

Appendix B – EIA Screening Opinion for 2023 Scheme

Delegated Report
North Hertfordshire District Council

**Screening Opinion in accordance with The Town and Country Planning
(Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended)**

**In respect of Land opposite Wymondley Grid Station and to the south of Sperberry
Hill, St Ippolyts, Hertfordshire**

Proposed 25MW solar farm and 12.5MW battery storage facility

This screening opinion relates to the above proposal and is based on information contained within application reference 21/02628/SO together with the supporting documents and information submitted on 7 September 2021.

This report confirms the view of the Local Planning Authority that the proposed development does not fall within Schedule 1 of the EIA Regulations and does not therefore require a mandatory Environmental Statement.

The proposed development falls within Schedule 2 which relates to Section 3(a) 'Industrial Installations for the Production of Electricity' on a site exceeding the threshold of half a hectare. The proposed development exceeds the thresholds by reason of proposing 33.9 hectares of land for the use of solar panels.

This report appraises the characteristics of the site and the proposed development against the criteria in Schedule 3 of the Regulations and against the current Planning Practice Guidance and concludes that the proposed development is not likely to give rise to significant impacts and so would not require a formal Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and an Environmental Statement (ES) to accompany the planning application that has been submitted to the Local Planning Authority.

1. Summary of the proposed development

- 1.1 The proposed development is set out as the provision of a solar farm with associated battery storage affecting 33.9 ha. The site is not designated within the Emerging Local Plan (ELP).
- 1.2 The site is located generally to the south of the A505 and east of the A1, close to St Ippolyts. The proposed development would be located on land at the south of Sperberry Hill and the Wymondley Grid Station. The site comprises a series of arable fields which consist of two main blocks between St Ippolyts village and Redcoats, a group of former agricultural listed buildings.

2. Assessment against Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 of the Regulations

- 2.1 The proposed development does not fall within any of the categories of development set out in Schedule 1 of the Regulations.

- 2.2 The proposed development falls within column 1 of Schedule 2 of the Regulations being categorised as being within section 3(a) which relates to 'Industrial Installations for the Production of Electricity'.
- 2.3 The development exceeds the site area limit of 0.5 hectares in column 2 of Schedule 2 (3(a)) of the EIA Regulations 2017.
- 2.4 The site is not within a 'sensitive area' as defined under Regulation 2 of the EIA regulations. There are no Scheduled Monuments within m of the applications site.
- 2.5 Based on the above, the proposed development represents Schedule 2 development, however this does not automatically mean that the proposal is EIA development. In accordance with the Regulations, a screening exercise must be carried out in order to determine whether an EIA is required, considering the proposals against the selection criteria identified in Schedule 3 of the Regulations.
- 2.6 Regulation 5(4) of the EIA Regulations 2017 outlines that the Local Planning authority must take account the selection criteria set out under Schedule 3 of the regulations when determining whether a Schedule 2 development is an EIA development.

3. Consultation Responses

- 3.1 *Hertfordshire Highways* – No objection in principle but noting the context of the site and type of proposed development, a Transport Statement would be required to demonstrate the suitability of access points from Sperberry Hill and suitability of roads for HGVs or larger vehicles. A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) is also required to support any planning applications. Detailed advice is contained in the attached note from the highway authority. It is also noted that a glint and glare assessment would be included to support any planning application in the context of highway safety. A Section 278 agreement will be required for any new or altered access points.
- 3.2 *Lead Local Flood Authority* – Confirmation that both a FRA and SWDS is required to support any future applications. The site is within Groundwater Source Protection Zone 1 and close to 2 and 3. The expectation given the current greenfield use of the site is that drainage and surface water can be managed in a sustainable manner in accordance with the hierarchy of SuDS techniques. Drainage works may also require drainage consent from HCC as LLFA. The proposed use of the site introduced impermeable surfaces meaning that run off needs to be actively managed. See attached letter for full details.
- 3.3 *Natural England* – Although significance has not been assessed by Natural England, the advice is that there could be '*potential likely significant effects*' on the Chilterns AONB as it has '*potential for adverse effects*'. It is noted that the site is not within or partly within the AONB itself. It is also noted that environmental impacts could relate to priority species, habitats, local wildlife sites, soils, best and most versatile agricultural land, local landscape character, ancient woodland and veteran trees. '*Should you determine that an EIA is not required in this case, you should ensure that the application is supported by sufficient biodiversity, landscape and other environmental information in order for you to assess the weight to give these material considerations when determining the planning application.*'

