

Our ref: ES/AL/AK/GM13215/LET-001

Date: 21 August 2024

South Cambridgeshire District Council
South Cambridgeshire Hall
Cambourne Business Park
Cambridge
CB23 6EA

Dear Sir or Madam

Request for Screening Opinion under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 in relation to the proposed solar farm at land to the south of Ashwell Street, Bassingbourn, South Cambridgeshire

We are writing on behalf of our client, SSE Energy Solutions (the Applicant, hereafter referred to as 'SSE'), to request a formal EIA Screening Opinion under regulation 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (herein the 'EIA Regulations') in support of a solar farm (the proposed development) with an output of 22 Megawatts (MW), located on land to the northwest of the A505 dual carriageway to the north of Royston (the 'Site'). The outer perimeter of the A505 runs along the boundary between South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) to the north of the road, and North Hertfordshire Council (NHC) to the south.

In accordance with paragraph 6(2) of the EIA Regulations, we enclose a Site location plan (Figure 1), and a description within this letter of:

- The Site and the proposed development;
- The aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the proposals;
- Any likely significant effects of the proposed development on the environment (to the extent of the information available); and
- Measures envisaged to avoid or prevent what might otherwise have been significant adverse effects on the environment.



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It should be noted that a small proportion of the Site falls outside SCDC's municipal boundaries into North Hertfordshire. However, as the majority of the proposed site area lies within the District with only the cable route and point of connection falling within NHC's boundaries, SCDC are presently deemed to be the relevant planning authority. Therefore, in accordance with EIA Regulation 6, WA are requesting that SCDC to adopt a Screening Opinion as the relevant planning authority. However, this request will also be copied to NHC for information.

This letter sets out the legislative and environmental considerations of relevance to the proposals, to enable SCDC to issue a Screening Opinion. It is considered that the proposed development does not comprise 'EIA development' as defined in the EIA Regulations, on the basis that the proposal is not likely to result in significant effects on the environment.

The Development Site and Surrounding Area

The Site comprises approximately 27.9 hectares (ha) in area, and is located to the south of Bassingbourn in Cambridgeshire. To the north, the surrounding land is rural in nature, with the wider landscape predominantly consisting of arable and pastoral farmland. The A505 dual carriageway to the south of the Site represents the perimeter of the built-up urban settlement of Royston.

The Site is situated approximately 2.5 kilometres (km) to the northwest of Royston town centre, 2.8km southeast of Bassingbourn, and 4.8km southwest of Melbourn (Figure 1).

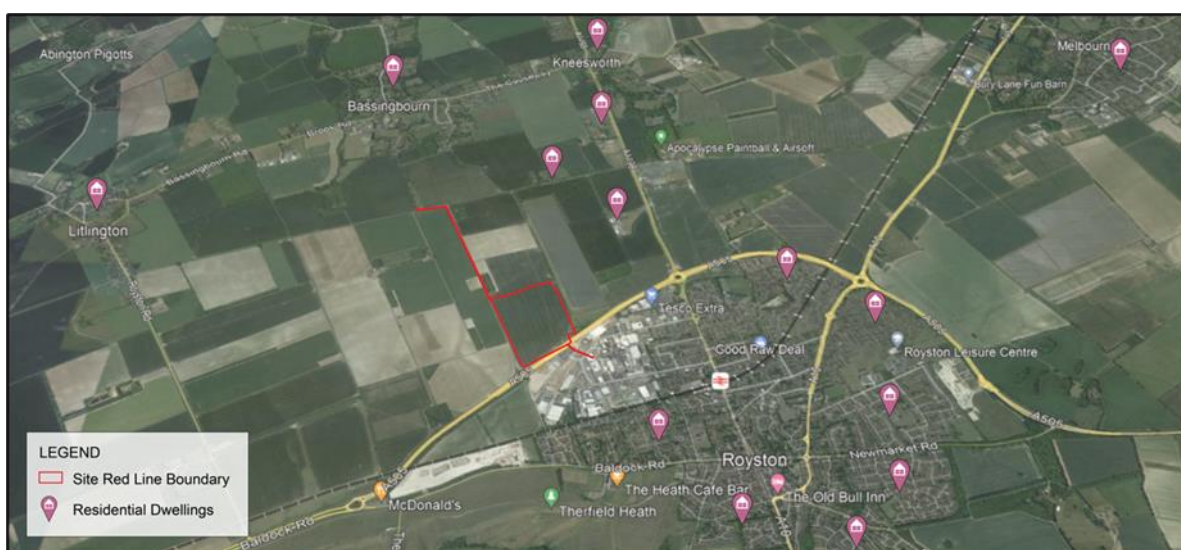


Figure 1: Site Location (Google Earth, 2024)



The land to the north of the Site is primarily rural in nature. Bassingbourn, located 2.8km northwest of the Site, contains various clusters of small-scale residential developments, with a range of services and shops in the village centre.

The nearest residential dwellings lie approximately 1km north of the Site (at the end of Spring Lane following Ashwell Street) and approximately 1.1km to the east of the Site (as shown at Figure 1).

Located directly to the east of the Site is Bassingbourn Solar Farm, spanning 22.5ha. Further east of this lies agricultural land that surrounds a small mixed-use industrial estate, accessed via Old North Road/ A1198.

Situated further east of the A1198 is Royston Solar Farm, which spans a total of 15.8ha. The locations of Bassingbourn Solar Farm and Royston Solar Farm are shown in relation to the proposed Site area in Figure 2.



Figure 2: Nearby Solar Farms (Sites outlined in blue) and proposed Site red line (Google Maps, 2024)

The urban district of Royston mainly comprises mixed use commercial, industrial and residential developments, with the nearest dwelling to the south of the Site lying approximately 700m away.



In addition to the town centre, the urban core of Royston is also home to the Johnson Matthey chemical plant which has been a key part of the town for decades. The proposed solar farm will be supplying power directly via private wire (Figure 3).

