
From: >
Sent: 09 November 2021 08:00
To:
Cc:
Subject: screening
Attachments: EIA_Screening_Matrix Land North of Willow Cottage 5 Nov 21.docx

Ref number SMD/2021/0662

Application Location Land North of Willow Cottage, Sandon Road, Hilderstone, Staffordshire, ST15 8SL

Application description Screening request for proposed Solar Farm

Site size hectares ~ 61.7 (29.5 in SMDC, 32.2 in ESBC)

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust has been asked to review the above application as part of a service level agreement with Staffordshire Moorlands District Council to provide ecology advice regarding planning and development management functions.

SUMMARY – The development is unlikely to require an EIA from an ecological perspective - see attached screening matrix. However, there are ecological considerations that need to be addressed regardless of whether an EIA is required or not.

If an EIA is not required, the following requirements will still apply:

- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of the proposed sites and surrounding habitats where potentially affected, including existing and potential Local Wildlife Sites, irreplaceable and priority habitats.
 - o Any additional phase 2 surveys identified by the initial PEA
 - o Any other requirements identified e.g. species mitigation, compensation
- Species surveys (in addition to any identified during the PEA)
 - o Ground nesting bird surveys.
 - o Great crested newt surveys of ponds.
 - o Otter surveys.
 - o Badger surveys.
 - o Brown hare impacts and enhancements.
- Biodiversity Impact Assessment (BIA) to ensure a net gain is achieved.
- Detailed landscaping plan with habitat enhancements.
- Long-term management plan.
- Tree survey/arboricultural impact survey/adequate Root Protection Areas.
- Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).
- Sustainable drainage plan (if additional drainage is proposed).

Documents reviewed:

- Location plan (1_2500) – North
- Location plan (1_2500) – South
- Screening Opinion

EIA Screening Criteria

The development falls under a Schedule 2 development; 3(a) "Industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam and hot water (unless included in Schedule 1)". It also meets the threshold criteria: "The area of the development exceeds 0.5 hectare."

With regards to potential significant ecological impacts, we feel that the development does not trigger the need for an EIA.

However, there are ecological requirements that will need to be addressed, regardless of whether an EIA is required or not. A full assessment of the ecological impact is needed. A preliminary ecological appraisal (PEA) with phase 1 habitat survey is required. The PEA will need to assess the fields proposed for development, the boundaries of the site, surrounding habitats where possible, any areas where excavations are needed such as for pipework for drainage or wiring, and proposed access. The PEA will identify any further surveys required.

DESIGNATED WILDLIFE SITES

SSSIs

The development falls within the Chartley Moss SSSI impact risk zone. However, the type/size of development does not trigger the need to consult with Natural England.

Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)

Hose Wood SBI is located 80m to the east of northern site.

Newclose Sprink SBI 130m is located to the west of south-western site

The south-west corner of the western most section within 'Location plan – South' is recorded as a 'historic' Local Wildlife Site, when Newclose Sprink was a larger area. This was revised after the latest survey and is not longer designated. However this area of habitat may still be of interest as a priority habitat.

Status and potential impacts need to be assessed, including indirect impacts.

Potential LWS

Any diverse habitats as identified during the PEA should be assessed against LWS criteria.

The moated site grassland located in-between the two southern sites could fall into this category. The survey should assess this habitat and any potential impacts, including indirect impacts.

HABITATS

Irreplaceable habitats- Ancient Woodland and hedgerows

The proposed site within Location Plan – North is within 80m of Hose Wood ancient woodland to the east. The proposed south-western site is 130m from Newclose Sprink ancient woodland.

There are also remnants of woodland within the site boundary itself, which could have potential to be ancient. Most ancient woods under 2 ha are not yet on the national inventory, and it is common to find small remnants near to larger ancient woodlands, especially along watercourses and other hard to farm terrain. All woodlands will need to be assessed within the PEA for potential ancient status using accepted methods such as interrogating old maps, and flora surveys.

Hedgerows within the site also need to be considered and assessed for ancient status using best practice methodology to determine whether they may be irreplaceable and therefore require avoidance.

Priority Habitats

The proposed site within Location Plan – North is adjacent to a traditional orchard to the west, a priority habitat in Staffordshire.

The area within the Location Plan North appears to support contain marshy grassland. This could potentially meet Staffordshire priority habitat status. To be assessed as part of the PEA.

Hedgerows -It is likely that a tree survey/arboricultural impact assessment will be required, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that impacts will be avoided. Root Protection Areas (RPAs) may need to be secured during the construction/installation process.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Policy NE1 in the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan Adopted September 2020, expects that 'all development where possible seeks to deliver a net gain in biodiversity proportionate to the size and scale of the development. In circumstances where adverse impacts are demonstrated to be unavoidable, developers will be required to ensure that impacts are appropriately mitigated, with suitable compensation measures towards loss of habitat used only as a last resort where there is no alternative'

A Biodiversity Impact Assessment (BIA) utilising the latest DEFRA metric will be required to ensure a net gain can be achieved. A baseline utilising the current site status and a sufficiently detailed proposed landscaping plan will be required to calculate this.

Depending on the PEA survey results, there may be opportunities to enhance existing hedgerows and grasslands to increase diversity. Give the size of the site and opportunities to avoid and enhance habitats, a gain should be readily achievable.

A long-term management plan will also be required, covering the life of the development.

Surface drainage, SuDS

Any sustainable drainage should be designed to include wildlife habitat.

SPECIES

Great Crested Newt (GCN)

There are several ponds both within the red line boundaries and within close proximity to the site, therefore great crested newt surveys will be required to assess potential impacts and potential requirements. A GCN record is present within Hose Wood SBI within approximately 300 m of the nearest site boundary.

Otter

Due to a record within 300 m of the site boundary (Southern site), otter surveys may be required to determine possible impacts.

Birds

The size of the fields mean they may be suitable for ground nesting birds such as priority farmland species skylark, lapwing etc. Therefore, a ground nesting bird survey will be required.

Badgers

Due to numerous records within the area and suitable habitat, a badger survey will be required.

Brown Hare

There are records of brown hare within the area, due to this impacts to this species need to be considered. Due to the grassland being retained, potential impacts may be limited. However, densities of grazing animals (if proposed) will need to be low, possibly with areas of grassland reserved for wildlife via fencing.

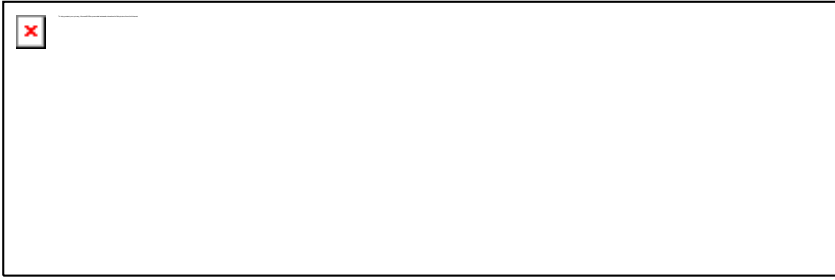
Careful consideration is needed for any boundary treatments to ensure that mammal commuting routes are not severed (e.g. badgers, hare, hedgehogs).

Kate Dewey BSc (Hons) MCIEEM

Senior Planning Officer



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2 Attachments