subsequent planning permission. As such there would be no significant impacts in terms of pollutions and nuisances.

f. The risk of accidents having in particular regards to substances or technologies – The risk of an accident is considered low, and minimal with regards to environmental impacts.

2) Location of Development

a. The existing land use – The current land use is for agricultural use. During operation, it is intended that sheep will be permitted to graze under the development, in order to manage field growth and therefore will retain an agricultural use.

b. The relative abundance, quality and regenerative capacity of the natural resources in the area – In terms of the proposed development, the natural resource being used is sun light, which for all intents and purposes is limitless. The sheep proofing of the development which permits the final use of PV with grazing pasture, ensures there remains the potential for agricultural use of the land. The proposed development once implemented would deny intensive agricultural uses on the land

thereby allowing it time to regenerate and after the site has been used for the proposed development, it can be returned to its current nature.

c. The absorption capacity of the natural environment – The limited height and configuration of the development, as set out for the use of a solar PV array could easily be absorbed into the area. The effect that the proposals have on the natural environment should not be considered significant, due to its limited visual, pollution and waste impacts as detailed above.

3) Characteristics of the potential impact:

a. Extent of the impact – The site is located within the Green Belt however visual impacts of the proposals will be limited to the immediate area due to the relatively flat landscape, natural vegetation and the proposed inclusion of additional screening around boundaries. It has been noted that Shepherd's Cross designated Scheduled Monument is located approximately 1.2km east of the site and Biddulph Old Hall designated Scheduled Monument is located approximately 1.5km north east of the site. There will be no direct impacts on these assets any visual impacts from the site which are not expected due low level nature of the proposals and existing natural vegetation, would be addressed within the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment which would accompany any subsequent application. As previously stated a detailed Flood Risk Assessment will be undertaken and mitigation measures included as necessary. Any potential impacts during the construction phase can be controlled through planning conditions.

b. The transfrontier nature of the impact – No significant transfrontier impacts are envisaged.

c. The magnitude and complexity of the impact – In terms of magnitude, the relative lack of environmental sensitivity of the immediate surrounding area means that the impacts are likely to be proportionately less significant than in more sensitive areas. In terms of complexity, the principle impacts have been defined above and are not considered as complex in nature and are clearly understandable. These issues would be expected to be addressed in any subsequent planning application.

d. The probability of the impact – Although impacts are likely to arise from the development during construction and operation, it is considered that these will be limited and these are not expected to be significant.

e. The duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact – Although the proposed development is for 25 years, at the end of the operation of the solar panels, site restoration will be relatively simple, with no long term impacts or pollution issues remaining on site. Due to the continued grazing of the land throughout its lifespan and the limited construction involvement in the installation of the development, potential impacts are all reversible.

Our proposed development will not have a significant direct or indirect impact any historic sites and as the land is currently utilised for agricultural purposes, our development will not create any additional impacts on existing wildlife or protected species.

Based on these and the site specific location, we hope you support our view that we will have limited but acceptable visual impact, which should be addressed via the formal Planning Application process and the development is not likely to result in significant impacts in terms of the EIA Regulations, so does not need to be subject to an EIA.

I look forward to receiving the Screening Opinion, and any comments on information required for an application, in due course.

I would appreciate it if you could confirm receipt of this Screening Request. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any queries.

Best Regards,
Vinnie Lynch

Town Planner



TGC House, 10 Duckmoor Rd Ind. Estate, Bristol, BS3 2BJ

Switch: +44 (0) 117 941 7093 Mobile: +44 (0) 7841 206970

www.tgcrenewables.com

TGC Renewables Ltd is a UK registered company no. 07499954

Registered Address: TGC House, 10 Duckmoor Rd Ind. Estate, Bristol, BS3 2BJ