

**Regulation 6(1) and 15(1) - Screening Opinion  
Selection Criteria for Screening Schedule 2 Development**

Ref: LW/22/0451	Parish: Ringmer
Date received: 28 <sup>th</sup> June 2022	Grid ref: 546615 112173
Date due: 19 <sup>th</sup> July 2022	
Site: Land east of Neaves Lane, Ringmer	
Proposal: 49.9 Megawatt Solar Power Installation	

The following are the selection criteria for screening Schedule 2 developments as set out in Schedule 3 of the 2011 regulations

Description of Development		Yes	No
Is it a Schedule 1 case?			✓
Is it a Schedule 2 case?		✓	
Further details or comments	The proposal represents a Schedule 2 Class 3 development as it involves an industrial installation for the production of electricity and occupies a site greater than 0.5 hectares in area.		
Is the site within, partly within or near a 'sensitive area' defined by Regulation 2 of the EIA Regulations?		✓	
Further details or comments	Adjacent to South Downs National Park. Plashetts Park Wood SSSI approx. 2.5km to north of site. Lewes Downs SSSI approx. 2.25 km to the south-west. There is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Medieval moated site and Tudor ruins, Laughton Place) approx. 1.4 km to the east of the site. There are also SAM's at Medieval ringwork at Clay Hill, approx. 2.3 km to the north-west and Medieval settlement site on eastern side of Saxon Down approx. 2.25 km to the south-west.		

**1 CHARACTERISTICS OF DEVELOPMENT**

(a) Natural Resources	Y/N	Significance
Will construction, operation or decommissioning of the project involve actions which will cause physical changes in the topography of the area?	N	The site is broadly flat and the framing system used for the solar panels would adapt to marginal changes in site levels.
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?	N	No.
Are there any areas on/around the location which contain important, high quality or scarce resources which could be affected by the project.	N	It is stated that the site is Grade 3 agricultural land and, on the assumption that this is correct, the development would not be carried out over land identified as the best/most versatile for agricultural purposes.

<b>(b) Waste</b>	<b>Y/N</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Will the project produce solid wastes during construction or operation or decommissioning?	Y	Construction waste would be minimal as the land has not previously been developed. However there would be waste materials/packaging etc arising from construction works that would require disposal. A waste minimisation statement can be secured by condition and be used to identify methods to minimise construction waste and to re-use or recycle where possible. It is not considered that there would be any significant environmental impact.
<b>(c) Pollution and nuisances</b>	<b>Y/N</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Will the project release pollutants or any hazardous, toxic or noxious substances to air?	Y	Potential for dust/air emissions during construction works. This could be effectively mitigated through a Construction Management Plan.
Will the project cause noise and vibration or release of light, heat, energy or electromagnetic radiation?	Y	<p>It is noted that there are dwellings close to the western site boundary and that there are a number of public footpaths nearby. At the construction phase, metal frames would be pile driven into the ground but to a minimal depth. There would also be traffic related noise.</p> <p>During operation Low level background noise would be generated by transformers/inverters/substations. Provided noise emitting infrastructure is sympathetically positioned and mitigation measures are in place where required, it is considered that noise impact would be minimal.</p> <p>Solar panels are designed to absorb light as this is how power is generated and therefore required to be maximised for efficiency. Site screening, the modest height of the arrays and the angle of the panels would also help reduce glint/glare. It is noted that there are airfields nearby and they would be consulted at the application stage.</p>
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?	Y	The site does not lie within a source protection zone. It is noted that there are watercourse nearby and there is the potential that the historic agricultural use of the site has resulted in contaminants being present in the ground. It is not considered that the application would result in any significant risk of water contamination provided appropriate mitigation/remediation measures are in adopted during construction works.

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?	<b>N</b>	No
<b>(d) Population and human health</b>	<b>Y/N</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Will there be any risk of major accidents (including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge) during construction, operation or decommissioning?	<b>N</b>	No
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)	<b>N</b>	No
<b>(e) Water Resources</b>	<b>Y/N</b>	<b>Significance</b>
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?	<b>Y</b>	<p>The site is not in a source protection zone although it is understood to fall within a principal aquifer in the lower greensand formation.</p> <p>The northern part of the site is crossed by a stream which forms one of the sources of Glynde Reach which, in turn, flows into the river Ouse. The areas immediately flanking the banks of the stream fall within Flood Zone 3. There are also areas where there is a risk of surface water flooding, predominantly aligned with the position of field boundary ditches and ponds.</p> <p>It is noted that a buffer would be maintained around flood zone 2/3 areas and that, as the solar arrays are mounted on frameworks, the majority of the site would remain permeable, with coverage restricted to concrete platforms on which plant such as transformers, inverters, substations and batteries would be mounted.</p>
<b>(f) Biodiversity (species and habitats)</b>	<b>Y/N</b>	<b>Significance</b>
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	<b>Y</b>	<p>The Southerham Farm Local Nature Reserve and Mount Caburn National Nature Reserve are both approx. 2.5km to the south of the site. Malling Down Local Nature Reserve is approx. 2.9km to the west. The verge on Neaves Lane has been designated as a Wildflower Verge by East Sussex County Council.</p> <p>Given the nature of the development and the</p>

