

# Screening Report for a proposed solar farm with battery storage and associated infrastructure on land at Derritt Lane, Sopley, Christchurch, Dorset, BH23 8AX.

On behalf of Namene Service Company Ltd

Date: 23rd January 2023 | Pegasus Ref: P22-1906

Author: Hannah Tidd





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23rd January 2023

Planning Office of New Forest District Council,  
Appletree Court  
Beaulieu Road  
Lyndhurst  
Hampshire  
SO43 7PA.

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: REQUEST FOR SCREENING OPINION UNDER REGULATION 6 OF THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) REGULATIONS 2017**

**INSTALLATION AND OPERATION OF GROUND MOUNTED SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC ARRAY WITH BATTERY STORAGE TOGETHER WITH ALL ASSOCIATED WORKS, EQUIPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE –on land at Derritt Lane, Sopley, Christchurch, Dorset, BH23 8AX.**

We write on behalf of Namene Service Company Ltd (the 'Applicant') to request a Screening Opinion to determine whether there is a requirement for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to accompany a planning application for development at the above location. This request is made under Regulation 6 of the Town and Country Planning (EIA) Regulations 2017.

In accordance with the EIA Regulations, we have provided the following information:

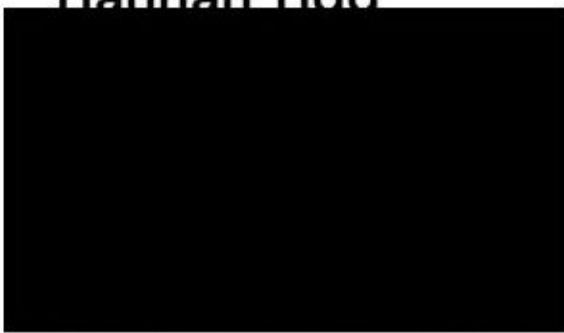
- (a) A plan sufficient to identify the land (**Appendix 1 and 2**);
- (b) A description of the development, including in particular–
  - i. A description of the physical characteristics of the development and, where relevant, of demolition works;
  - ii. A description of the location of the development, with particular regard to the environmental sensitivity of the geographic areas likely to be affected (**Appendix 3**);
- (c) A description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the development (**Appendix 3**);
- (d) To the extent the information is available, a description of any likely significant effects of the proposed development on the environment resulting from–
  - i. The expected residues and emissions and the production of waste, where relevant; and
  - ii. The use of natural resources, in particular soil, land water and biodiversity; (**Appendix 3**) and
- (e) Such other information or representations as the person making the request may wish to provide or make, including any features of the proposed development or any measures to avoid or prevent what might otherwise have been significant adverse effects on the environment (**Appendix 3**).

We look forward to receiving the Screening Opinion within three weeks of receipt of this request as specified in the Regulations and confirmation that the Screening Opinion will be placed on the Public Register.



Yours faithfully,

Hannah Tidd



Environmental Planner



Enc.

