

CV/GRO/BRS.6654

21 June 2016

Development Management
Cheshire East Council
PO Box 606
Municipal Buildings
Crewe
Cheshire
CW1 9HP

BY E-MAIL AND POST

Dear Sir/Madam

Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England) Regulations 2011 (as amended 2015): Regulation 5 (1) Request for a Screening Opinion.

Proposed installation of utilisation engines for the generation of Short Term Operating Reserve (STOR) electricity of up to 20MW for the Local Distribution Network on land at Fields Farm, Congleton Road, Sandbach, Cheshire, CW11 4TE

On behalf of INRG Solar Limited, Pegasus Group duly requests Cheshire East Council's Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Opinion for the provision of an electrical generation facility on land at Fields Farm, Sandbach, CW11 4TE.

This Screening Opinion request is made under Regulation 5 (1) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 (as amended 2015) (EIA Regulations). The information contained within this letter is considered to be in accordance with Regulation 5 which states that a request for a screening opinion shall be accompanied by:

- (a) A plan sufficient to identify the land;
- (b) A brief description of the nature and the purpose of the development and its possible effects on the environment; and
- (c) Such other information or representations as the person making this request may wish to provide or make.

Site Location and Description

Located at 100m National Grid Reference SJ759623 (easting 375909, northing 362384) the screening site relates to a rectangular parcel of agricultural land positioned to the immediate east of the Fields Farm fisheries. There are no environmental or cultural designations located within the subject site. The site lies entirely within Flood Zone 1, at low risk of flooding, as defined by the Environment Agency Flood Risk Map for Planning.

The Site Location Plan is enclosed [Enclosure 1].

A photograph of the site is set out below (photo taken from the north edge of the site looking south):-



Development Proposal

The development proposal relates to the introduction of generation engines that will provide standby electricity reserve to the National Grid, known as Short Term Operating Reserve (STOR). STOR provides balance and stability to the National Grid system during specific and unexpected periods of high demand or system constraints. The propose scheme would have a generation capacity of 20MW and is envisaged to be in operation for a maximum of 500 hours per year. The STOR contract would require INRG to make the generating plant to be available to generate power at specific times during certain period in the week, this is typically a two-hour contract between the hours of 16.00hrs and 22.30hrs.

The development would comprise a number of containerised diesel engines. Ancillary infrastructure would include power control systems, banded fuel tanks, transformers, inverters, substation, acoustic perimeter fencing and security systems. The development would have a minimum operational lifespan of 10 years. There are no by-products generated by the system. At the end of the temporary period of the planning permission the engines can be redeployed and reused elsewhere.

It is envisaged that any planning application would be submitted in 2016.

Environmental Designations

A desk-top search utilising the Magic Interactive tool was undertaken to identify any environmental or cultural designations or schemes within 3 km of the site. To summarise, the site is not located within any sensitive sites as defined by the EIA Regulations.

Table 1: Designations within 3km of centre of site:-

Topic	Designation
National Nature Reserve	No NNR within 3km of site.
Sites of Special Scientific Interest	There is one SSSI within 3km of the site:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sandbach Flashes SSSI is located 3km to the west and is a site of physiographical and biological importance. It consists of a series of pools formed as a result of subsidence due to the solution of underlying salt deposits. The water varies from freshwater, chemically similar to other Cheshire meres, to highly saline. Inland saline habitats are extremely rare and are of considerable interest because of the unusual associations of plants and animals.
Listed Buildings	Various within 3km of the site.
Registered Park and Garden	No Registered Parks within 3km of site.
National Forest	No National Forest within 3km of site.
Scheduled Monuments	There is a cluster of three scheduled monuments located 1.5km to the south of the site.
Local Nature Reserve	None identified within 3km of the site.
Ramsar Sites	No Ramsar sites within 3km of centre of site.
Special Areas of Conservation	No SAC within 3km of centre of site.
World Heritage Site	No WHS within 3km of centre of site.
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty	No AoNB within 3km of site.

Possible Environmental Effects

Overall, the energy scheme is expected to cause minimal environmental impacts during its construction and operation.