- 3.4 *Environmental Health* – No objection in relation to air quality. It is noted that battery storage containers, transformer stations and invertors can be noisy and affect residents unless properly attenuated. It is therefore appropriate that noise should be one of the aspects included and subsequently properly assessed for impact.
- 3.5 *Stevenage Borough Council* – No comments.
- 3.6 *Wymondley Parish Council* – No comments.
- 3.7 *St Ippolyts Parish Council* – No comments.
- 3.8 *Historic England* – Not yet received.
- 3.9 *Hertfordshire Minerals and Waste* – Not yet received.
- 3.10 *Archaeology* – Not yet received.
- 3.11 *Hertfordshire Public Health* – Not yet received.

4. Selection Criteria for Screening Schedule 2 Development

Site location and context

- 4.1 The site lies within the Green Belt as allocated by the Saved Local Plan and would remain as such in the ELP. The site is entirely within Flood Zone 1, as identified by the Environment Agency. The site is not susceptible to Surface Water Flooding, as identified at gov.uk 'Flood Map for Planning'. The Chilterns AONB is located about 3.7km to the west. The site is within the impact zone of the closest SSSI, which is about 2km to the west at Wain Wood.
- 4.2 No part of the site is within an Archaeological Area of Significance. There are no further site designations within the site itself. There are 14 statutory listed buildings within a 500m radius of the site. There is a Registered Park and Garden at Temple Dinsley about 1.9km to the south west, and Schedule Monument at Wymondley Priory about 1.8km to the north-east of the site.
- 4.3 The site sits to the south of Sperberry Hill and the Wymondley substation. St Ippolyts village is to the north-west of the site and Redcoats former farm complex to the east. The site generally sits in a pattern of large arable fields around to the east, west and south. The land is classified as half Grade 2 agricultural land and half Grade 3a.
- 4.4 The most northern parts and western parcel of the site is visible from Sperberry Hill looking south, where the land slopes down. There are sporadic hedgerows and trees along all field boundaries and the line of pylons run across the site to the substation which are also highly visible in and around the site. There is some visibility of the site from the lane leading from Sperberry Hill towards The Wyck. There are several public rights of way that cross the site including Hertfordshire Way.
- 4.5 This application does not include details of potential access arrangements, although given the character of the roads it is likely that access would be from Sperberry Hill, or potentially the lane. As there are two distinct parcels of land two access points may be required.

Characteristics of the development

4.6 Schedule 3 states that this should have regard to the following:

a) The size and design of the whole development.

4.7 The size of the proposed solar farm at 33.9 ha, whilst a reasonable land take, is not significant in the scale of solar farms. This is considered reasonable given the scale of arable fields around the application site. The scale of solar farms can vary significantly and is assessed in the context of the area. The planning history for the site is noted where an application in 2016 was refused and dismissed at appeal but related to just the western parcel of land. This application therefore relates to an increased area with the additional larger parcel to the east.

4.8 The proposed built form of the development would be limited in terms of bulk, mass and height due to the type of proposals, although acknowledging that it does change the use and therefore character of the land. The design is utilitarian, and the layout of the structures are uniform and presumably designed to be as efficient as possible. There will be some larger built form in terms of battery storage and associated equipment. The design and location of this is not yet known.

b) Cumulation with other development.

4.9 There is one small existing solar farm site in North Hertfordshire District near Luton. The Council has also received is one other pre-application enquiry and screening opinion regarding a solar farm to the north-east of Great Wymondley, which would also connect to the Wymondley substation. Spatially and visually these two sites are separated by the A602, Little Wymondley, a railway line and open countryside.