1x Site Location Plan

1x Environmental Designation Plan



## Appendix 1- Site Location Plan



**KEY**  
 Site Boundary

NOTES:  
 REVISIONS: First Issue (13/10/2022) SC

**SITE LOCATION PLAN**

**Avon Tyrell Solar Farm**

CLIENT  
 Namene Solar Ltd

DATE	DRAWN	APPROVED	SCALE
13/10/2022	SC	HT	1:25,000@A3

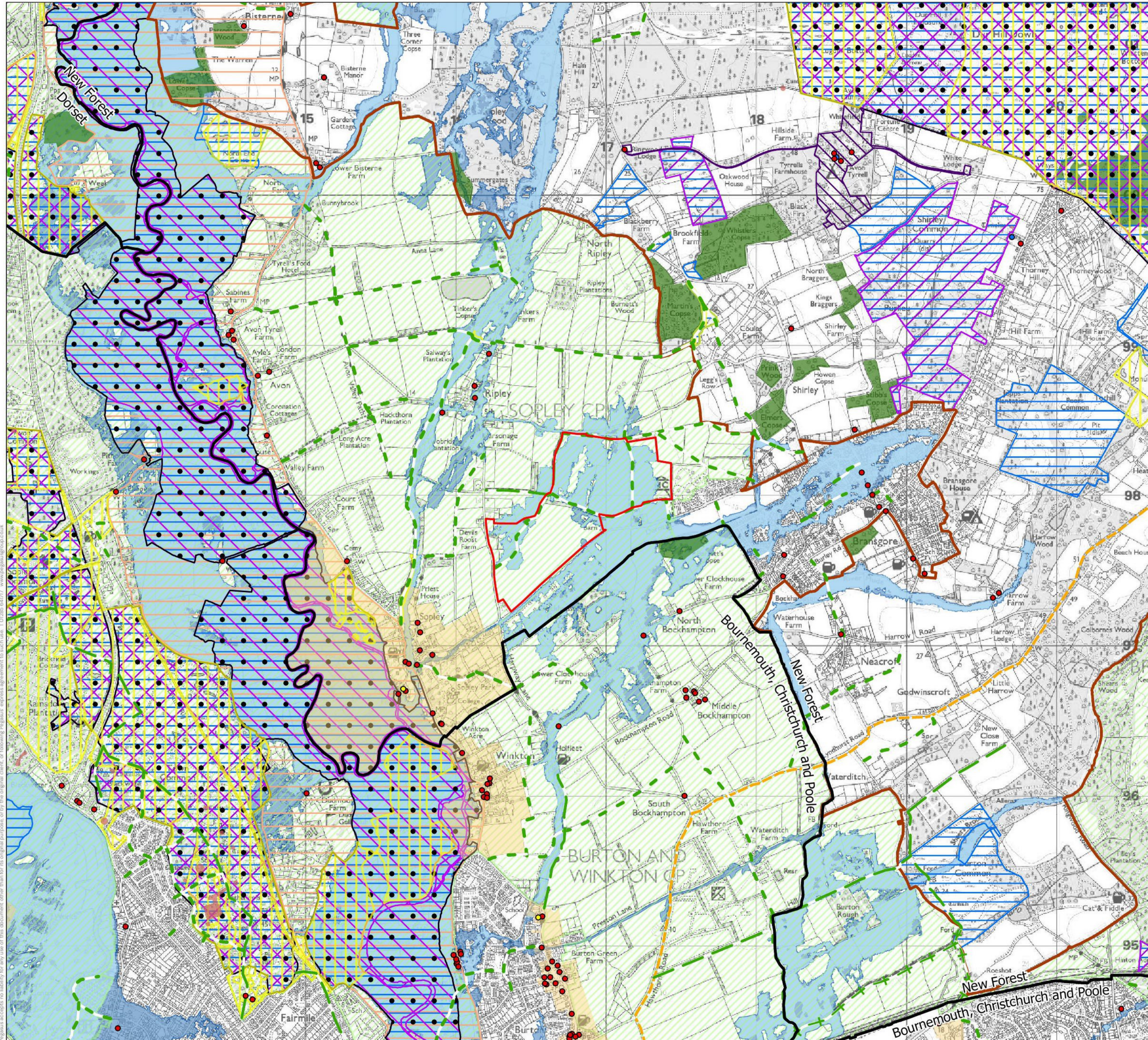
SHEET	REVISION	DRAWING NUMBER
-	-	P22-1906_01



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## Appendix 2- Environmental Designations Plan



- KEY**
- Site Boundary
  - District Boundary
- Listed Building Grade
- I
  - II\*
  - II
- Public Footpaths
  - Public Bridleways
  - + + Public Byway open to all traffic
- National Parks
  - CRoW Access Land
  - Registered Parks and Gardens
  - Scheduled Monuments
  - Conservation Area
  - Ramsar
  - Special Protection Areas
  - Special Areas of Conservation
  - Sites of Special Scientific Interest
  - Environmentally Sensitive Areas
  - Ancient Woodland
  - Green Belt
  - EA Flood Zone 3
  - EA Flood Zone 2
  - National Cycle Network

NOTES:  
 REVISIONS: First Issue (13/10/2022) SC

**ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGNATIONS PLAN**

**Avon Tyrell Solar Farm**

CLIENT  
 Namene Solar Ltd

DATE	DRAWN	APPROVED	SCALE
20/10/2022	SC	HT	1:25,000@A3

SHEET	REVISION	DRAWING NUMBER
-	-	P22-1906_02



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## Appendix 3– Screening Report

Pursuant to EIA Regulation 6 (2) – Requests for screening opinions of the relevant planning authority, a description of the development is provided in **Appendix 3– Screening Report**. The Screening Report is in accordance with the EIA Regulation 6 requirements as noted below.