The proposed development is being considered as part of SSE's Energy Solutions offering. Specifically, the solar plant will provide electricity 'behind the meter' to Johnson Matthey's premises to enable them to purchase green electricity, directly reduce scope 1 emissions, and to reduce reliance on the electricity grid itself.

Alongside the solar generation project, a programme of works involving smart energy solutions, electricity storage, and thermal energy storage are being investigated. These aim to consolidate Johnson Matthey's business strength, and to secure its future as an important and significant local employer and significant contributor to the local economy.



Figure 3: Johnson Matthey Site from the North (Wardell Armstrong (WA), 2024)

Current Use

The existing use of the Site is agricultural land, with the Site currently occupied by the planting of Sugar Beet (Figure 4). Pockets of woodland are situated within the Site, with field boundary hedgerows throughout.



Figure 4: Sugar Beet on Southern Quarter of Site (WA, 2024)

Accessibility

The southern region of the Site directly borders the A505 which travels east to west from Royston to Baldock. The A505 acts as a physical barrier, creating severance and isolating the nearby urban district in Royston, with the only accessible link for pedestrians and cyclists conjoining the two areas being a Public Right of Way (PRoW), which borders the eastern perimeter of the Site and crosses the A505 (Figure 5, Figure 6 and Figure 7).

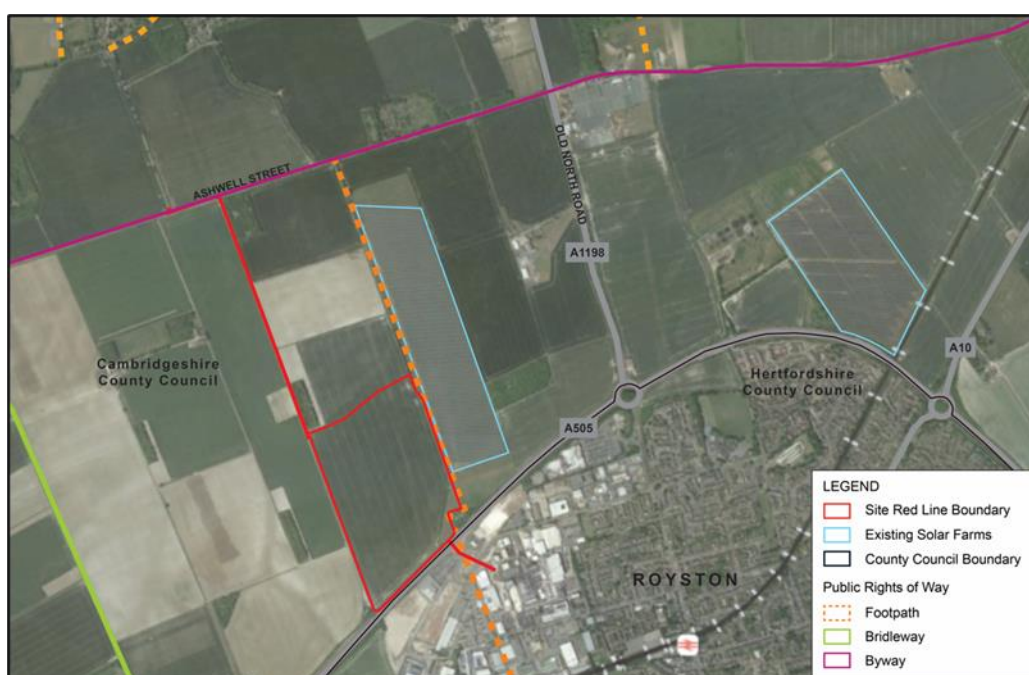
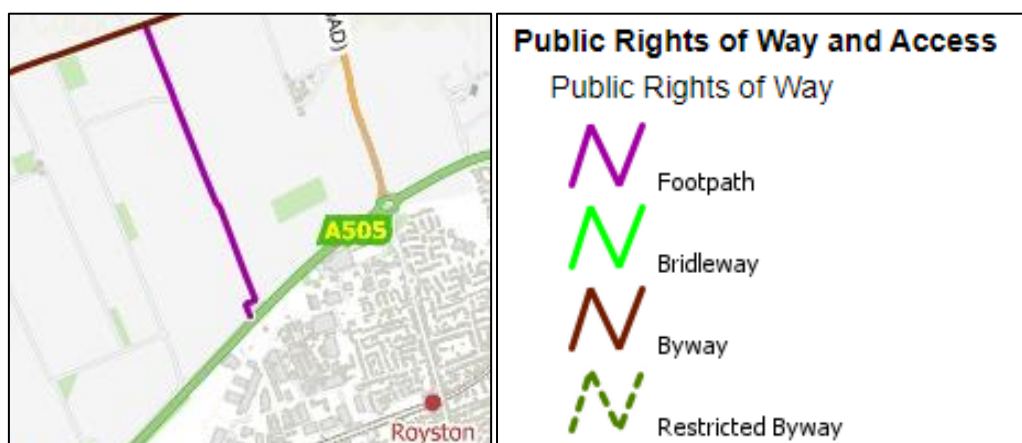
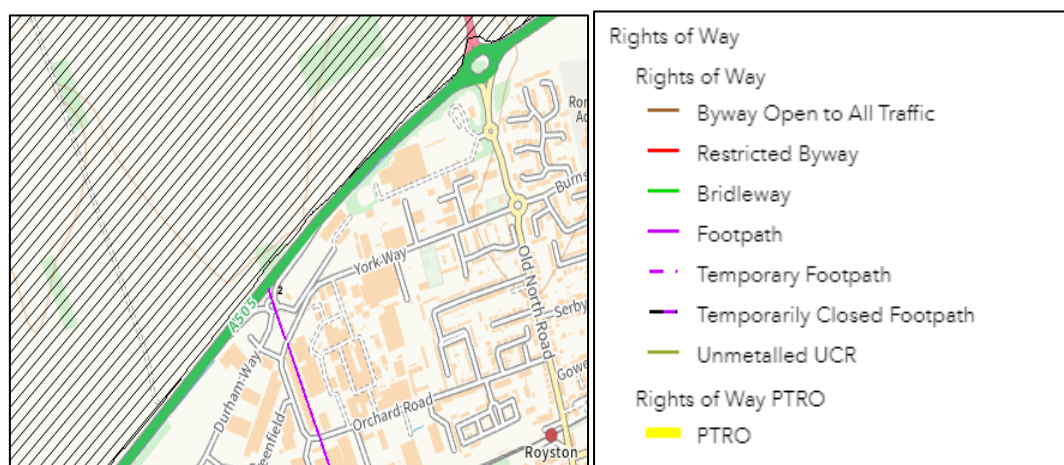