4.10 There are no site allocations for solar farms in the saved or emerging Local Plans. This proposal would not increase cumulation of development or result in an over concentration of this use.

c) Use of natural resources

4.11 The use of the land for a solar farm would not alter natural resources on site significantly. The contribution of solar energy to reducing the need or reliance on natural resources is positive.

d) The production of waste

4.12 Construction waste is an inevitability with any development project although the scope of waste from a solar farm would be limited given the existing use of the site and proposed scope of built form to be introduced. Waste production is not expected to be significant, and the carbon reductions sufficiently offset against the benefit of renewable energy production. A Site Waste Management Plan could be secured by condition and/or legal agreement. A CTMP should be submitted to manage waste in the context of construction traffic. It is noted that on decommissioning the site in the future much of the solar panels and equipment can be recycled by specialist processors.

e) Pollution and Nuisances

4.13 The principal consideration in regard to noise and vibration resultant from the proposed solar farm is increased traffic movements, primarily through the construction phase and then any ongoing noise from the proposed equipment. The environmental impact of noise and vibration from construction traffic will be temporary, and it is expected to be able to be managed satisfactorily through a construction traffic management plan secured by condition and/or legal agreement. Solar farms are not considered to result in undue noise levels in the normal daily running of the site although a noise assessment will be required and considered in the context of the location of proposed equipment.

4.14 Considering the existing siting of the development and key junctions, the proposed development is not likely to have a significant impact in respect to increased traffic and resultant noise and emissions. Increased traffic movements are acknowledged, however, the environmental impacts resultant from that increase will not be significant in the context of the area. The Highway Authority have recommended suitable technical work is submitted to support the application, noting the scale and location of the proposed development. New access points are required to the site on both sides of Graveley Lane, which will need to meet highway standards, but there is no objection in principle to the proposals and its impacts from a highway perspective in this context.

4.15 In light of the planning practice guidance that only a very small proportion of Schedule 2 development would require an Environmental Impact Assessment, and that such assessments should not be used as a barrier to growth, it is concluded that the potential short and long term pollution and noise nuisances would not have a significant environmental impact.

f) The risk of major accidents and/or disasters relevant to the development concerned, including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge

4.16 Natural disaster events are not considered relevant to the type of proposed development. There is no likelihood of significant additional traffic which could cause major accidents as a result of a likely decrease in employment as a result of the proposed development and increased automation. The introduction of renewable energy will assist in the reduction of carbon emissions and resulting impact on climate change.

g) The risks to human health (for example, due to water contamination or air pollution)

4.17 None expected.

Location of development (having regard to environmental sensitivity of the area to be affected)

4.18 Schedule 3 states that the environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by development must be considered having regard in particular to:

a) the existing land use

4.19 The existing site comprises arable fields. The site is divided into two parcels with a lane between going south from Sperberry Hill. There are pylons across the western parcel towards the substation. There are a series of hedgerows and sporadic trees and rights of way across the eastern parcel. Much of this layout would be retained. As such, the existing land use is not considered sensitive to the proposed use, as it is not of any significant environmental value.

- 4.20 The existing agricultural land is graded part Grade 2, part Grade 3 which is considered Best and Most Versatile (BMV) land and should be protected in principle. This is not considered alone to be significant enough to require an ES, but will be assessed in the planning balance.

b) abundance/quality/regenerative capacity of natural resources in the area

- 4.21 The development would not likely have a significant impact on immediate/ onsite/ nearby natural resources. The proposed development would not have a negative environmental impact in respect to pollutive discharge, or impact on ecology.

c) absorption capacity of the natural environment

- 4.22 The site and surrounding land are not designated as significant natural environments (such as wetlands or mountain or forest area) that could be adversely affected. Due to the nature of the proposed development, there will still be potential for biodiversity to thrive, which should also be compared to the existing baseline scenario. It is also noted that although 40 years is a substantial period of time, it is temporary and the land will revert back to agricultural use when the period ends.

