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26 July 2023

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Principal Planning Officer
Eastleigh Borough Council
Eastleigh
HAMPSHIRE
SO50 9YN

**Proposed Solar Farm at Allington Lane, Fair Oak, Eastleigh, Hampshire, SO50 7DD:
Screening Request**

Dear Dawn,

I am writing under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 to seek a formal Screening Opinion under Part 2 of these regulations for a proposed solar farm near Eastleigh. A map showing the general scale and location of the proposed development is attached in Appendix 1 (initial maximum scale of development) and Appendix 2 (current working layout incorporating amendments).

The proposed site is currently unused agricultural land surrounded by hedges and mature tree belts. The proposed development would involve the installation of a solar farm with a generating capacity of around c.27MWp AC and a site area of approximately 22 ha split over several fields. It is also proposed to include containerised battery storage as part of the proposed development. The applicant has undertaken the removal of specific areas of solar panels to account for possible Great Crested Newts habitats and have included areas of set back from any notable trees and woodland.

Whilst solar farms are not specifically mentioned under Schedule 2 of the regulations, Column 1 of Schedule 2 does list '(a) Industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam and hot water (unless included in Schedule 1)' and Column 2 establishes that if the area of such a development exceeds 0.5ha then it should be considered under Schedule 2. As a development which will generate electricity and will be above 0.5ha Locogen have taken the precautionary approach of seeking a screening opinion for this proposed development.

Appendix 1 to this letter sets out Locogen's assessment of the proposal under the terms of Schedule 3 of the regulations and has concluded that the development is not one which needs to be accompanied by a formal Environmental Impact Assessment. Instead, an application for development will be supported by sufficient environmental

Commented [EH1]: better to use AC

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Commented [IM3]: Is this the total field area or the area with panels? If latter I would change to the whole field area, if former then we are going to struggle more than I thought on the capacity...

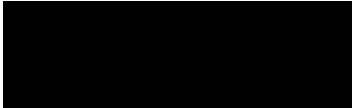


information as the applicant and the planning authorities agree necessary to make a determination under the Planning Acts having due regard to the requirements of the respective development plans.

Where additional assessments may be required this has been identified in Appendix 1. We would propose to agree the scope of these works as part of ongoing discussions between ourselves over the next few weeks and months.

It is noted in this respect that a pre-application application was also previously made to Eastleigh Borough Council in January 2023 with a response provided in February 2023. The advice contained in that response has been used to frame this request. The applicant would welcome any additional advice that Eastleigh Borough Council may wish to provide at this stage.

Yours sincerely,



Ian McLean

Associate Director



Appendix 1

SCHEDULE 3 SELECTION CRITERIA FOR SCREENING SCHEDULE 2 DEVELOPMENT

In seeking this Screening Opinion consideration has been given to Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations 2017. The format of this request therefore follows the criteria set out in the order they appear in that Schedule.

1. Characteristics of development

The characteristics of development must be considered with particular regard to—	Applicants Initial Assessment
(a) the size and design of the whole development;	The proposed development will take up several unused agricultural fields totalling approximately 22 ha. The project has been designed so as to fit within these existing field boundaries, which in turn provide containment and screening from visual receptors in the surrounding area. The panels will be mounted on frames which will be no higher than 3.5m in height. It is concluded that the proposal would not require EIA as a result of this consideration.
(b) cumulation with other existing development and/or approved development;	There are no similar developments of this kind in the immediate area, therefore the cumulative impacts are considered low. It is concluded that the proposal would not require EIA as a result of this consideration.

(c) the use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity;	Whilst there will be some limited minor impact on soil from the installation of the plant the ongoing operation of the plant will not have any long terms significant effects on the considerations listed. In fact by continuing to manage the existing 'rewilding' of this previously agricultural land which would be unlikely in a do-nothing scenario then the proposed development could be considered to have a positive long-term impact on these considerations. Assessments of the ecology, landscape, agricultural land and hydrology will be undertaken and presented alongside the proposed planning application. It is concluded that the proposal would not require EIA as a result of this consideration.
(d) the production of waste;	The proposed development will not generate significant levels of waste during its operational period. At the end of its lifetime plant will be removed from site and where possible components reused or recycled in line with requirements at that time. It is concluded that the proposal would not require EIA as a result of this consideration.
(e) pollution and nuisances;	The proposed development will not result in significant levels of pollution or nuisances. A noise assessment will accompany the application to ensure that noise generated by the invertors used on the site will not exceed required levels at the nearest noise sensitive properties. It is concluded that the proposal would not require EIA as a result of this consideration.

(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;	On the basis that the proposed development will generate electricity from a renewable source it's intention is to address and in doing so help to avoid the natural disasters which might otherwise arise from doing nothing to deal with climate change. No other major disasters are considered likely as a result of this development, however a glint and glare assessment will be undertaken to ensure that users of the roads and railway which surround the site are not adversely affected. It is concluded that the proposal would not require EIA as a result of this consideration.
(g) the risks to human health (for example, due to water contamination or air pollution).	The proposed development will not give rise to contamination or pollution which would present a risk to human health. It is concluded that the proposal would not require EIA as a result of this consideration.
Overall, it is concluded that the Characteristics of the proposed development would not give rise to a level of environmental impact or impacts which would require an EIA to be undertaken.	