Specific development control topics are discussed in turn below:-

- **Hydrology and Drainage** - The development site may be re-profiled to prevent any off-site run off. Swales would be included if required. The site appears to be on ground with poor permeability over mudstone. It outside a groundwater source protection zone. Bunding might also be required to avoid the perception that oil might pollute the fishing lakes and full details would be presented in a combined Flood Risk Assessment & Drainage Management Plan.
- **Production of Waste** - There is no anticipated production of waste associated with the development proposal. The engines have a lifespan of over 30 years during which time there are no anticipated waste by-products arising from their usage.
- **Nuisance** - Importantly, the development is only expected to be in operation (and generate electricity) for a maximum of 500 hours per annum. When the plant is not generating their noise and air emissions will be zero. The application proposal would be accompanied by an Air Quality Assessment Report. Turning to noise, an acoustic assessment would also accompany the planning application submission and would present any mitigation measures that would be necessary to make the development acceptable.
- **Landscape and Visual** - An Appraisal of Landscape and Visual Effects (ALVE) would accompany any planning application. The development proposal is not anticipated to have a detrimental effect on the existing character of the area. The ALVE would identify, where necessary, any mitigation measures required to reduce perceived impact to visual amenity.
- **Access** - The development proposal would utilize the existing private access road to Fields Farm that connects to Congleton Road to the south of the site. The private roadway already accommodates large vehicles associated with the workings of the farm and fisheries. During the operational phase of development it is anticipated that there would be two staff arrivals (and departures) each day. Diesel will also be brought to the site and would equate to an average of one tanker per week. In addition, there would be one arrival and departure each month by a maintenance vehicle. Accordingly, the development would not have a material impact on the operation of the adjoining or wider highway network.
- **Ecology** - The development proposal can have an impact on ecology in three ways, namely:- a) The siting of the new structures having potential impacts on existing habitat within the site; b) The impact on species that might use the site temporarily or immediate surrounding area; and, c) The impact of emission on sites of ecological interest further afield. A Phases 1 Habitat Survey and assessment of the site and its immediate surrounds will be undertaken as part of the planning submission. The potential impacts of the scheme with regards to emissions on any site of ecological interest is expected to be negligible and this would be assessed as part of the air quality assessment.

Statutory Considerations

For the purpose of this Screening Request we have considered the EIA Regulations.

The EIA Regulations, in conjunction with Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on Environmental Impact Assessment (Updated April 2015), set out the legal framework in relation to Environmental Impact Assessment. The EIA Regulations contain two development schedules (Schedule 1 development and Schedule 2 development). Schedule 1 contains a list of development where EIA is mandatory. The screening proposal does not fall within Schedule 1 Development.

Schedule 2 contains a list of development, coupled with development thresholds, where EIA may be considered. The Local Planning Authority must screen every planning applications falling under the Schedule 2 development thresholds to determine whether or not EIA is required. The screening proposal would fall under schedule 2 Development Category 3(a) which is defined as "*industrial installation for the production of electricity, steam or hot water (unless included in Schedule 1)*" whereby the applicable threshold is when the site area exceeds 0.5 hectares.

The associated Planning Practice Guidance provides a set of indicative screening thresholds for Schedule 2 developments (this is presented as a tabulated Annex to the Guidance). For industrial energy installations the indicative threshold identifies that an EIA assessment is unlikely to be required for schemes under 50MW. The development proposal, at 20MW, is significantly below this indicative threshold.

Taking into consideration the nature of the development proposal, whilst there will be some effects upon the environment as a consequence of the scheme none of these are deemed to constitute 'significant effects' upon the environment as set out in the relevant guidance. Accordingly, it is considered that the screening proposal is Non-EIA development.

For the reasons identified and discussed in this letter and summarised below, we consider an Environmental Impact Assessment is not required for the proposed development since:-

- The site is not located within any sensitive area as defined by the EIA Regulations;
- The development will not be of more than local importance as the scale, and nature of the proposals are not considered likely to have more wide-ranging effects;
- The scheme does not have any complex or hazardous environmental effects both during construction and operation; and
- The visual impact of the proposal would be localised and would be relatively limited in the immediate landscape.

We look forward to receiving the Council's Screening Opinion within the timeframe specified by the EIA Regulations.

Should additional information be required from either the Council or statutory consultees please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Yours faithfully



Colin Virtue
Director
e-mail: colin.virtue@pegasuspg.co.uk

enc Site Location Plan