

15/03/2022  
SMD/2021/0804

Isabella Marcucci  
Assistant Planner  
Intelligent Alternatives Ltd

By e-mail

Dear Ms Marcucci

**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 at The Fields Farm, Draycott Cross, Cheadle, Staffordshire**

**SMD/2021/0804 screening response**

In response to your submission dated 7<sup>th</sup> December 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 by 17<sup>th</sup> March 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 up to 100MW.

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 (ha) 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, loss of land from agricultural production and potentially ecology. The site is gently sloping in an expansive exposed landscape of cultivated farmland somewhat devoid of traditional farm land features such as hedges and trees. The location is rural and whilst perhaps limited in immediate or near visibility is likely to be visible at medium range and further range. A development of this scale, whilst unlikely to be 'understood' in detail at these medium and far distances, is nevertheless likely to be noticeable as an 'interruption' to the general un-developed rural landscape appearance and at odds with the surroundings the more general prevailing pattern of land use.

It is noted that the proposed apparatus would comprise 85 'containers' 2.44m (w) x 2.9m (h) x 12.2m (l); wire mesh 'paladin' fencing to height 2.4m is proposed along with CCTV camera surveillance system. There would be a "dedicated access track" of 4m width to link with the existing track serving The Fields Farm.

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 ceasing on 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. There are ponds and water habitats in the vicinity and potential impacts for reptiles and amphibians including newts which could include the specially protected Great Crested Newt needs to be considered. An appropriate standard of biological assessment would be needed to accompany any application. 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.

Cumulative impacts may be found with an existing overhead electricity pylon transmission line and a wind turbine.

It is understood that an on-going operational noise impact would be created and this would need to be evaluated in terms of nearby receptors. 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 gently undulating topography. The dominant land use is agriculture.

The character of the site will completely change for the lifetime of the development. Although it is understood to be 'reversible' the submission gives no indicative lifespan for the development. 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 it is not considered that significant effects are likely.

#### 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 to be considered complex. 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Rachael Simpkin". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Rachael" and last name "Simpkin" clearly legible.

Rachael Simpkin  
Senior Planning Officer (Majors & Commercial)  
Development Services

