

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

1. CASE DETAILS			
Case Reference	SMD/2023/0336	Brief description of the project / development	35MW PV Solar PV development, 34 hectares
Appellant			
LPA	Staffordshire Moorlands		
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)			
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) Energy Industry (a) Industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam and hot water (unless included in Schedule 1).	
Is the development within, partly within, or near a 'sensitive area' as defined by Regulation 2 of the EIA Regulations?		Yes	
If YES, which area?		The whole site is within risk zones of several SSSIs, the nearest being: Swineholes Wood and Black Heath SSSI, Rue Hill SSSI, Bath Pasture SSSI, Whiston Eaves SSSI and Froghall Meadow and Pastures SSSI. Natural England to be consulted on any development that includes Infrastructure- Pipelines and underground cables, pylons and overhead cables.	
Are the applicable thresholds/criteria in Column 2 exceeded/met?		Yes	
If yes, which applicable threshold/criteria?		The area of the development exceeds 0.5 hectares	
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)		No	
If yes, is a copy of the SO/SD on the file?			
If yes, is the SO/SD positive?			
4. ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT			
Has the appellant supplied an ES for the current or previous (if reserved matters or conditions) application?		No	

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**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 REFERING TO THE PROJECT / DEVELOPMENT.**

A Screening Criteria Question	B Response to the Screening Criteria Question in Column A (Yes/No and explanation of reasons) Briefly explain reasons and, if applicable and/or known, include name of feature(s) and proximity to site(s)		C Is a Significant Effect Likely? (Yes/No and explanation of reasons (nb if the answer in Column B is 'No', Column C is not applicable)) 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.	
5. NATURAL RESOURCES				
5.1 Will construction, operation or decommissioning of the project involve actions which will cause physical changes in the topography of the area?	Yes / No / N/A	Panel construction will not affect topography. However it is unclear whether the proposed internal access tracks or the Temporary Construction Compound may require some level changes.	No	Reasons- the area that may be affected is relatively small and could be restored post construction.
5.2 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?				
5.3 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?				
6. WASTE				
6.1 Will the project produce solid wastes during construction or operation or decommissioning?				

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7. POLLUTION AND NUISANCES				
7.1 Will the project release pollutants or any hazardous, toxic or noxious substances to air?				
7.2 Will the project cause noise and vibration or release of light, heat, energy or electromagnetic radiation?				
7.3 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?				
7.4 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?	Yes	<p>The River Churnet, which the site's watercourses flow into, is in Moderate condition in terms of WFD assessment, rather than Good. Any pollution run-off into brooks could affect the Churnet further.</p> <p>Most areas of SSSI near to the site are in unfavourable condition. However, the proposed development would not impact SSSIs directly.</p>	Yes	Ground disturbance during construction, and potential changes to land management such as compaction and over-grazing could cause higher run-off and silt pollution in high rainfall events if not avoided or managed.
8. POPULATION AND HUMAN HEALTH				
8.1 Will there be any risk of major accidents (including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge) during construction, operation or decommissioning?				
8.2 Will the project present a risk to the population (having regard to				

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population density) and their human health during construction, operation or decommissioning? (for example due to water contamination or air pollution)				
9. WATER RESOURCES				
9.1 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?	Yes	There are watercourses/ drains within the site, which drain to the Cotton Brook, and then into the River Churnet.	Yes	Ground disturbance and compaction during construction, and potential changes to land management such as over-grazing, could cause higher run-off and silt pollution in high rainfall events if not avoided or managed.
10. BIODIVERSITY (SPECIES AND HABITATS)				
10.1 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 reserves or parks. (Where designated indicate level of designation (international, national, regional or local))).	Yes	New House Farm (east of) Site of Biological Importance is a Local Wildlife site of county importance, entirely within the proposal site. It is designated for its species-rich grassland. This would be adversely impacted by panel installation as it would shade the grassland. This area (2.5 hectares) would need to be avoided. Ashtree Lodge Pastures SBI is located adjacent the site to the east, on the other side of the road. Windy Harbour SBI is located 80m to the north of the site. Several other Local Wildlife Sites exist nearby in all directions. Indirect impacts could include impeding species migration and severing habitat links between these designated sites.	Yes	Loss or degradation of New House Farm (east of) SBI. Loss or degradation of other semi-improved grassland- possible LWS value or priority habitats. These habitats form a corridor/ stepping stone between other designated sites. Avoidance, mitigation or compensation may not be possible, appropriate or viable within the site or off-site. As the site sits inbetween several locally designated sites, and near to several Nationally designated SSSIs, if impacts on habitats within the site are not avoided/ mitigated, this would disrupt existing habitat links and potentially

