Second Renewable Projekt UG
Ignaz-Stroof-Strasse 8
06749 Bitterfeld-Wolfen
Germany

Date: 15th June 2019

Planning Department
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.
Moorlands House, Stockwell St,
Leek ST13 6HQ

Re: **Proposed Solar Farm at ST15 8SL, Andrew Barnett's land at Bird Grove Farm // New Buildings, Stoke on Trent , East Staffordshire**
Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017 Regulation 5
Request for Screening Opinion

Dear Sir or Madam,

We, Second Solar Project, have been instructed by Gruene Energien Solar GmbH to formally request a Screening Opinion to establish whether (a) an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is required for the above proposed development and if so, (b) what the requirements of such an EIA would be should such a document then accompany a planning application for the above proposal. This request is made under Regulation 5 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017 and is accompanied by a scaled Site Location Plan providing an indication of the scale and siting of the proposed development (land edged red), together with a description of the project detailed below. It should be noted that the area edged red on the accompanying plan is about 202 acres and will be required to accommodate the proposed development. The potential environmental impact of the scheme is also considered below.

The Site

The area subject of this letter consists of a number of agricultural enclosures with a total area of app. 202 acres. In terms of land quality the main area is largely agricultural land and/or improved grassland.
The northern and the southern part of the land in question is gently sloping to the north and the centre part is gently sloping to the south. Each enclosure is defined by a system of mature hedgerows and has no visual impact. The county road runs along its west side.

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In the wider sense, the site is isolated, being accessed only via a private access road and fenced off by hedge rows. The private access road forms part of a public footpath crossing the site from east to west. It will remain open at all time during construction though at times it may need to be temporarily diverted to allow for cables to be laid/dug during the construction process.
The next farm lies approximately 150 m to the land's south, with the nearest larger village then located some 1.3 km to its north - west.

Owing to the isolated nature of the site visual recognition of the solar park wil only be seen from distant view points, eg. from the public highway. Pedestrians using the public right of way will see the solar farm either side of the footpath but this will only be on a temporary basis as pedestrians pass through the site.

There are no 'sensitive sites' as described with the EIA Regulations within or adjacent to the proposed development area.

The Proposal

The proposed development constitutes the installation of a solar farm on the above site with a planned capacity of approximately 49,9 MW. This will include the solar sodules, frame, inverters and grid transfer station.

The solar modules (or photovoltaic panel) will cover approximately 80 hectares of the Site in question. The exact size of each module has yet to be determined and the nature of the modules used will be dependant on and determined by the final site evaluation process.

Each module will be mounted on a simple frame construction made out of steel profiles with a maximum width of approx. 6m, in a similar fashion to that indicated in Figure 1.

