

Dealt with by: Mr C. Johnston

Our Ref: SMD/2021/0545

Direct Dial: 01538 395400 ext. 4123

Your Ref:

Date: 27th August 2021

Liz Russell
1C Swinegate Court East
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York
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Dear Liz Russell

Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 – Screening opinion.

UPPER LEIGH SOLAR FARM, LAND WEST OF LOWER TEAN

A formal screening opinion has now been undertaken by Staffs Moorlands District Council as required in accordance with the above legislation, under regulation 5 of S.I 2015 No.1824 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2015 for the following development: -

49.9MW Ground Mounted Solar Farm within Staffs Moorlands and East Staffordshire comprising the following:

Strings or rows of solar panels (each panel approximately 1 m x 2 m) mounted on metal frames, likely to be screwed or driven into the ground to a depth of 1-2 m, depending on ground conditions;
Lower edge of panel typically 0.8 m from ground;
Highest point of panel 3 m in height from the ground;
Inverters and transformers, housed in GRP enclosures or containers, typically measuring 7 m x 2.5 m x 3 m;
Substation compound;
2.4 m high perimeter fence/ deer fence;
CCTV cameras located on 3m high poles;
Connection Mast / tower approximately 23 m in height; and
Access tracks – 3.5 m wide (kept to a minimum across the site).

Having considered the details of the proposed development Staffordshire Moorlands Council is of the opinion that the application does not fall within Schedule 1 of the S.I. 2015 No.1824. However, it does fall within Schedule 2 development of S.I. 293, in particular Part 3 (a) industrial installations for the production of electricity and exceeding 0.5 hectares in size, where EIA is not mandatory. Having therefore had regard to the characteristics of the development, its location and potential impact, the Local planning Authority does not consider that the proposal requires an Environmental Impact Assessment for the following reasons.

Physical changes in the locality (topography, land use, changes in water bodies, etc)

Although this is a significant development, the physical changes in the locality are not considered to be significant other than the change to the appearance of the site but this would not be permanent and the impact would be reversible.

Traffic related impacts – Movements and Safety, Noise and Air Quality.

It is not considered that the proposal will be a significant traffic generator with most vehicle movements restricted to very short term construction and decommissioning phases and negligible vehicle movements throughout the much longer operational phase.

The noise and air quality issues associated with traffic generation are considered to be insignificant and for this reason do not necessitate EIA.

Infrastructure

Given the scale of the development, particularly when considered and the lack of any other similar developments proposed in the vicinity, it is not considered that there are any significant impacts on schools, hospitals, transport links and other community infrastructure, which require EIA consideration.

Ecology and Nature Conservation

There is a likelihood of some impacts on habitats for protected species in and around the site but it is considered that these can be adequately addressed through normal protected species surveys and any recommended mitigation and protection measures.

Flood Risk

Part of the site is a flood zone but the impacts can be controlled via careful siting and measures. It is not considered that EIA is warranted on these grounds.

Conclusion

On the basis of the above, it is considered that the proposal is unlikely to have significant effects and an Environmental Impact Assessment will not be required.

The Council has considered other possible impacts and effects of the development including archaeology and architectural/heritage context, contamination, ground and water quality, loss of agricultural land, cumulative impact with other proposals, harmful substances and waste generation, risk of accidents and social changes as well as the visual impact of the proposal. The Council does not consider that these are of such significance as to warrant environmental impact assessment. I have enclosed, for reference, a copy of a screening checklist document which has helped formulate this decision.

Yours Sincerely,

X *B.J. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council