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		<p>There are several areas of semi-improved grassland within the site that may also be of higher distinctiveness if assessed- these may be of LWS standard or otherwise meet the criteria for priority habitats. Full assessment would be required to determine their status.</p> <p>The site is within the Grassland habitat opportunity area within the Nature Recovery Network mapping, and in a strategic area for habitat creation/ enhancement.</p>		<p>prevent further restoration/ creation of habitats to enhance the ecological network.</p>
<p>10.2 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?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>A number of priority ground nesting birds have been recorded in the wider area, that are likely to use open grassland habitats on the site, including curlew, skylark, golden plover, snipe, lapwing and meadow pipit. Ground nesting birds will not tend to use panel fields for nesting, and may also avoid in winter as well. Breeding and wintering bird surveys are required.</p> <p>Brown Hare and Badger have been recorded in the area- access gates in any fencing would be required to allow continued access for mammals.</p> <p>Great crested newts have been recorded in ponds to the west of the site, and could be present.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>These declining birds are threatened by other agricultural activities and the loss of further nesting/ feeding areas to them would be significant to their conservation. As there does not appear to be an adequate area of open land within the site/ landholding that could be used as a compensation area, mitigation would need to be provided off-site and it is not clear whether this would be possible or viable.</p> <p>Impact to other species would not be significant if mitigation measures were put in place.</p>

11. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL

<p>11.1 Are there any areas or features on or around the location which are protected for their landscape and</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The site is within the Churnet Valley Masterplan area.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Would have a visual impact, as well as potentially impacting future use of the tramway.</p>
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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).		Part of the site intersects with the route of an old tramway to Cauldon Quarry, which is a local heritage asset. Hofton's Cross Meadow Local Nature Reserve lies 260m to the east; the proposal site is visible from the LNR.		
11.2 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?)				
12. CULTURAL HERITAGE/ARCHAEOLOGY				
12.1 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).				
13. TRANSPORT AND ACCESS				
13.1 Are there any routes on or around the location which are used by the public for access to recreation or				

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

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other facilities, which could be affected by the project?				
13.2 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?				
14. LAND USE				
14.1 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, farm/agricultural holdings, forestry, tourism, mining, quarrying, facilities relating to health, education, places of worship, leisure /sports / recreation.				
14.2 Are there any plans for future land uses on or around the location which could be affected by the project?				
15. LAND STABILITY AND CLIMATE				
15.1 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?				
16. CUMULATIVE EFFECTS				
16.1 Could this project together with existing and/or approved development	Yes	If other developments will have a negative impact on the same receptors (priority ground	Yes	Solar farms, battery storage areas and other developments that impact open farmland an all

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result in cumulation of impacts together during the construction/operation phase?		nesting birds) then cumulative impacts could occur. Any development, not just solar farms, should be considered.		displace ground nesting birds, and if not adequately mitigated result in long term or permanent loss of habitat.
17. TRANSBOUNDARY EFFECTS				
17.1 Is the project likely to lead to transboundary effects? ²				

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.

18. CONCLUSIONS – ACCORDING TO EIA REGULATIONS SCHEDULE 3

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19. SCREENING DECISION

If a SO/SD has been provided do you agree with it?	
Is it necessary to issue a SD?	
Is an ES required?	

20. ASSESSMENT (EIA REGS SCHEDULE 2 DEVELOPMENT)	OUTCOME	
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Is likely to have significant effects on the environment	ES required	Yes
Not likely to have significant effects on the environment	ES not required	
More information is required to inform direction	Request further info	

21. REASON FOR SCREENING

Loss and degradation of a Local Wildlife Site and possible other priority habitats. Impacts to ground nesting priority birds, and severing of habitat corridors. Potential impacts to water quality with potential to impact local brooks and River Churnet.

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DATE	31 July 2023