Characteristics of the potential impact

- 4.23 The likely significant effects of the development on the environment must be considered in relation to criteria set out in paragraphs 1 and 2 above, with regard to the impact of the development on the factors specified in regulation 4(2), taking into account—

(a) the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)

- 4.24 The size of the population likely to be affected, to a less than significant degree, as a result of the environmental issues identified above is not substantial. Any impact will be isolated to those neighbours immediately adjacent to the site which are limited by virtue of the rural character of the area. The impact on heritage assets is likely to be locally specific to those identified above, although views of the site in the context of heritage assets also needs to be considered. The impact on landscape would likely stretch further afield but limited to the areas between Hitchin, Letchworth and north Stevenage and potentially the eastern end of the Chilterns AONB but requiring appropriate assessment.

(b) the nature of the impact

- 4.25 The nature of the impact is limited primarily, in this case, to within the site and on immediately adjacent to it with particular impact to the visual impact of the development on the landscape, the Chilterns AONB, and impact on the setting of designated heritage assets.
- 4.26 On traffic movements, the impacts of increased traffic movements will be dissipated beyond discernibility and can be managed through appropriate assessments recommended by the Highway Authority.

(c) The transboundary nature of the impact

- 4.27 Whilst the site is not a substantial distance from the local boundary with Stevenage Borough Council, the less than significant environmental impacts would not reach or cross this

boundary. Officers at Stevenage Borough Council did not wish to provide any comments on this application when consulted but noted the role of the Green Belt in which the site is located and the need for Very Special Circumstances.

(d) The intensity and complexity of the impact

- 4.28 The impacts of the proposed development on the environment, as discussed above, are not considered intense. There is limited complexity added by increases to traffic movements primarily during the construction phase of development which is temporary. There also needs to be careful consideration given to the impact of the proposals on landscape and visual amenity, as well as the impact on designated and non-designated heritage assets and on nearby residents. However, these complexities are not beyond normal procedures when considering a planning application and would not reasonably require an ES.

(e) The probability of the impact

- 4.29 The impacts identified above are highly probable. It is unlikely that noise, vibration and emissions from traffic will have some impact on the environment. Notwithstanding this, the impact would not be significant. Less than significant environmental impacts on heritage assets and landscape would also be considered probable, however this can be reasonably assessed during the course of any future planning application.

(f) The expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact

- 4.30 The environmental impacts from construction, including traffic, emissions and waste production will be early in onset, but relatively short in duration. The less than significant environmental impacts from traffic generation as a result of the use of the site would not be immediate or substantial.
- 4.31 The life expectancy of a solar farm is also up to 40 years, after which time the impact could be reversed.

(g) The cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or approved development

- 4.32 The potential cumulative impacts of the proposed site together with other solar farms is limited, with just one other proposed in this area at the time of writing. Future proposals would be considered in their context at that time. No likely significant impact has been identified within paragraphs 1 or 2 of Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations 2017 (as above).

(h) The possibility of effectively reducing the impact

- 4.33 Planning conditions and/or legal agreements could effectively mitigate against some potential less than significant environmental impact in respect to construction, increased traffic and other environmental impacts.
- 4.34 The applicant has suggested a list of technical documents to support any future planning application which has been reviewed. These include: Planning Drawings, Planning, Design and Access Statement; Glint and Glare Assessment; Ecological Assessment; Flood Risk and Surface Water Strategy; Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment; Cultural Heritage Assessment; Noise Assessment; Agricultural land Assessment; and Transport Statement. This list is considered to be comprehensive in the potential for assessing and possibly reducing the

impact of development. The Highway Authority have required the submission of a Framework Construction Traffic Management Plan with any future planning application.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The Local Planning Authority recognises that the EIA Planning Practice Guidance states that only a very small proportion of Schedule 2 development will require an assessment. The Planning Practice Guidance states that the exclusive thresholds offer only a broad indication of the scale of development, which is likely to be a candidate for EIA, but that the requirements need to be considered on a case-by-case basis. In this case, the proposed development would not be of a scale or a nature to justify the need for an EIA or ES.
- 5.2 In view of the above analysis and in accordance with the requirements of the Regulations and guidance in the Planning Practice Guidance it is considered that any environmental effects that are likely as a result of the proposed development can be adequately addressed by specific studies and reports which can accompany any future applications and an Environmental Impact assessment is not required in this instance. Accordingly, the Local Planning Authority issues a 'Negative Opinion'.

**THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) REGULATIONS
2017 SCREENING MATRIX**

1. CASE DETAILS			
Case Reference	21/02628/SO	Brief description of the project / development	Proposed 25MW solar farm and 12.5MW battery storage facility.
Appellant	N/A		
LPA	North Hertfordshire District Council		
2. EIA DETAILS			
Is the project Schedule 1 development according to Schedule 1 of the EIA Regulations?		No	
If YES, which description of development (THEN GO TO Q4)		N/A	
Is the project Schedule 2 development under the EIA Regulations?		Yes	
If YES, under which description of development in Column 1 and Column 2?		3. (a) Industrial installations for the production of electricity	
Is the development within, partly within, or near a 'sensitive area' as defined by Regulation 2 of the EIA Regulations?		No	
If YES, which area?		N/A	
Are the applicable thresholds/criteria in Column 2 exceeded/met?		Yes	
If yes, which applicable threshold/criteria?		Development exceeds 0.5ha	
3. LPA/SOS SCREENING			
Has the LPA or SoS issued a Screening Opinion (SO) or Screening Direction (SD)? (In the case of Enforcement appeals, has a Regulation 37 notice been issued)		Not yet	
If yes, is a copy of the SO/SD on the file?		Not yet	
If yes, is the SO/SD positive?		N/A	
4. ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT			
Has the appellant supplied an ES for the current or previous (if reserved matters or conditions) application?		No	

WHEN COMPLETING THIS DOCUMENT IN RELATION TO AN ENFORCEMENT APPEAL, THE UNDERSIGNED OFFICER HAS HAD REGARD TO THE PROJECT AS ALLEGED IN THE RELEVANT ENFORCEMENT NOTICE WHEN REFERRING TO THE PROJECT / DEVELOPMENT.

Question	(Part 2a) / (Part 2b) – Answer to the question and explanation of reasons (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)		(Part 3a) / (Part 3b) (only if Yes in part 2a) – Is a Significant Effect Likely? (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)	
	Briefly explain answer to Part 2a and, if applicable and/or known, include name of feature and proximity to site (If answer in Part 2a / 2b is 'No', the answer to Part 3a / 3b is 'N/A')		Is a significant effect likely, having regard particularly to the magnitude and spatial extent (including population size affected), nature, intensity and complexity, probability, expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact and the possibility to effectively reduce the impact? If the finding of no significant effect is reliant on specific features or measures of the project envisaged to avoid, or prevent what might otherwise have been, significant adverse effects on the environment these should be identified in bold.	
1. NATURAL RESOURCES				
1.1 Will construction, operation or decommissioning of the project involve actions which will cause physical changes in the topography of the area?	No		N/A	
1.2 Will construction or operation of the project use natural resources above or below ground such as land, soil, water, materials/minerals or energy which are non-renewable or in short supply?	No		N/A	
1.3 Are there any areas on/around the location which contain important, high quality or scarce resources which could be affected by the project, e.g. forestry, agriculture, water/coastal, fisheries, minerals?	No		N/A	

Question	(Part 2a) / (Part 2b) – Answer to the question and explanation of reasons (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)		(Part 3a) / (Part 3b) (only if Yes in part 2a) – Is a Significant Effect Likely? (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)	
2. WASTE				
2.1 Will the project produce solid wastes during construction or operation or decommissioning?	Yes	Construction projects inevitably result in the production of some solid waste.	No	The scale of the proposed construction would not be significant and could reasonably be mitigated by way of condition (requiring a Site/Construction Waste Management Plan).
3. POLLUTION AND NUISANCES				
3.1 Will the project release pollutants or any hazardous, toxic or noxious substances to air?	No		N/A	
3.2 Will the project cause noise and vibration or release of light, heat, energy or electromagnetic radiation?	Yes	Noise and vibration would occur as a result of the construction phase from traffic generation.	No	The noise and vibration resultant from the construction will be temporary. Subsequent use and traffic will not be significant and can be managed with appropriate technical work.
3.3 Will the project lead to risks of contamination of land or water from releases of pollutants onto the ground or into surface waters, groundwater, coastal waters or the sea?	No		N/A	
3.4 Are there any areas on or around the location which are already subject to pollution or environmental damage, e.g. where existing legal environmental standards are exceeded, which could be affected by the project?	No		N/A	
4. POPULATION AND HUMAN HEALTH				
4.1 Will there be any risk of major accidents (including those caused by climate change, in accordance with	No		N/A	

