

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING
(ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSEMENT) REGULATIONS 2017**

SCREENING OPINION

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	Case details	
a	Applicant case reference	
b	Application number	2020/1409/EA
b(i)	Parish	Bracon Ash and Hethel
d	Site Address	Land East Of Cranes Road Hethel Norfolk
e	Proposal	Proposed solar farm
f	Approval of reserved matters?	No
	Approval of conditions?	No
	If Yes, enter the description of development subject of the related planning permission.	n/a
g	Area of development/works/new floorspace	Site Area 40 Hectares

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	EIA Details	
A	Schedule 1	
(i)	Is the proposed development Schedule 1 development as described in Schedule 1 of the EIA Regulations?	No
(ii)	If yes, under which description of development? (i.e. no. 1)	
B	Schedule 2	
(i)	Is the proposed development Schedule 2 development as described in Column 1 of Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations?	Yes
(ii)	If yes, which description in Column 1? (i.e. no. 1)	3a
(iii)	Is the development within, partly within, or near a 'sensitive area' as defined by Regulation 2 of the EIA Regulations?	No
(iv)	If Yes, which area?	
(v)	Are the applicable thresholds/criteria in Column 2 exceeded/met?	Yes
(vi)	If yes, which applicable threshold/criteria?	0.5ha

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	LPA Screening	
(i)	Has the LPA issued a Screening Opinion?	No
(ii)	Has the SoS issued a Screening Direction?	No
(iii)	If yes, is a copy of the Screening Opinion/Screening Direction on the file?	n/a
(iv)	If yes, was the Screening Opinion/Screening Direction positive?	n/a
(v)	Are the applicable thresholds/criteria in Column 2 exceeded/met?	No
	Reserved matters/conditions applications only	
(i)	Was the original planning permission subject to EIA screening?	n/a

(ii)	Was a Screening Opinion/Screening Direction issued for the original planning permission?	n/a
(iii)	If yes, is a copy of the Screening Opinion/Screening Direction for the original planning permission on file?	n/a

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	Environmental Statement	
	Has the applicant supplied an Environmental Statement for the current or previous (if reserved matters or conditions) application?	No

Screening

A. Checklist

Questions to be considered	Likely/Unlikely – briefly describe	Is this likely to result in a Significant effect? Yes/No – why?
1. Will construction, operation or decommissioning of the project involve actions which will cause physical changes in the locality (topography, land use, changes in waterbodies etc)	The development will result in a change in the land use from agricultural use to a solar farm	No. The development will have an impact on the local landscape but this will be relatively localised and can be considered through supporting documents with a planning application
2. Will construction or operation of the project use natural resources such as land, water, materials or energy, especially any resources which have non-renewable or in short supply?	Use of energy and materials in construction of the solar farm	No. The amount of materials required for the construction of the solar farm is not significant.
3. Will the project involve use, storage, transport, handling or production of substances or materials which could be harmful to human health or the environment or raise concerns about actual or perceived risks to human health?	No	No – not applicable to this proposal
4. Will the Project produce solid wastes during construction or operation or decommissioning?	Yes	No – A small number of construction related waste products likely to be produced during construction. This is not unusual and unlikely to be significant levels and therefore unlikely to give rise to significant effects.
5. Will the project release pollutants or any hazardous, toxic or noxious substances to the air?	Negligible	No – Small amount of vehicle exhaust pollutants during construction unlikely to result in significant effects on air quality
6. Will the project cause noise and vibration or release of light, heat energy or electromagnetic radiation?	Some potential for noise disturbance and other impacts during the construction process, plus noise from any proposed plant	Noise, vibration and light disturbance likely during construction but is temporary in nature and unlikely to result in a significant impact, whilst the noise from any plant or substation should be able to be mitigated for. These impacts can be considered through the planning application process

	or substations that may be required.	and controlled through environmental nuisance legislation
7. Will the project lead to risks of contamination of land or water from releases of pollutants onto the ground or into surface waters, groundwater, coastal waters or the sea?	No	Not applicable
8. 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 – not applicable to this proposal
9. Will there be any risk of accidents during construction or operation of the project which could affect human health or the environment?	No particular risk	No – Health and Safety during construction covered by other legislation
10. Will the project result in social changes, for example, in demography, traditional lifestyles, employment?	No	N/a
11. Are there any areas on or around the location which are protected under international or national or local legislation for their ecological, landscape, cultural or other value, which could be affected by the project?	The site is not located within, adjacent or in close proximity to any Site of Special Scientific Interest; Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area or Ramsar Site.	No – not applicable to this proposal
12. Are there any other areas on or around the location which are important or sensitive for reasons of their ecology eg wetlands, watercourses or other waterbodies, the coastal zone, mountains, forests or woodlands, which could be affected by the project?	No	No – not applicable to this proposal
13. Are there any areas on or around the location which are used by protected, important or sensitive species of fauna or flora eg for breeding, nesting, foraging, resting, overwintering, migration, which could be affected by the project?	Not known however Ecology reports and surveys would be expected to be provided with any application to identify any site-specific sensitivities	No. The impact of the development and mitigation measures can be considered through the planning process
14. Are there any inland, coastal, marine or underground waters	No	No – not applicable to this proposal