**A description of the development, including in particular–**

- i. A description of the physical characteristics of the development and, where relevant, of demolition works;**
- ii. A description of the location of the development, with particular regard to the environmental sensitivity of the geographic areas likely to be affected;**

**A description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the development;**

**To the extent the information is available, a description of any likely significant effects of the proposed development on the environment resulting from–**

- iii. The expected residues and emissions and the production of waste, where relevant; and**
- iv. The use of natural resources, in particular soil, land water and biodiversity; and**

**Such other information or representations as the person making the request may wish to provide or make, including any features of the proposed development or any measures to avoid or prevent what might otherwise have been significant adverse effects on the environment.**

## Application Site

The Application Site (**Appendix A**) is circa. 73.1ha of agricultural land irregular in shape, comprising of four arable fields lined with hedgerows and mature trees along the field boundaries. There is an unnamed water course running through the centre of the Site in a north-south direction. The Site is set in a semi-rural landscape, situated circa 770m east of the village of Bransgore and c. 645m north-east of the village of Sopley. The closest residential area is located on the outskirts of the village of Bransgore and is located adjacent to the south-eastern corner of the Application Site. The Site is located within the administrative boundary of New Forest District Council (NFDC).

The Application Site is set within an area of relatively flat topography. Lying beyond the Application Site is predominantly open countryside of arable farmland with urbanising influences of the towns of Christchurch, Bournemouth and Highcliffe in the wider vicinity to the south of the Site.

The boundaries of the Site are defined by hedgerow and mature trees around the existing field pattern, and agricultural tracks. The southern and northern boundary of the Site are defined by Derritt Lane and School Lane respectively and beyond lies further agricultural fields and greenfield land. To the east the Site is bound by hedgerow vegetation and trees with further agricultural fields beyond and built development associated with the village of Bransgore. To the west the Site boundary is defined by hedgerows and a section of the boundary borders Harpway Lane, beyond this is further agricultural and greenfield land. An individual warehouse building, known as Green Barn, is located adjacent to the south-western corner of the Site and Devils Roost Farm and associated buildings is located further north along the western boundary. A further individual farm building, known as New Barn, is located adjacent to the southern boundary in the centre of the Site, with a further set of farm buildings located south-west of the barn to the south of Derritt Lane.

There are Public Rights of Way (PRoW) adjacent to 'natural boundaries' within the Application Site; with a bridle way located along the north-western boundary of the Site, and a series of footpaths within the Site between fields. There is a footpath that runs in a north-eastern direction starting at the western boundary below Devils Roost Farm, and joins the bridleway located along the north-western boundary, from here the footpath moves eastwards through the centre of the Site and joins the south-eastern boundary of the Site. A further footpath runs along the northern boundary of the Site, and a footpath runs in a north-south and vice versa direction through the centre of the Site connecting the two footpaths running along the southern and northern boundaries. These PRoW's are already partially screened by existing vegetation.

## Nature and purpose of the Proposed Development

The Proposed Development is the 'construction of a Solar Farm with battery storage together with all associated works, equipment and necessary infrastructure', on land over several fields.

Through the utilisation of sunlight, the facility will generate renewable energy for distribution onto the National Grid via Western Power Local Distribution Network. The Proposed Development aims to address the local and national renewable energy targets and ultimately reduce the reliance on fossil fuel-based sources as a form of energy production. With the facility's capacity, it has the capability of generating up to 49.9MW of electricity. The Proposed Development therefore provides a step towards the transition to a low carbon National Grid.

The nature of ground mounted solar PV is both temporary and reversible, allowing the Site to be restored to its former agricultural use. The Proposed Development is likely to consist of the following:

- Photovoltaic (PV) panels based on a simple metal framework ('table') to form an 'array' which is pile driven into the ground, avoiding the need for substantive foundations. These arrays would operate on a fixed panel system to make efficient use of the sun's energy;
- A number of inverters/transformers at various locations;
- Customer and DNO Sub-Station (Delivery Station);
- Site perimeter boundary fencing (e.g., deer fencing);
- A CCTV system, ether pole or fence-mounted, located at strategic points around the site perimeter;
- Associated access tracks connecting inverter/transformer units;
- Battery Station with their associated transformers and inverters;
- Storage container(s) for spare parts etc;
- Relevant communications and monitoring equipment; and
- Creation or improvement of site accesses for construction, operation, and decommissioning purposes.

Access to the Application Site for the construction phase will utilise the existing farm access off Harpaway Lane. For the operational phase, access will be from Derritt Lane at the south-west corner of the Site, utilising the existing farm access.

The proposed grid connection would be via an underground cable leading from Christchurch Substation via the Salisbury Road to the south-western corner of the Site where Derritt Lane meets Harpaway Lane.

The Proposed Development will also provide biodiversity enhancements through hedgerow enhancement and wildflower planting on site. There is the potential to include further biodiversity enhancements through set aside, the creation of wildlife corridors and the possible installation of bat and bird nesting boxes, bee hotels, woodpiles, and beehives.