Figure 5: PRoW shown in context with Site and nearby solar developments (WA/SSE, 2024)



**Figure 6: PRow within SCDC's boundaries
(Cambridgeshire County Council PRow mapping, 2024)**



**Figure 7: PRow within NHC's boundaries
(Hertfordshire County Council PRow mapping, 2024)**

Environmental Designations

The Site is not situated within the Green Belt, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, or a National Park. Although the Site is not within a Coal Mining Reporting Area, it is thought to lie within a Mineral Safeguarding Area (in relation to chalk) as detailed in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan (adopted July 2021). The Mineral Planning Authority will be consulted as required in relation to any forthcoming planning application for the Site.

Ecology

There are two designated sites within 2km of the Site:

- Therfield Heath Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Local Nature Reserve (0.9km to the south)
- Holland Hall (Melbourn) Railway Cutting SSSI (1.75km to the east)



The closest European / internationally designated sites are Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (10.5km to the north), Wicken Fen Ramsar (34.6km to the northeast), and Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar (46.5km to the northwest).

Heritage

A Scheduled Monument (Historic England List Entry Number: 1006881) has been identified directly to the north of the Site (Figure 8). This is located approximately 150 metres (m) from the Site boundary. There are also a number of non-designated heritage assets identified within the surrounding landscape, including Iron Age Mill Ditches, a Bronze Age Barrow Cemetery, two Bowl Barrows, and a Long Barrow.



Figure 8: Scheduled Monument directly north of the Site (WA, 2024)

Flood Risk

The Site is located within Flood Zone 1, which indicates that the land has a low probability of flooding from rivers and the sea.



Soils

According to Provisional Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) data published by Natural England, the area within the Site red line boundary which is being considered for the installation of solar panels is predominantly classified as Grade 3 Agricultural Land, (good to moderate quality agricultural land), with a small area of Grade 2 Agricultural Land (agricultural land of a very high-quality, or 'best and most versatile' (BMV) land) within the Site boundary (Figure 9). A detailed soils survey will be undertaken to confirm the exact BMV grade throughout the Site.



Figure 9: ALC in relation to the Site with Grade 3 land shown in green and Grade 2 land shown in blue (Natural England Open Data Publication, 2017)

Development Description

The proposed development comprises the construction and operation of a solar farm with an output of up to 22MW (subject to final design) and associated infrastructure, anticipated to include ground mounted solar arrays, inverters, substations, CCTV, access tracks, perimeter fencing, and landscape works.

The scheme is not anticipated to utilise the total site area of 27.9ha. It is currently envisaged that the proposed development will be brought forward in two phases, with a 12MWac output system within the northern part of the Site (as shown on drawing refs. JMRN-SSE-XX-XX-DR-E-0100-P01 and JMRN-SSE-XX-XX-DR-E-0200-P01) being delivered first over 15.8ha,



followed by the remaining 10MWac output system to the south of the initial phase (as shown on drawing refs. JMRN-SSE-XX-XX-DR-E-0101-P01 and JMRN-SSE-XX-XX-DR-E-0201-P01) being constructed as further demand is required through to 2030, bringing the total developed area within the Site red line boundary to 26.83ha.

The proposed point of connection for the private wire to Johnson Matthey's premises is located directly to the south of the Site, intersecting the A505. No grid connection is required. Please note that the cable route shown on the enclosed drawings is currently shown as indicative, and will be finalised prior to submission of any future planning application following consultation with NHC as LPA and Highways Authority, along with relevant statutory consultees.

The Applicant is committed to creating a sensitively designed scheme. Proposed landscaping will include tree and hedgerow screening, providing enhancement to existing vegetation on the Site which will also help to minimise the impact of the development on the surrounding countryside.

The proposed layout will comprise primarily of solar panel modules, which convert sunlight directly into electricity. The fixed modular panels will be positioned to be south-facing and will be arranged in rows with an east-to-west alignment, optimising the potential production of energy. The layout of the panels will be designed with regard to the composition of soils on the Site, and to avoid impacts on heritage assets.

The operational life of the proposed solar farm is assumed to be 40 years, after which time the development can be decommissioned and removed, or if appropriate, the lifetime extended subject to a further planning application. The development is temporary in nature.

Site Access

A number of options have been considered relating to Site access for the development proposals. Figure 10 displays proposed access routes to the Site.

The primary access route is located north of the Site via South End in Bassingbourn, which after 1.1km branches off on to Ashwell Street close to the Site. The access route follows on to an informal track (Figure 11), leading directly to the Site. Appropriate works to widen access routes will be undertaken where necessary and details included within the planning application.