Question	(Part 2a) / (Part 2b) – Answer to the question and explanation of reasons (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)		(Part 3a) / (Part 3b) (only if Yes in part 2a) – Is a Significant Effect Likely? (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)	
scientific knowledge) during construction, operation or decommissioning?				
4.2 Will the project present a risk to the population (having regard to population density) and their human health during construction, operation or decommissioning? (for example due to water contamination or air pollution)	No		N/A	
5. WATER RESOURCES				
5.1 Are there any water resources including surface waters, e.g. rivers, lakes/ponds, coastal or underground waters on or around the location which could be affected by the project, particularly in terms of their volume and flood risk?	No		N/A	
6. BIODIVERSITY (SPECIES AND HABITATS)				
6.1 Are there any protected areas which are designated or classified for their terrestrial, avian and marine ecological value, or any non-designated / non-classified areas which are important or sensitive for reasons of their terrestrial, avian and marine ecological value, located on or around the location and which could be affected by the project? (e.g. wetlands, watercourses or other water-bodies, the coastal zone, mountains, forests or woodlands, undesignated nature	No		N/A	

Question	(Part 2a) / (Part 2b) – Answer to the question and explanation of reasons (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)		(Part 3a) / (Part 3b) (only if Yes in part 2a) – Is a Significant Effect Likely? (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)	
reserves or parks. (Where designated indicate level of designation (international, national, regional or local))).				
6.2 Could any protected, important or sensitive species of flora or fauna which use areas on or around the site, e.g. for breeding, nesting, foraging, resting, over-wintering, or migration, be affected by the project?	No		N/A	
7. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL				
7.1 Are there any areas or features on or around the location which are protected for their landscape and scenic value, and/or any non-designated / non-classified areas or features of high landscape or scenic value on or around the location which could be affected by the project? ¹ Where designated indicate level of designation (international, national, regional or local).	Yes	Chilterns AONB	No	No designations on site. Chilterns AONB is 3.2km away and needs to be considered. Local topography and rights of way enable the site to be visible from nearby public vantage points. A LVIA should address all these points and beyond, including views from the AONB and environmental impact on it
7.2 Is the project in a location where it is likely to be highly visible to many people? (If so, from where, what direction, and what distance?)	Yes	See public vantage points through the site and proximity to roads	No	Primarily from public rights of way and Sperberry Hill, although these provide access to local places only. It is not thought that the impact will be significant due to the distances, but needs to be considered through any future application.

¹ See question 8.1 for consideration of impacts on heritage designations and receptors, including on views to, within and from designated areas.

Question	(Part 2a) / (Part 2b) – Answer to the question and explanation of reasons (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)		(Part 3a) / (Part 3b) (only if Yes in part 2a) – Is a Significant Effect Likely? (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)	
8. CULTURAL HERITAGE/ARCHAEOLOGY				
8.1 Are there any areas or features which are protected for their cultural heritage or archaeological value, or any non-designated / classified areas and/or features of cultural heritage or archaeological importance on or around the location which could be affected by the project (including potential impacts on setting, and views to, from and within)? Where designated indicate level of designation (international, national, regional or local).	Yes	None within the site although the site is in the setting of designated heritage assets. There are about 14 statutory listed buildings within 500m of the site. Their setting needs to be considered. There is a registered park and garden and scheduled monument in opposite directions more than 1.8km away.	No	It is not thought that the impact on designated heritage assets would be significant given the type of development and level of harm that could occur. This needs to be assessed through any future application.
9. TRANSPORT AND ACCESS				
9.1 Are there any routes on or around the location which are used by the public for access to recreation or other facilities, which could be affected by the project?	Yes	Public Right of Ways through the site	No	PROW are not likely to be affected as the solar panels can be laid out around the routes and ensure the routes are maintained.
9.2 Are there any transport routes on or around the location which are susceptible to congestion or which cause environmental problems, which could be affected by the project?	Yes	The development site links to C-road Sperberry Hill and the A602 / A1(M) as the closest strategic road network. Construction phase will be the most extreme element of the development and can be mitigated accordingly.	No	Effects are not likely to be significant and will be assessed through appropriate technical work including a Construction Traffic Management Plan.
10. LAND USE				
10.1 Are there existing land uses or community facilities on or around the location which could be affected by the project? E.g. housing, densely populated areas, industry / commerce,	Yes	The existing land use is agricultural in Grade 2 and Grade 3a and needs to be further assessed. St Ippolyts is the closest settlement, which is not large and has a limited population.	No	It is not expected that a solar farm would have a significant adverse effect on adjacent land uses.