on or around the location which could be affected by the project?		
15. Are there any areas or features of high landscape or scenic value on or around the location which could be affected by the project?	No	No – not applicable to this proposal
16. Is the project in a location where it is likely to be highly visible to many people?	Visible from the adjoining public highway, albeit with low usage and also from public footpaths that both adjoin and bisect the site	Visual impact can be assessed through an LVIA submitted as part of the application.
17. 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?	Public footpaths adjoin and bisect the site which are used for recreation	Visual impact can be assessed through an LVIA submitted as part of the application with mitigation measures provided for impact on public rights of way.
18. 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 – not applicable to this proposal
19. Are there any areas or features of historic or cultural importance on or around the location which could be affected by the project?	Yes – Grade II listed Bracon Ash and outbuildings 130 metres to the east and Grade II listed Curzon Hall to the north	Due to intervening screening, the development is unlikely to have a significant impact on their setting with any mitigation achievable through the planning application process
20. Is the project located in a previously undeveloped area where there will be a loss of greenfield land?	Yes, land was previously undeveloped	Loss of greenfield land will need to be balanced against benefits from provision of renewable energy
21. Are there existing land uses on or around the location eg homes, gardens, other private property, industry, commerce, recreation, public open space, community facilities, agriculture, forestry, tourism, mining or quarrying which could be affected by the project?	No	No – not applicable to this proposal
22. Are there any areas on or around the location which are densely populated or built-up, which could be affected by the project?	No	No – not applicable to this proposal
23. Are there any areas on or around the location which are occupied by sensitive land	No	No – not applicable to this proposal

uses eg hospitals, schools, places of worship, community facilities, which could be affected by the project?		
24. Are there any areas on or around the location which contain important, high quality or scarce resources eg groundwater, surface waters, forestry, agriculture, fisheries, tourism, minerals, which could be affected by the project?	No	No – not applicable to this proposal
25. Is the project location susceptible to earthquakes, subsidence, landslides, erosion, flooding or extreme or adverse climatic conditions eg temperature inversions, fogs, severe winds, which could cause the project to present environmental problems?	No	No – not applicable to this proposal
26. Are there any plans for future land uses on or around the location which could be affected by the project?	No	No – not applicable to this proposal
27. Are there any other factors which should be considered, such as consequential development which could lead to environmental effects, or the potential for cumulative impacts with other existing or planned activities in the locality?	Existing solar farm at Mulbarton; other proposals to the west for new economic development	The development would not be seen in the context of the existing or other potential solar development in the area, nor with the proposals to the west of the parish, and therefore it is not considered that there are cumulative impacts that would require this proposal to be subject to EIA.

B	Conclusions	
(i)	Schedule and category of development	Schedule 2 10(b)
(ii)	Summary of features of project and of its location	
	<p>a) Characteristics of development (see note 1 below)</p> <p>The proposal is for a new solar array on a site of approximately 40 hectares. It is proposed that the site will have an installed capacity of 25 megawatt-peak (MWp). The arrays will be contained within two fenced areas separated by the public right of way that bisects the site.</p> <p>It is not considered likely that there is any significant potential for pollution or major accidents.</p>	
	<p>b) Location of development (see note 2 below)</p> <p>The site is located in a rural location in the north of the parish of Bracon Ash and Hethel. There are a small number of houses scattered in the local landscape, with the larger settlement of Mulbarton to the east.</p> <p>There are a couple of designated heritage assets in relatively close proximity. Consideration of the impact on these and possible archaeological impacts can be assessed through the planning application process.</p>	

	In respect of ecology, the development is not proposed on land that has any specific designation. It is considered that if there are any impacts on ecology they can be adequately resolved within the planning application process and are not considered to result in significant environmental effects to warrant EIA.	
	<p>c) Characteristics of the potential impact (see note 3 below)</p> <p>The primary impacts of the development to be considered are from visual impact and activity relating to construction of the solar farm.</p> <p>The impacts would be relatively localised and would not be transfrontier. The impacts can be addressed through a planning application and submission of relevant assessments and, if acceptable, through the imposition of relevant conditions where necessary</p>	
(iii)	If a Screening Opinion/Screening Direction has been provided, do you agree with it?	n/a
(iv)	Is it necessary to issue a Screening Opinion/Screening Direction?	Yes
(v)	Is an Environmental Statement required?	No

Note 1: Characteristics of development

(Having regard to—

- (a) the size and design of the whole development;
- (b) cumulation with other existing development and/or approved development;
- (c) the use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity;
- (d) the production of waste;
- (e) pollution and nuisances;
- (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;
- (g) the risks to human health (for example, due to water contamination or air pollution).

Note 2: Location of development

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

- (a) the existing and approved land use;
- (b) the relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and its underground;
- (c) the absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to the following areas—
 - (i) wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths;
 - (ii) coastal zones and the marine environment;
 - (iii) mountain and forest areas;
 - (iv) nature reserves and parks;
 - (v) European sites and other areas classified or protected under national legislation 66
 - (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;
 - (vii) densely populated areas;
 - (viii) landscapes and sites of historical, cultural or archaeological significance.

In considering whether significant environmental effects are likely, you should have regard to the Annex A of C2/99 and indicative thresholds and selection criteria in Schedule 3 of the regulations. You should also note that in certain cases other statutory and non statutory designations – not included in the formal definition of “sensitive areas” in the regs, but which are nonetheless environmentally sensitive may be relevant in determining whether significant environmental effects are likely and therefore whether EIA is required.

Note 3: 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), taking into account—

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

C	Screening Decision	
	Schedule 2 development – not likely to have significant effects on the environment	ES not required

Case Officer

Signed : Tim Barker

Date :10 September 2020