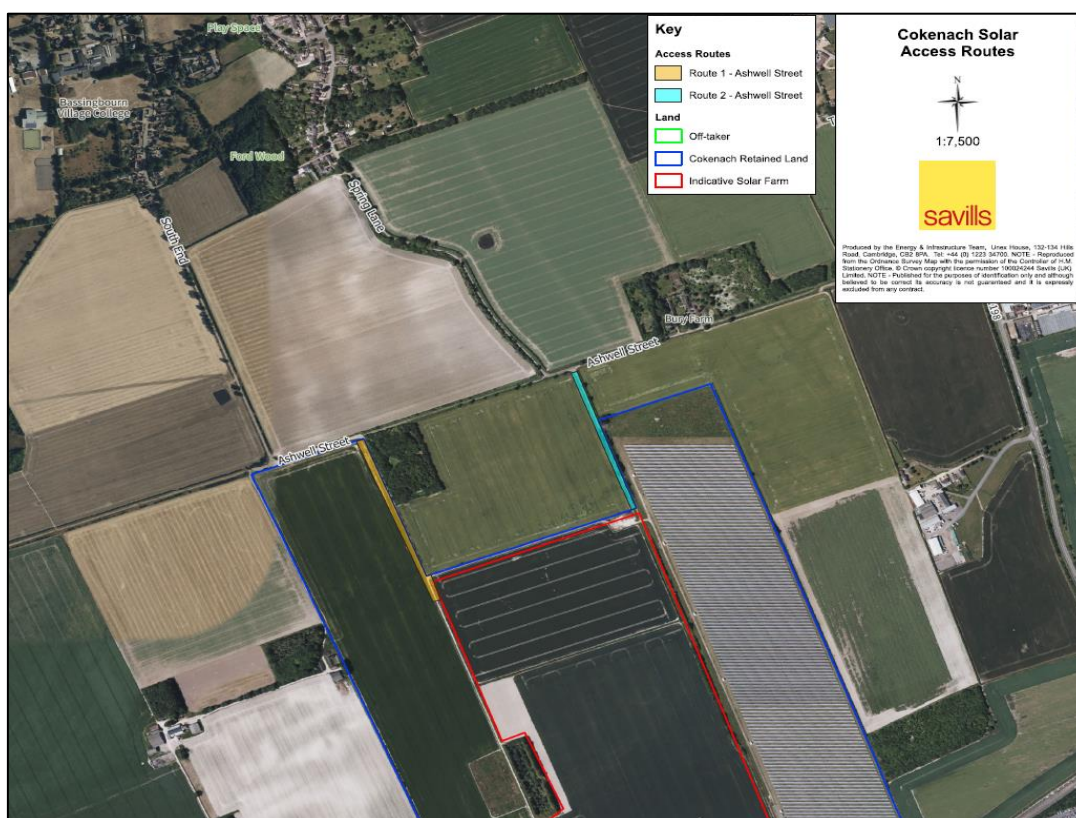


Figure 10: Site Access Points (Savills / Google Earth, 2024)



Figure 11: Informal Track located west of the proposed development Site (WA, 2024)



Other Developments in the Area

Table 1 provides a summary of the relevant planning history in close proximity to the Site.

Table 1: Planning History					
Council	Reference No.	Description	Location	Direction	Decision and Decision Date
South Cambridgeshire District Council	S/0098/14/FL	Change of use of land from (1) agricultural to (2) mixed use for agriculture and use of the generation of renewable energy (solar).	Land To The South Of Bury Farm Spring Lane Bassingbourn	Located east of the proposed development	Application approved 29/08/2014
South Cambridgeshire District Council	S/1517/13/E1	Proposed Solar Development	Land Between Railway and Sewage Disposal Works Royston Road Melbourne Cambridgeshire	Located east of the proposed development	Application approved 11/08/2020
North Hertfordshire Council	20/01017/FP	Erection of three B1C, B2 and B8 units with associated car parking and ancillary works	Land South of Durham Way Royston Hertfordshire	Located south of the proposed development	Application approved 18/12/2020
South Cambridgeshire District Council	S/O439/12/FL	Installation of five wind turbines – maximum height of 100m. 60m lattice tower meteorological mast.	Land at Highfield Farm West of Royston Road Litlington.	Located southwest of the proposed development	Application refused 19/02/2014
South Cambridgeshire District Council	S/4322/19/FL	Retrospective change of use from office/ storage to gymnasium	Unit 8, Highfield Farm Old North Road Bassingbourn Cum Kneesworth Cambridgeshire	Located northwest of proposed development	Application approved 23/03/2020



Table 1: Planning History					
Council	Reference No.	Description	Location	Direction	Decision and Decision Date
North Hertfordshire Council	20/00744/OP	Outline planning application for 99 residential dwellings (Including 40% affordable housing) structural landscaping, public open space and children's play area, surface water flood mitigation, and vehicular access point via demolition of property	Land opposite Heath Farm Briary Lane Royston Hertfordshire	Located south of the proposed development	Application refused 13/05/2021

Request for EIA Screening Opinion

The EIA Regulations set out the thresholds for when a project would constitute an EIA development. If the proposal falls into one of the categories of development identified in Schedule 1, then EIA is mandatory. If the proposal falls into a category in Schedule 2, then EIA may be appropriate depending upon the scale of the proposed scheme and the sensitivity of the site and its surroundings.

If a proposal exceeds the relevant thresholds set out within Schedule 2, or the receiving environment is considered sensitive, EIA Screening should be carried out against the selection criteria within Schedule 3.

The proposed development does not fall within any of the categories of development in Schedule 1 of the EIA Regulations. However, the proposed development falls within the thresholds set out within Schedule 2 Category 3 (a) of the Regulations. The relevant threshold for Category 3 (a) is 0.5 ha. The total area of the proposed development Site is 27.9 ha; thus it exceeds the threshold of 0.5 ha outlined in Schedule 2. Therefore, EIA screening must be undertaken in accordance with EIA regulations.



The following table identifies the thresholds outlined in Schedule 2 for Category 3 (a) as well as the indicative thresholds outlined within the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

Proposed development type	Schedule 2 criteria and thresholds	Indicative criteria and threshold	Key issues to consider
3. Energy Industry			
(a) Industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam and hot water (unless included in Schedule 1);	The area of the development exceeds 0.5 hectare.	Thermal output of more than 50 MW. Small stations using novel forms of generation should be considered carefully. Paragraph: 002 Reference ID: 5-002-20150618 Revision date: 18 06 2015	Level of emissions to air, arrangements for the transport of fuel and any visual impact.

