



High Peak Borough Council

working for our community

01/11/2018

My ref: MOL/HPK/2018/0520

Your ref:

James Jamieson
Intelligent Alternatives Ltd
100 Brand Street
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Dear Mr Jamieson

**HPK/2018/0520 - EIA Screening Opinion for solar farm at Bailey Flatt Farm
Redgap Lane, Green Fairfield Buxton**

**Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations
2017**

I refer to the above request for a screening opinion from the Council in respect of a proposed solar farm at land at Bailey Flatt Farm, Redgap Lane, Green Fairfield, Buxton. I have set out the Council's position in this letter, as follows:

Introduction

This document constitutes the Local Planning Authority's screening opinion in respect of the proposed solar farm at land at Redgap Lane, Green Fairfield, Buxton under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017.

The application site extends to approximately 24 hectares and comprises gently sloping agricultural land located within the open countryside as identified within the High Peak Local Plan 2016. The boundary of the Peak District National Park is within close proximity of the site to the east.

The Cuning Dale SSSI is located just beyond the site boundary to the south west.

Public footpaths cross east-west through the central area of the site and through the south east corner of the site.

Screening Opinion

The proposed development falls within Schedule 2, Part 3(a) of the Regulations as it is an installation for the production of energy which has an area greater than 0.5

hectares. The proposal therefore needs to be screened by the Local Planning Authority to determine whether significant effects are likely and hence whether an Environmental Impact Assessment is required.

When deciding whether a Schedule 2 project is likely to have significant effects, the Local Planning Authority must take account the selection criteria in Schedule 3 of the 2017 Regulations. This is based upon 3 principles:

1. The characteristics of development
2. The location of development
3. The types and characteristics of the potential impact

1. Characteristics of development (size, cumulation, use of natural resources, the production of waste, pollution and nuisances, the risk of major accidents, the risks to human health)

The site extends to approx. 24 hectares and it is anticipated that a solar farm of up to 14.4MW could be developed, powering approximately 4,360 homes. The solar panels will be mounted on metal frames, secured to the ground by metal piles. The panels will face due south and will be dark blue or black in appearance. The bottom of the panels will be a minimum of 80cm above ground level and be positioned in rows with approximately 3 metres of space from front to back, to ensure that the land can remain in agricultural use.

Given the proximity of the Peak District National Park to the site and the scale of the proposed solar farm, careful consideration will need to be given to the visual impacts on the wider landscape including the setting of and views from the National Park. The proposals will generally sit at a similar height to the nearby and wider area and mature tree cover will provide some screening. The low level nature of the proposals will assist in minimising significant visual impacts. It is stated that trees on and around the site will be allowed to grow in height to help screen and break up the appearance of the proposals. A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment will be submitted with the planning application. This will need to take into account views from the neighbouring Peak District National Park together with any necessary landscaping to mitigate the impact and an assessment of views from the public rights of way and any glare and glint impact.

The fields are not likely to be of significant ecological value. Notwithstanding this, an Ecological Assessment will be submitted; this should include any necessary biodiversity mitigation and enhancement measures. This would be subject to consultation with the relevant ecology consultees. The site adjoins the Cuning Dale SSSI and SAC to the south. It is understood that these areas will be avoided and the southern site boundary will be clearly delineated to prevent access into these designations.

Impact on amenity is likely to be low as the proposals will be low level installations and sited away from the nearest neighbours. There is limited noise from the installations.

It is not considered that the proposed development would give rise to any significant cumulative effects with other development in the surrounding area. There are no other current applications for solar farms in the surrounding area.

The proposals will not generate any waste once operational. During construction and operation, waste and recycling facilities will be put in place. The proposals do not require substantial engineering works. Once operational, the development will not result in pollution other than from service vehicles.

There will be regular traffic movements during construction (expected to last approximately six months) however once operational visits to the site will be infrequent. Matters relating to access should be assessed as part of the Traffic Management Plan and a Transport Plan/Assessment.

No impact on human health or risk of accidents is anticipated.

2. Location of development

The site is within the open countryside and currently in agricultural use. The site is not within an environmentally sensitive area under the EIA Regulations, although it is important to note that the Peak District National Park boundary follows Redgap Lane to the north-east of the site and protrudes around the high land around Tim Lodge plantation. The Cuning Dale SSSI is located immediately to the south of the site.

The site will remain in agricultural use alongside the proposals. The site comprises a combination of Grade 4 and Grade 4 land, which is not Best and Most Versatile agricultural land.

The site is within Flood Zone 1 which is the zone at the lowest risk of flooding. Swales and scrapes will be incorporated into the drainage design to ensure surface water drainage is managed. A flooding and drainage assessment with surface water management proposals will be submitted with the planning application. This will be reviewed by the Local Lead Flood Authority (Derbyshire County Council Flood Risk Management Team).

The Cowdale Quarry Scheduled Monument is located to the south. However, this designation is screened by trees and there will be no visibility of the site. A Heritage Assessment will be submitted with the planning application. Due to the nature of the proposals there is unlikely to be any archaeological impact.

The location of the development is not considered to give rise to any significant effects.

3. Types and characteristics of the potential impact

The likely significant effects of a proposal should be considered in relation to the criteria set out for (1) characteristics and (2) location of the proposed development, 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.

The magnitude and spatial extent of the impact would not be significant. No transboundary effects are anticipated other than potential impacts on views from the National Park. It is considered that this in itself would not warrant the submission of an EIA. The nature of the proposal is not considered complex and impacts are generally low intensity. The probability, expected onset, duration and frequency of the impact is not likely to give rise to significant effects. The proposals are reversible and the site could be restored to its existing condition. There are no cumulative effects with the other development.

Conclusion

On balance, the visual impact of the proposed development is likely to be largely localised. However, given the proximity to the Peak District National Park, closer analysis of this issue will be necessary at the planning application stage.

Therefore in terms of character, location and type of impact, the proposal is not expected to give rise to any significant adverse effects and is not considered to be EIA development.

Notwithstanding this, issues relating directly to the proposal concerning landscape and visual impact, ecology, heritage, highway impacts, and residential amenity should be addressed in reports and planning statements to accompany the planning application and the application will be subject to consultation with the relevant consultees.

Decision

An Environmental Impact Assessment is **not** required.

Yours sincerely

X *B.J. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood
Operations Manager – Development Services

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