Question	(Part 2a) / (Part 2b) – Answer to the question and explanation of reasons (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)		(Part 3a) / (Part 3b) (only if Yes in part 2a) – Is a Significant Effect Likely? (Yes/No or Not Known (?) or N/A)	
farm/agricultural holdings, forestry, tourism, mining, quarrying, facilities relating to health, education, places of worship, leisure /sports / recreation.				
10.2 Are there any plans for future land uses on or around the location which could be affected by the project?	No		N/A	
11. LAND STABILITY AND CLIMATE				
11.1 Is the location susceptible to earthquakes, subsidence, landslides, erosion, or extreme /adverse climatic conditions, e.g. temperature inversions, fogs, severe winds, which could cause the project to present environmental problems?	No		N/A	
12. CUMULATIVE EFFECTS				
12.1 Could this project together with existing and/or approved development result in cumulation of impacts together during the construction/operation phase?	No		N/A	
13. TRANSBOUNDARY EFFECTS				
13.1 Is the project likely to lead to transboundary effects? ²	No		N/A	

² The Regulations require consideration of the transboundary nature of the impact. Due to the England's geographical location the vast majority of TCPA cases are unlikely to result in transboundary impacts.

5. CONCLUSIONS – ACCORDING TO EIA REGULATIONS SCHEDULE 3

Characteristics of developments – The proposed development covers a large land area but the built form would be limited in bulk and height. It will not result in a cumulation of similar development in the area, not cause an undue impact on natural resources. The proposed development will result in the production of waste, as well as pollution and some environmental nuisance, however these are not considered to be significant and can be assessed under normal planning procedures. The risk of natural disaster and impact on human health would also be extremely limited.

Location of development – The site is within the Green Belt and comprises Grade 2 and Grade 3a agricultural land. The proposed development would not have a negative environmental impact due to its location on pollutive discharge or ecology. The existing site does not have an abundance of natural resources and the proposed development will not affect this nor the sites absorption capacity, other than potential for enhancement.

Type and characteristics of potential impact – The proposed development is expected to be locally specific in terms of its impact on heritage assets, transport, pollution, drainage, flood risk and ecology. Landscape impact will be further afield but is not considered to be significant in its context given the distance from the Chilterns and the scale of the solar farm. The impact on heritage assets and landscape are expected to be localised and complex but not particularly intense. All these impacts are probable as a result of the proposals and need appropriate technical work for any future planning application. These impacts are also reversible after the period of 40 years that the proposed development will be in effect and can be managed through appropriate planning conditions/legal agreement.

Bearing in mind the PPG statements that "Only a very small proportion of Schedule 2 development will require an Environmental Impact Assessment" and that "Environmental Impact Assessment should not be a barrier to growth", alongside the above assessment, it is not considered that the proposed development is EIA development for the purposes of the Regulations.

6. SCREENING DECISION

If a SO/SD has been provided do you agree with it?	N/A	
Is it necessary to issue a SD?	Yes	
Is an ES required?	No	
7. ASSESSMENT (EIA REGS SCHEDULE 2 DEVELOPMENT)	OUTCOME	
Is likely to have significant effects on the environment	ES required	
<u>Not</u> likely to have significant effects on the environment	ES not required	✓
More information is required to inform direction	Request further info	

NAME	Sarah Kasparian, North Herts District Council
DATE	01 November 2021