The proposed development site will accommodate a 18MW array over an area of 27.9ha, and therefore exceeds the Schedule 2 threshold.

The PPG states that it should not be presumed that developments above the thresholds should always be subject to assessment, and that each development should be considered on its merits. Whilst the proposed development exceeds the Schedule 2 criteria and thresholds identified above, the proposed development does not exceed the indicative criteria and threshold outlined within the PPG.

In addition, it is not considered likely that the proposals will have significant effects in relation to visual impact, air quality or transport. The site will be designed to screen the proposals as far as possible, and transport and air quality impacts will be primarily limited to the construction phase which will be temporary and short term in nature.

The proposal has been further screened against the selection criteria within Schedule 3 to robustly demonstrate that an EIA is not required. The aspects to consider are as follows:

1. The characteristics of the proposed development;
2. The location of the proposed development; and
3. The types and characteristics of any potential impact.



Appendix 1 of this letter provides an assessment of the proposed development against the criteria included in Schedule 1, 2 and 3 of the EIA Regulations, to enable SCDC to issue a Screening Opinion. It is considered that the proposal does not comprise “EIA development” as defined in the EIA Regulations on the basis that the proposed development is not likely to result in significant effects on the environment.

Information Accompanying the Application

Although it is anticipated that there will be no significant environmental impacts as a result of the Proposed Development, as a minimum the following assessments will be undertaken in support of the application:

- Planning Application Form, Notices and Certificate
- Planning Statement incorporating a Design and Access Statement
- Planning Drawings including:
 - Site Location Plan
 - Site Layout Plan
 - Elevations
- Landscape Strategy Plan
- Preliminary Ecological Assessment
- Landscape and Visual Assessment
- Photomontages
- Landscape Environmental Management Plan
- Preliminary Biodiversity Offsetting Assessment and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment
- Agricultural Land Classification Report and Soils Survey
- Archaeology and Heritage Statement
- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy
- Glint and Glare Assessment
- Ground Conditions Phase 1 Desk Study
- Transport Statement and Construction Traffic Management Plan
- Construction Environmental Management Plan
- Statement of Consultation

Summary of Appendix 1

The EIA Regulations state that the proposal falls within the criteria of Schedule 2 activity, however based on the preliminary identification and assessment of the potential impacts and taking into account the existing uses of the site, its scale and location, it is not considered likely that the development will result in significant effects on the environment and as such it



is not considered to comprise EIA development. The extent of any likely impacts can be successfully dealt with by appropriate technical study and consideration through any planning proposal, with well-established mitigation methods.

As a result of the location of the site, it is considered that there are few immediate sensitivities that would be affected by the proposals, and those identified in the screening information provided above can be successfully dealt with by appropriate technical study and consideration through any planning proposal without necessitating the composition of a full EIA.

We therefore request that SCDC adopts a Screening Opinion, in accordance with Regulation 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, that the proposed development is not EIA development.

We look forward to receiving your response within the statutory three-week timescale (set by Regulation 6(6)(a)).

Yours faithfully

for Wardell Armstrong LLP

Amy Kennedy

Associate Director – Planning

akennedy@wardell-armstrong.com

cc Planning Department, North Hertfordshire Council

Enc. Site location plan (drawing ref. GM13215-005-P0.02)
Site red line boundary plan – 22MWac output (complete scheme) (drawing ref. JMRN-SSE-XX-XX-DR-E-0101- P01)
Site layout plan – 22MWac output (complete scheme) (drawing ref. JMRN-SSE-XX-XX-DR-E-0201-P01)
Site red line boundary plan – 12MWac output (first phase) (drawing ref. JMRN-SSE-XX-XX-DR-E-0100-P01)



Site layout plan – 12MWac output (first phase) (drawing ref. JMRN-SSE-XX-XX-DR-E-0200-P01)

Preliminary Ecological Assessment (April 2024)



APPENDIX 1 – SCREENING MATRIX

SCREENING MATRIX	
PROJECT:	Solar Farm, Bassingbourn
SCHEDULES 1 & 2	
Is it Schedule 1 development?	No The proposed development does not fall under any Schedule 1 development criteria
Is it Schedule 2 development?	Yes The proposed development falls within Schedule 2 Category 3(a) Energy Industry, as described as 'industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam and hot water (unless included in Schedule 1)'
Does the development exceed the applicable threshold?	Yes The threshold criteria for development under Category 3(a) is when the area of development exceeds 0.5 hectares. In this case, the proposed development exceeds this criteria due to having a total developable area of approximately 28ha for the solar farm and access road.
Is the development located in, or partly in a 'sensitive area'?	No A Scheduled Monument (Historic England List Entry Number: 1006881) however has been identified directly to the north of the Site (Figure 8). This is located approximately 150 metres (m) from the Site boundary, and as such, the development is not located in or partly in a 'sensitive area' as under Regulation 2(1) of the EIA Regulations.
Is a Screening Opinion required?	Yes The proposed development exceeds the threshold criteria of Category 3(a) of Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations 2017. Therefore, a Screening Opinion is required. On this basis, the proposed development is required to be assessed under Schedule 3 which sets out selection criteria for whether or not it constitutes an EIA development.



SCHEDULE 3		
Criteria	Yes / No [Include relevant details]	Is a significant effect likely? [Include details of mitigation to avoid significant effects where relevant.]
Natural Resources		
Will construction, operation or decommissioning of the project involve actions which will cause physical changes in the topography of the area?	No The site is relatively flat with a gentle slope north to south and will not require changes to its topography to facilitate the proposed development.	No It is not anticipated that the development will cause physical changes in the topography of the area during construction, operation, and decommissioning.
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 The construction and operation of solar farms do not require the use of extensive natural resources or non-renewables resources in short supply. However, good practice soil storage, handling and reinstatement methods will be used as standard for all construction-related operations. Construction mitigation measures will be provided in further detail prior to commencement of works. Moreover, the retention of soils means that following the operational lifetime of the proposal, they could easily be returned to agricultural land, facilitated by the temporary nature of solar farms.	No The use of extensive natural resources or non-renewable resources in short supply is not anticipated for this project owing to its nature and scale. Although the site is on Grade 2 and Grade 3 BMV, the land can be used for grazing and in its decommissioning stage the land will be returned with minimal intrusion from the proposed development. The proposed development will facilitate the production of energy which will be of benefit to supply.



