

19/01/2022
SMD/2021/0691

Jezamine McHale
Project Developer
Anesco

By e-mail

Dear Ms McHale

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

**Screening opinion to determine the requirement for an Environmental Impact
Assessment (EIA) to accompany a planning application,
for a proposed battery storage project
Land off Bemersley Road Brown Edge Staffordshire**

SMD/2021/0691 screening response

In response to your submission dated 27th October 2021 and subsequent correspondence, an EIA screening assessment has been undertaken as requested. Thank you for agreeing to extend the time for this decision to be issued today 19th January 2022.

The proposed development falls within the description of development given at Column 1, Section 3 (a) of Schedule 2 to the 2017 Regulations, namely: Energy industry – industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam and hot water. In cases where such development exceeds 0.5ha in area a screening assessment is required. The proposal site occupies c.2 hectares. On this basis the proposal exceeds the threshold. The proposal is therefore 'Schedule 2 development' within the meaning of the 2017 Regulations and needs to be screened by the LPA to determine whether significant effects on the environment are likely and hence whether Environmental Impact Assessment is required.

In preparing this screening opinion the LPA has had regard to the selection criteria in Schedule 3 of the 2017 Regulations. The LPA has also had regard to the Indicative thresholds and criteria set out in the Government's Planning Practice Guidance. This advises that key issues to consider for this description of development are levels of emission to air; arrangements for the transport of fuel, and any visual impacts. It also refers to an indicative threshold for output of more than 50 MW. It is noted that in this case the anticipated output is given as c.50MW.

The LPA has used the recommended Screening Matrix to prepare this opinion.

Characteristics of the development

The size of this proposal is c. 3 to 4 x the threshold area which may suggest an

EIA could be needed. However there would be no significant emissions to air and the import / export of energy held at the site would be transmitted to and from the grid via new plant installed at the site and it is understood would utilise nearby existing overhead transmission lines.

The main impacts would be to landscape and potentially ecology. The site is a sloping field forming part of the valley side to the infant River Trent. The location is rural and lies within a striking wider green landscape vista which may be viewed for example from Marshes Hill Common SJ 905 548 at Brown Edge and from other intervening and overlooking locations.

It is noted that the proposed apparatus comprising 14 items would typically be between 2.5m and 3.0m in height but would also include a substation to height 5.5m. There would be a “dedicated access track” and security fencing enclosing the site by way of a 2.4m high deer fence, “or similar”, installed around the site.

Overall the visual impact is considered unlikely to lead to significant environmental effects in terms of the EIA Regulations but this is a proposal which will require detailed scrutiny at the planning application stage and visual impact on landscape character and public enjoyment would be a key consideration requiring a comprehensive Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.

There are some nearby heritage assets which could be affected in terms of their setting and this would be subject to assessment as part of any submitted application.

The implication of reduced agricultural production of the land will need to be considered noting that it is recorded Grade 3 ‘good to moderate quality’ but again this would not trigger the EIA requirement.

Ecology of the site is not known and will need to be surveyed and assessed including potential for significant species of ground nesting birds such as Curlew and Lapwing to be present as breeding species. An appropriate standard of biological assessment would be needed to accompany any application. There is a nearby reference in the Staffordshire Heritage Environment Record to an area of earthworks c.200m to the north which may represent the remains of part of a post-medieval water meadow field system. Subject to further appropriate surveys for protected species, breeding birds and general biodiversity impacts it is considered that significant impacts in terms of the EIA Regulations would be unlikely.

The proposal may be found to have a positive environmental benefit in that its core purpose is to facilitate the management of energy distribution.

No cumulative impacts have been identified at this stage.

There will be some traffic and associated noise impact during construction but it would be expected that this can be mitigated/minimised through a Construction and Environmental Management plan and is not considered likely to give rise to significant effects.

Location of the development

The site is not within a Sensitive Area in terms of the Regulations. The site is within open countryside in a rural area of varied topography and vegetation characteristics. It is characterised in the built environment by isolated farmhouses and dwellings. At the same time built settlements are not far distant with the larger Staffordshire Moorlands Village of Brown Edge c.1km to the east. Outlying fringes of the Potteries conurbation come to within c.300m to the SW and the Staffordshire Moorlands town of Biddulph reaches to within c.3km north of the site.

The character of the site will completely change for the lifetime of the development. Although it is reversible the submission indicates a life of 40 years. The matter of visual landscape character impact will be a key consideration in the planning application. It will need to be addressed as part of an appropriate Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. For the purposes of the Regulations however significant effects are considered to unlikely.

Characteristics of the potential impact

The application would need to quantify and define the extent of landscape impacts. There would be no trans-frontier impact. The impacts are specific and judged relatively limited in the EIA assessment context so as not be considered complex. Although the life of the project is given to be 40 years, which would represent a significant proportion of people's lives, the impacts are likely in the main to be readily reversible should the development be brought to an end and removed. Overall, the LPA is of the opinion that any potential impacts would not be of a magnitude to suggest that an environmental statement is required.

Conclusion

For the reasons above it is considered that the development would not be likely to have EIA significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location. The development would not be of more than local importance and would not involve unusually complex and potentially hazardous environmental effects. There would be no significant cumulative effect.

Under regulation 6(9) it is hereby confirmed that in the opinion of the Local Planning Authority the above development is not EIA development in terms of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017.

Yours sincerely,

X *B.J. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

Head of Development Services