2. Location of development

The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by development must be considered, with particular regard, to the following:

The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by development must be considered, with particular regard, to	Applicants Initial Assessment
(a) the existing and approved land use;	The area is currently unused agricultural land. The proposed development offers the potential for seasonal grazing under and alongside the proposed development. It is concluded that this locational consideration would not require EIA for this application.
(b) the relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and its underground;	The natural biodiversity of the site would improve through positive land management during the operational phase of the proposed development whereafter a decision could be made as to whether to repower the site or return it to agricultural land or other uses. It is concluded that this locational consideration would not require EIA for this application.
(c) the absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to the following areas—	In general terms the ability of the site to absorb this level of development has been a primary consideration during the site finding and design process. Detailed consideration of the criteria listed is provided below. It is concluded that this locational consideration would not require EIA for this application.
(i) wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths;	The River Itchen SSSI is located to the south and west of the proposed development, separated both by the existing railway and road network. An assessment of hydrological impacts will support the planning application. It is concluded that this locational consideration would not require EIA for this application.

(ii) coastal zones and the marine environment;	Although the site is only a few km's from the tidal areas of the Solent, it is separated from this by the extensive built-up areas of Southampton and surrounding settlements. It has therefore been concluded that there will be limited interaction and or direct effects arising from the proposed development on the marine environment or any associated natural coastal zones. It is concluded that this locational consideration would not require EIA for this application.
(iii) mountain and forest areas;	There are no mountain or significant forest areas affected by this site and as such this has been scoped out of further consideration. Proposals for the protection and enhancement of trees and hedgerows will be provided in support of the planning application. It is concluded that this locational consideration would not require EIA for this application.
(iv) nature reserves and parks;	Despite the proximity to Itchen Valley Country Park, it is not considered that there will be a direct impact on the park from the Development by means of embedded mitigation and consideration within design. It is concluded that this locational consideration would not require EIA for this application.
(v) European sites and other areas classified or protected under national legislation;	Whilst there are European and other nationally designated areas located close to the development, it is anticipated, as highlighted above, that there is sufficient separation between the proposed development and these designations that neither will be directly nor significantly affected by this site. This will be confirmed through the assessments supporting the planning application. It is concluded that this locational consideration would not require EIA for this application.

(vi) areas in which there has already been a failure to meet the environmental quality standards, laid down in Union legislation and relevant to the project, or in which it is considered that there is such a failure;	There are no environmentally degraded areas affected by this site and as such this can be scoped out of further consideration. It is concluded that this locational consideration would not require EIA for this application.
(vii) densely populated areas;	The site is within proximity to the borough of Eastleigh, on the outskirts of Southampton, and will be adjacent to the One Horton Heath Development which will directly benefit from the Proposed Development. An assessment of residential amenity will be undertaken in support of the planning application. It is concluded that this locational consideration would not require EIA for this application.
(viii) landscapes and sites of historical, cultural or archaeological significance.	There are no known landscapes or sites of historical, cultural or archaeological significance directly affected by this site. An assessment of landscape and cultural heritage will be undertaken in support of the planning application. It is concluded that this locational consideration would not require EIA for this application.
Overall, it is concluded that the Location of the proposed development would not give rise to a level of environmental impact or impacts which would require an EIA to be undertaken.	

3. Types and characteristics of the potential impact

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), (i.e. population and human health; biodiversity, with particular attention to species and habitats protected under Directive 92/43/EEC(1) and Directive 2009/147/EC(2); land, soil, water, air and climate; material assets, cultural heritage and the landscape; the interaction between these factors) taking into account:

- the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);
- the nature of the impact;
- the transboundary nature of the impact;
- the intensity and complexity of the impact;
- the probability of the impact;
- the expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact;
- the cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or approved development; and
- the possibility of effectively reducing the impact.



Applicants Initial Assessment

Having undertaken initial desk-based assessments as well as initial surveys and site walkovers to consider potential impacts arising from the development on the factors specified in Regulation 4(2) it is the applicant's view that none of the potential impacts arising from the construction or operation of the proposed development are likely to be of such a scale, magnitude, nature, intensity, duration as to be considered significant enough to warrant an EIA being undertaken for this proposed development.

Any impacts arising will be sufficiently small in scale, localised in nature and ultimately reversible that they can be appropriately assessed as part of the Town and Country Planning process without recourse to full Environmental Impact Assessment.

The applicant will also demonstrate the extent to which they have sought to include opportunities to mitigate potential impacts through enhancement measures within the design and implementation of the proposed development.

In doing so the applicant will have due regard to the requirements of the development plans and frame any assessments in such a manner as to address the specific requirements of these plans.

Consideration will also be given to the contribution of the proposed development to meeting Climate Change and Net Zero objectives set out by government since 2017 when the EIA Regulations came into force. The extent to which the borough and county authorities have adopted these measures will also be a material consideration in determining this application.

Overall, it is concluded that the **type and characteristics of the potential impacts** arising from the proposed development would not give rise to a level of environmental impact or impacts which would require an EIA to be undertaken.

Appendix 1: Plan of the initial Proposed Development





Appendix 2: Current plan of the revised Proposed Development (final layout still to be agreed)