SCHEDULE 3		
Criteria	Yes / No [Include relevant details]	Is a significant effect likely? [Include details of mitigation to avoid significant effects where relevant.]
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?	Yes The proposed development would be situated on land that is currently in agricultural use. A review of Natural England's Agricultural Land Classification mapping shows the agricultural land within the site is likely classed as Grade 2 (very good quality) and Grade 3 (good to moderate quality).	No Whilst the development will result in the temporary removal of small areas of very good to moderate quality land from agricultural use, such change would be minimal owing to the scale of developable area and therefore not deemed to have likely significant effect. The change should be viewed in the context of the wider area which comprises a variety of Grade 2 and Grade 3 BMV land. Upon the end of the development lifespan the site would be restored back to agricultural use therefore the impact would also be temporary. An Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey will be undertaken in support of the planning application to ascertain the quality of the agricultural land on site. This will inform the final site design and layout of the proposed development. To minimise the risk of potential damage to / loss of the existing onsite soil resources, good practice soil storage, handling and reinstatement methods will be used as standard for all construction-related operations. This will be based on such guidance as Defra's 'Construction Code of Practice' and IQ's Good Practice Guide for Handling Soils in Mineral Workings. Construction mitigation measures will be provided in further detail (e.g. detailed construction Method Statements or



SCHEDULE 3		
Criteria	Yes / No [Include relevant details]	Is a significant effect likely? [Include details of mitigation to avoid significant effects where relevant.]
		similar) prior to commencement of works. The retention of soils means that following the operational lifetime of the proposals, the land could easily be returned to agricultural use and there will be no permanent loss of soil resources.
Waste		
Will the project produce solid wastes during construction or operation or decommissioning?	No The proposed development will not produce solid wastes, such as excess construction materials, owing to its nature. The operation of the development is not likely to produce any waste.	No The proposed development is not anticipated to generate significant levels of waste materials. Earthworks required for construction will be minimal and undertaken in accordance with a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and any waste will be disposed of appropriately at the relevant and licenced waste facility. The operation of the development is not likely to produce any waste. During decommissioning, all equipment will be dismantled and removed from the site, with any waste either recycled or disposed of at a licenced waste facility, and the land will be returned back to agricultural use.
Pollution and Nuisances		
Will the project release pollutants or any hazardous, toxic or noxious substances to air?	Yes The proposed development is low carbon in nature and will not result in significant air quality or dust impacts during operation. During operation the primary source of	No Whilst the construction and decommissioning phases will see the use of construction machinery and vehicles on site, each phase will be controlled and monitored through a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) to ensure that any construction and



SCHEDULE 3		
Criteria	Yes / No [Include relevant details]	Is a significant effect likely? [Include details of mitigation to avoid significant effects where relevant.]
	emissions may be from maintenance. In the construction and decommissioning phases there could be the potential for emissions from vehicles.	decommissioning impacts, resulting from an increase in vehicle movements, are minimised. Moreover, a CEMP, or similar measure, will be incorporated to further ensure that works are carried out to best practice to prevent any pollution incidents from occurring. The only requirement for staff to visit the site during the operational phase will be for maintenance purposes. No staff will be based at the site and there will be no daily staff related trip generation.
Will the project cause noise and vibration or release of light, heat, energy or electromagnetic radiation?	Yes The proposed development includes equipment which are noise-generating such as cooling fans and components of the substation and inverters. Owing to the nature of the proposed development minimal artificial light will be required and excessive heat and energy generation will not occur. Electromagnetic radiation is not relevant to the proposed development.	No Whilst the proposed development includes equipment which are noise-generating these would produce low levels of noise which would only be audible at short distances. The nearest residential receptors are the dwellings that lie approximately 1km north of the Site (at the end of Spring Lane following Ashwell Street) and approximately 1.1.km to the east of the Site (as shown in Figure 1). Given the distance of the property away from the site and the woodland in between acting as a noise barrier, noise generated from the site is unlikely to be audible above the existing baseline. Moreover, the construction and restoration phases of the development, alongside vehicle movements, would only produce a temporary amount of noise. Workers will follow standard good practice such as avoiding two noisy operation simultaneously and turning off all



SCHEDULE 3		
Criteria	Yes / No [Include relevant details]	Is a significant effect likely? [Include details of mitigation to avoid significant effects where relevant.]
		equipment when not in use. Vehicle movements during operations will be minimal and sporadic and would be associated with maintenance staff.
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?	Yes This type of development is not known to utilise or release pollutants or toxic substances, nor would it lead to risks of contamination into surface waters or groundwater due to the nature of the development. Construction activities such as spillages and trackout could increase risk of contamination. The introduction of the proposed development will introduce a small amount of hardstanding on the site for the substations which would increase runoff potentially providing a source pathway to receptors	No Due to their nature, the operation of a solar farm is not known to pose a risk of contamination to surface waters or groundwater. During construction standard best practice will be implemented and followed to reduce the risk of contamination from activities such as spillages and linkages. Measures will be set out within a CEMP which will have input from the appointed contractor. The proposed development proposals will include the management of surface water runoff through SuDS (where necessary), to minimise flood risk and improve water quality. The implementation of SuDS components act as a treatment process to reduce contaminations levels in runoff to acceptable levels, delivering gradual improvement to water quality and providing an environmental buffer for accidental spills or unexpected high pollutant loadings from the Site. Moreover, there are no known water bodies or



SCHEDULE 3		
Criteria	Yes / No [Include relevant details]	Is a significant effect likely? [Include details of mitigation to avoid significant effects where relevant.]
		courses situated within the immediate vicinity of the proposed development site and the site is not situated in a coastal region.
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 No such areas have been identified.	No There are no known such areas in or around the site.
Population and Human Health		
Will there be any risk of major accidents (including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge) during construction, operation or decommissioning?	No Due to the relatively minor nature of the works required to construct and operate the proposed development and subject to adherence to relevant health and safety requirements, it is highly unlikely that a major accident or disaster would arise. Changes to the future climate baseline have the potential to affect the proposed development through issues such as soil drying; temperature; relative humidity; precipitation; snow and ice; gales, storms and extreme weather; solar radiation and cloud cover. However, the proposed development would be designed to ensure resilience to such impacts.	No As per previous column.