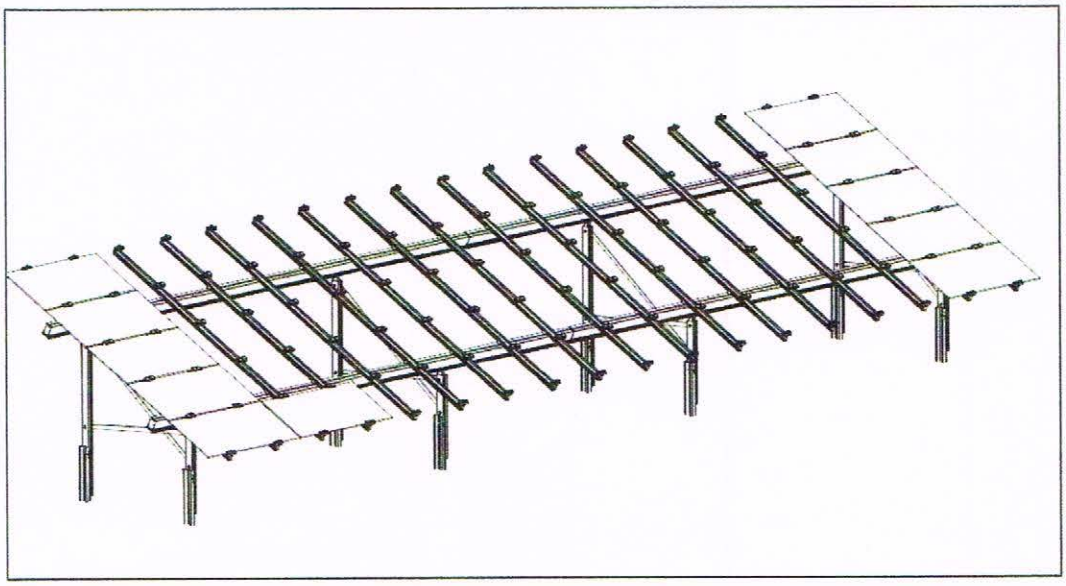


Table design

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Each framework will be fixed to the ground, but the foundation type will be dependant on the nature of the ground. At this point in time it is uncertain as to the type of foundation to be used, but it will be either by means of ramming the uprights to a maximum depth of approx.. 1.8m, using steel profiles. We understand that the bottom of the modules will be approximately 0.8m above ground level, with modules then arranged in rows or arrays, the exact alignment of which is to be confirmed. A space (available for grazing purposes) of about 6,5m in average (2,5-16m – depending on ground slope) will then be between each array to avoid overshadowing on nearby modules. It is estimated that the shadowing angle will be approximately 20°.

All modules will then be linked to junction boxes, which will in turn be linked to inverters and transformer station situated at various locations around the site (location to be confirmed). The solar farm will be linked to WPD 132kV electricity network through a direct connection to the 132 kV overhead cables crossing the proposed site in the north-western corner. A new substation will be constructed next to the overhead lines.
Each enclosure forming part of the site will be fenced-off by a max. 2.5m high security fence to be positioned along the existing hedgerow network to minimise visual impact.

Following installation, the equipment will remain in place for a period of 40 years. After this time, all equipment will be removed from the land and each enclosure will be returned to the same state as found prior to its installation.

Potential Impacts

It is considered that the proposal will have a minimal impact on the environment, whilst also making a positive contribution to both local and national green energy generation targets.

At a site level, unlike other installations similar in size, the proposed development will be split over several separate enclosures, each enclosed by an existing high mature hedgerow network, which can be enhanced as part of any detailed proposals put to the Authority as part of any future planning application. This will then assist in minimising any visual impact, with these natural boundaries representing a strong and robust form of screening. Although some alteration to the land in terms of foundation works and siting of structures will take place during the lifespan of the project, the decommissioning of the site will ensure that there are no long terms impacts, visual or otherwise, on the land to which it relates. We also understand that grazing of the land will continue throughout the project's lifespan, representing an important part of the site's management.

The majority of the enclosures in question have in recent times been the subject of progressive and modern agricultural practices and so like many fields, their ecological value is limited to the hedgerows that enclose it. Combined with the fact that the site neither includes nor is in close proximity to any national or local nature conservation designation, this will ensure that there will be little or no ecological impact as a result of the proposal.

Unlike many areas in Staffordshire, the land in question does not form part of any local (such as a Special Landscape Area) or national landscape designation. The surrounding

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topography and materials proposed to be used in the construction of the proposed development will also ensure that the proposal's visual impact, including glare, will be minimised.

Although the land in question is located within approx. 150m to its next farm in the south, the topography of the land to be developed together with its surrounding hedgerows and planned additional mitigation measures will ensure that the proposal will have a limited if any impact on their amenities. Other than during the period of construction, as with any development, the project will not result in any increase in traffic flow on the local highway network, further ensuring that local residential amenity levels are not harmed.

Finally, we understand that the historic land use of the site does not suggest that there are any issues of ground contamination and flood risk.

Conclusion

The area of the land in question to accommodate the proposed development exceeds 0,5ha and taking into consideration the nature of the proposal, it therefore falls into the category of land that may require an EIA under Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations.

Notwithstanding the above, the site consists of a series of enclosures, as opposed to a single much larger enclosure. This combined with the topography of the site and surrounding area, its distance from large population centres and its exclusion from any national or local landscape designations, ensures that its visual impact in the local and wider sense will be minimal (a view that would be qualified by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment to accompany any forthcoming planning application). The above information also demonstrates that the proposal will have no detrimental impact on local or national ecological designations, residential amenity (including traffic matters) and would not result in increasing ground contamination or flooding risks.

In conclusion therefore, it is considered that as set out in the EIA regulations, the proposed development does not represent an example of where "*... the impact on the environment ...* [in] *... likely to have significant effects on the environment*" and so in our opinion an EIA would not be required to accompany any planning application for the proposal in question.

We trust that the above and enclosed information is clear and enables the Authority to provide an EIA Screening Opinion on the proposal in question. Should this not be the case or if you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me immediately via mail.

Yours sincerely

Marco Pannicke
Director