<p>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. (Where designated indicate level of designation (international, national, regional or local))).</p>		<p>distance from relevant sites it is not considered that they would be subject to any significant impact. Provided suitable mitigation is put in place as part of any Construction Management Plan, it is considered that the integrity of the wildflower verge would be preserved.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p><b>Y</b></p>	<p>The site has no special status in this regard but it is noted that there are ponds on site which may provide habitat for great crested newts as well as hedgerow, trees and grassland that would provide habitat and food sources for a variety of fauna.</p> <p>It is considered that potential impact could be mitigated by relevant surveys and enhancement/protection works that could be secured by planning condition.</p>
<p><b>(g) Landscape and Visual</b></p>	<p><b>Y/N</b></p>	<p><b>Significance</b></p>
<p>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?</p>	<p><b>Y</b></p>	<p>The edge of the South Downs National Park is within approx. 120 metres of the southern and western site boundaries and the site is visible in views towards and from the park.</p> <p>Whilst not covering the application site itself, the joint LDC and SDNP Landscape Capacity Assessment states that land directly to the west around Potato Lane has a negligible to low capacity for development. Notwithstanding this, it is noted that the application site is low lying, is bordered by hedgerow and that the proposed development would involve structures of modest height only.</p> <p>Therefore, whilst visual impact is identified as a key consideration for 3 a) development in the indicative screening thresholds table accompanying the planning practice guidance for Environmental Impact Assessments, it is not considered that the development would result in visual impact of a significance that would warrant the submission of an EIA.</p>
<p>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?)</p>	<p><b>N</b></p>	<p>There is a sporadic housing around the site, including a short row of dwellings occupying the western side of Neaves Lane opposite the site. There are also public footpaths nearby, including on the higher ground within the South Downs National Park.</p> <p>It is not considered that this would result in sustained visibility of the site to a significant</p>

		<p>number of people, particularly due to the modest scale of the development (in terms of height) and the natural screening around the site.</p> <p>It is therefore considered that visual impact could be suitably assessed as part of the planning application process.</p>
<b>(h) Cultural Heritage/Archaeology</b>	<b>Y/N</b>	<b>Significance</b>
<p>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)?</p>	<b>YU</b>	<p>It is considered that sufficient distance is maintained between the site and heritage assets to prevent any significant impact upon their setting. The northern part of the site is within an Archaeological Notification Area and a suitable assessment of potential impact upon archaeology would be secured as part of any planning submission.</p>
<b>(i) Transport and Access</b>	<b>Y/N</b>	<b>Significance</b>
<p>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?</p>	<b>N</b>	<p>There are public footpaths nearby but none crossing or directly adjacent to the site.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<b>Y</b>	<p>The site is not within an area with any identified air quality issues. The main access to the site from the west passes through the village of Ringmer and it is recommended that construction traffic approaches the site from the east or north so as to minimise potential for congestion within the village. Main road access is available from both of these directions although traffic leaving the site should not head east as it would require a right hand turn onto the A22 at what is a busy junction.</p>
<b>(j) Land Use</b>	<b>Y/N</b>	<b>Significance</b>
<p>Are there existing land uses or community facilities on or around the location which could be affected by the project?</p>	<b>N</b>	
<p>Are there any plans for future land uses on or around the location which could be affected by the project?</p>	<b>N</b>	<p>The site is identified in the LDC Interim Land Availability Assessment (LAA) as being potentially suitable for a solar farm development.</p>
<b>(k) Land Stability and Climate</b>	<b>Y/N</b>	<b>Significance</b>
<p>Is the location susceptible to earthquakes, subsidence, landslides, erosion, or extreme /adverse climatic conditions, e.g. temperature inversions,</p>	<b>N</b>	



fogs, severe winds, which could cause the project to present environmental problems?		
<b>(l) Cumulative Effects</b>	<b>Y/N</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Could this project together with existing and/or approved development result in cumulation of impacts together during the construction/operation phase?	<b>Y</b>	<p>There are a number of applications for large housing developments around Ringmer currently under consideration and construction traffic routing would therefore be an important matter to be assessed at the planning application stage/secured by condition.</p> <p>The nature of the development means it would not generate any significant level of traffic post completion and, whilst there are other solar farms within the wider surrounding area, as well as current application for a solar farm on nearby land around Norlington Lane to the north-west, it is considered that sufficient space is maintained between these neighbouring sites to prevent coalescence.</p>
<b>(m) Transboundary Effects</b>	<b>Y/N</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Is the project likely to lead to transboundary effects?	<b>Y</b>	<p>Given the proximity to the South Downs National Park there will be an element of visual impact upon its setting. The National Park Authority would be consulted as part of the planning process.</p>

Case Officer: James Smith

Specialist Advisor - Planning

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2022

Authorised by: Leigh Palmer

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2022