SCHEDULE 3		
Criteria	Yes / No [Include relevant details]	Is a significant effect likely? [Include details of mitigation to avoid significant effects where relevant.]
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)	Yes The proposed development could pose a risk to human health during the construction phase, as well as during maintenance during the operational life of the development.	No There are minimal existing human receptors in the local area. The only risks to human health associated with the proposed development would be during the construction phase, as well as during maintenance during the operational life of the development. However, adherence to the adopted CEMP, as well as the implementation of good practice health and safety measures, would minimise the likelihood of any accidents occurring. In terms of air pollution, construction traffic, and maintenance and monitoring visits during site operation are the only elements likely to produce air pollution. However, this impact is not considered to be significant due to the limited amount of construction activity required and small number of visits likely needed during site operation. Furthermore, it is reasonable to assume that vehicle emissions from site visits and the decommissioning phase would reduce over time due to the uptake in electric vehicles. Owing to the nature of the proposed development it is considered that the impact of noise upon human health is low. It is anticipated that a CEMP will be required prior to construction works commencing on site, providing details of any necessary mitigation measures.



SCHEDULE 3		
Criteria	Yes / No [Include relevant details]	Is a significant effect likely? [Include details of mitigation to avoid significant effects where relevant.]
		The layout and choice of equipment will be designed and chosen in a way to minimise the potential impact of noise and vibration from the site during the operational phase. The amount of hardstanding will increase as a consequence of the proposed development. As such development proposals will include the management of surface water runoff through SuDS (where necessary), to minimise flood risk and improve water quality. The implementation of SuDS components acts as a treatment process to reduce contaminations levels in runoff to acceptable levels, delivering gradual improvement to water quality and providing an environmental buffer for accidental spills or unexpected high pollutant loadings from the Site.
Water Resources		
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 There are no water resources located on or in the nearby vicinity of the site. The majority of the site is located in Flood Zone 1, therefore there is a low probability of flooding from rivers and sea.	No As per previous column.



SCHEDULE 3		
Criteria	Yes / No [Include relevant details]	Is a significant effect likely? [Include details of mitigation to avoid significant effects where relevant.]
	A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) will be produced in support of the planning application to ensure that the development will not increase flood risk on site or elsewhere and that it will be designed to be resilient to flooding. An indicative Surface Water Drainage Strategy will also be prepared, incorporating Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) where appropriate.	
Biodiversity		
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 reserves or parks).	Yes There are no statutory nature conservation designations covering the site or wider agricultural land parcel. There are two designated sites in the surrounding area: • Therfield Heath Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Local Nature Reserve (0.9km to the south) • Holland Hall (Melbourn) Railway Cutting SSSI (1.75km to the east) The closest European / internationally designated sites are Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (10.5km to the north), Wicken Fen Ramsar (34.6km to the northeast), and Upper Nene	No There is potential for adverse effects on Therfield Heath Site from indirect impacts, such as dust and pollution. However, as habitats within the Site are not representative to the designated site, they are not considered to pose direct constraints as a result of the proposed works. The Site falls within the Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) of this SSSI, therefore, it is recommended that a CEMP is produced to minimise the potential impacts to the SSSI. Holland Hall Railway Cutting SSSI lies wholly outside of the designated area with no obvious ecological connectivity, as well as no disturbance impacts predicted through the Preliminary Ecological Assessment. Royston Road RSV lies wholly outside of the designated area with no obvious ecological connectivity, as well as



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	Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar (46.5km to the northwest).	no disturbance impacts predicted through the Preliminary Ecological Assessment. The proposals are not anticipated to have a detrimental impact on any nearby ecological features or designations. The forthcoming planning application will be supported by appropriate ecological assessments and surveys which will also inform Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Calculations including details as to how BNG can be achieved across the site through detailed landscape/ecological enhancements to mitigate any potential impact. It is anticipated that following the implementation of standard best practice construction measures and pollution prevention measures, it is unlikely that any significant adverse effects would occur. Such measures would be presented in a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) and adhered to during construction of the Site.
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?	Yes A Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) has been undertaken at the site which concluded that there is a likely presence of ecological receptors which may be adversely impact by the development scheme such as badgers, bats and birds. However, the woodland to the	No During the construction phase, a CEMP containing mitigation for protected species will be adhered to in order to minimise any potential adverse effects. It is anticipated that the woodland to the southwest and west of the development site will be retained, alongside any existing hedgerow. Further surveys and/or



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	southwest and west of the site will be retained within the design and appropriate buffers applied.	assessments have been recommended in order to inform a full evaluation of adverse effects. A Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment using the appropriate biodiversity metric will be undertaken to quantify the change in biodiversity value of the Site resulting from the proposed development. A minimum of 10% BNG will be delivered as part of the proposed development, in line with statutory requirements.
Landscape & Visual		
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?	No The site lies to the north of existing industrial and commercial development. There are no protected or high value landscapes or features nearby.	No The forthcoming planning application will be supported by the relevant landscape and visual assessments, visualisations and plans. These include a Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVA), photomontages and a Landscape Management Plan (LMP). Through the proposed landscaping of the site, it is expected that any loss of openness will be limited and the open character which contributes to the separation of settlements will be maintained.
Is the project in a location where it is likely to be highly visible to many people?	No From a site walkover, views of the site may be available within the immediate context of the site from receptors such as the PRow.	No The existing hedgerows and woodland create a barrier between the site, therefore it is unlikely that visual impacts upon these receptors in the immediate vicinity of the site would be significant.



SCHEDULE 3		
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	However, the site is well screened by hedgerows from both the PRow and the A505. The nearest residential receptors are the dwellings that lie approximately 1km north of the Site (at the end of Spring Lane following Ashwell Street) and approximately 1.1.km to the east of the Site (as shown in Figure 1). The development may be visible from these receptors. Furthermore, the proposed development will be visible from the publicly accessed Therfield Heath SSSI due to the slight south to north slope of the SSSI site, making it higher than the proposed Site.	The site is unlikely to be seen from neighbouring settlements due to their proximity. The visual impact on the nearest residential receptors and Therfield Heath SSSI is anticipated to be limited due to distance away from the site and anticipated screening of the solar farm.
Cultural Heritage & Archaeology		



SCHEDULE 3		
Criteria	Yes / No [Include relevant details]	Is a significant effect likely? [Include details of mitigation to avoid significant effects where relevant.]
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)?	Yes A designated scheduled monument has been identified to the north of the site. There are also a number of non-designated heritage assets identified, including Iron Age Mill Ditches, Bronze Age Barrow Cemetery, Two Bowl Barrows, and a Long Barrow. There is the potential for unknown archaeology to be present on site.	No Due to the nature of the site, it is not anticipated that there will detrimental impact on the character or setting of the nearby heritage features or designations. There will also be no development on the monument. An Archaeology and Heritage Statement will be submitted as part of the forthcoming planning application and this will establish whether any archaeological activity is likely to exist on or around the site and whether any adverse effects on existing heritage assets in the locality are likely to arise. This will propose suitable mitigation measures where necessary in consultation with Historic England such as preservation by record should finds of archaeological importance be identified.
Transport & Access		
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 A public footpath is adjacent the eastern border site in a north-south direction.	No It is not expected that the public footpath should be altered or changed in any way for the development. Hedgerows border the path aiding the screening of the proposed development area.
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?	No	No See previous column.



SCHEDULE 3		
Criteria	Yes / No [Include relevant details]	Is a significant effect likely? [Include details of mitigation to avoid significant effects where relevant.]
	Whilst there will be an increase in Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) during construction of the proposed development, this is considered to be minimal given the nature and scale of the development and will only have a temporary impact. There will be a small number of large vehicles required to deliver equipment during construction. Implementation of a Construction Transport Management Plan (CTMP) will ensure any construction impacts, resulting from an increase in vehicle movements, are minimised. The only requirement for staff to visit the site during the operational phase will be for maintenance purposes. No staff will be based at the site and there will be no daily staff related trip generation. Decommissioning will likely generate a similar level of traffic as the construction phase. This phase will also adhere to a management/ routing plan to ensure effects are minimised.	
Land Use		



SCHEDULE 3		
Criteria	Yes / No [Include relevant details]	Is a significant effect likely? [Include details of mitigation to avoid significant effects where relevant.]
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, farm/agricultural holdings, forestry, tourism, mining, quarrying, facilities relating to health, education, places of worship, leisure /sports / recreation.	Yes The site of the proposed development and its immediate surroundings are used predominantly for agricultural purposes. To the south of the site, past the A505 is an industrial/commercial park. To the north of the site are residential areas Bassingbourn, Kneesworth and Litlington.	No It is unlikely that existing receptors in the immediate vicinity of the site will be subject to significant adverse effects such as pollution and nuisance. Whilst the site is on agricultural land, the reversibility of the scheme, coupled with the temporary nature of solar farms means that the site could easily be reverted back to agricultural land when required. Further, as solar arrays have minimal contact with the ground, the potential for significant adverse effect is minimal. Owing to the scale of the developable area of the proposed development any loss in agricultural land is considered to be minimal in the context of the surrounding area. In addition to this, the use of a CEMP and soil management measures will ensure soils and agricultural quality is protected. There will be continued agricultural use of the land in the form of sheep grazing. This is anticipated to improve the soil health of the site following generations of arable tillage.
Are there any plans for future land uses on or around the location which could be affected by the project?	No	No
Land Stability & Climate		



SCHEDULE 3		
Criteria	Yes / No [Include relevant details]	Is a significant effect likely? [Include details of mitigation to avoid significant effects where relevant.]
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 The location is not susceptible to earthquakes, subsidence, landslides, erosion, or extreme/adverse climatic conditions which could cause the project to present environmental problems.	No See previous column.
Cumulative Effects		
Could this project together with existing and/or approved development result in cumulation of impacts together during the construction/operation phase?	Yes The neighbouring solar farm to the east of the site could cause cumulative effects. Other proposed developments in the area are of a sufficient distance away that significant cumulative effects are not likely.	No The neighbouring solar farm is well screened and subject to its own management plans to reduce the likelihood of any significant cumulative effects.
Transboundary Effects		
Is the project likely to lead to transboundary effects?	No There will be no transboundary effects as a result of the proposed development.	No
Summary		



SCHEDULE 3		
Criteria	Yes / No [Include relevant details]	Is a significant effect likely? [Include details of mitigation to avoid significant effects where relevant.]
Based on the above, is the project likely to have significant effects on the environment in relation to:		Yes/No
The characteristics of the development (considering size, cumulation with other development, use of natural resources, production of water, pollution, risk of accidents/disasters and human health)		No
The location of the development, with regard to the sensitivity of the environment that could be affected.		No
The type and characteristics of potential impacts (considering magnitude, spatial extent, complexity, probability, duration, frequency, reversibility, cumulation and effectiveness of mitigation).		No

Having regard to the criteria set out in Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations the works are not likely to have significant effects on the environment, as detailed above, and subsequently the development does not amount to EIA development.