<b>Possible Effects on the Environment</b>	
<b>Section 1 – Applicable Thresholds</b>	
<b>Does the Proposed Development fall within Schedule 1 (Y/N)?</b>	No
<b>If yes, what is the applicable description.</b>	N/A
<b>If yes, the project automatically requires EIA</b>	
<b>If no, does the Proposed Development fall within Schedule 2 (Y/N)?</b>	Yes

<b>If yes, what is the applicable description?</b>	3 (a) Industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam, and hot water.
<b>Is the Project located in or adjacent to a 'Sensitive Area'?</b>	No
<b>If yes proceed to Section 2.</b>	
<b>If no, what is the corresponding applicable threshold in Schedule 2?</b>	The area of the development exceeds 0.5 hectares
<b>Does the Project exceed the applicable threshold (Y/N)?</b>	Yes
<b>If yes, proceed to Section 2</b>	
<b>Section 2 – Assessment of Possible Effects</b>	
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Analysis</b>
<b>Population</b>	<p>During construction/decommissioning, it is considered unlikely that the proposals will result in a significant change in population as workers are unlikely to relocate to the area on a permanent basis. The construction/decommissioning will have a temporary effect on employment provision through the creation of construction jobs. A minor beneficial effect is therefore anticipated. The construction phases of the Proposed Development would involve changes to traffic movements (e.g., use of HGVs). Given the low level of construction traffic (minimal during the operational phase), it is anticipated that there will be no congestion as a direct result of the proposals. A Construction Transport Management Plan (CTMP) will be submitted as part of the planning application.</p> <p>Once operational the Proposed Development does not provide any permanent residential accommodation and accordingly will not have any significant effect on population. The only vehicle movements will be from the occasional maintenance vehicle that would have negligible influence on the surrounding population.</p> <p>It is anticipated there would therefore be no significant effects on population arising from the Proposed Development to trigger the need for an EIA.</p>
<b>Human Health</b>	<p>During the construction phase there would be some potential for minor pollution or nuisance consistent with construction works, i.e., lighting of external works, dust/noise from vehicles/construction processes, surface water run-off from bare earth/stockpiles, plant noise etc. However, construction activities would be appropriately controlled to an acceptable</p>

	<p>level through the adoption of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) as well as best practice techniques and appropriate safety measures.</p> <p>The soil has no history to indicate there would be any form of contamination.</p> <p>Once operational there will be no unusual risk to human health. The development relies on well-established, safe modern technology and responsible operators who will utilise the CQA Plans as necessary. Appropriate Health and Safety signage will be displayed on Site, to warn of the potential risk from working near electrical equipment and to prevent illegal access and trespass.</p> <p>There would therefore be no unusual risk to human health and significant effects are not anticipated.</p>
<p><b>Biodiversity</b></p>	<p>The Application Site is not subject to any statutory or non-statutory nature conservation designations, nor are there any ecological designations bordering the Site. Within a 2.5km radius of the Site the closest designated sites are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avon Valley Ramsar, Special Protection Area (SPA) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) c. 950m west;</li> <li>• River Avon System SSSI and Special Conservation Area (SAC) c. 1.22km west;</li> <li>• Town Common SSSI c.164 km west;</li> <li>• The New Forest Ramsar, SSSI, SAC, SPA c. 1.78km east;</li> <li>• Dorset Heathlands Ramsar, SAC, SPA c. 2km west; and</li> <li>• Poors Common SSSI c. 2.33km east.</li> </ul> <p>The Site is located within an SSSI Impact Risk Zone for Towns Common SSSI, Avon Valley (Brickton to Christchurch) SSSI, River Avon System SSSI and The New Forest SSSI. However, the development does not fall under the criteria whereby the Local Authority would be required to consult with Natural England regarding potential risks to the SSSI's. The Site is separated from the closest designated ecological assets from intervening fields, woodland areas and dispersed pockets of urbanisation. It is not considered the Proposed Development would result in any direct effects on these designated sites, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.</p> <p>In terms of biodiversity at the Site itself, the fields are currently used for agricultural purposes and are bordered by dense, mature vegetation along field boundaries. The arable fields are considered to be of low habitat value being subject to regular agricultural management. The field boundaries include the presence of wider strips of denser vegetations with mature hedgerow and trees present. The field boundaries offer higher ecological value, and the design of the Proposed Development will seek to safeguard and retain these features.</p>

	<p>Whilst there may be an effect on biodiversity, the majority of the Application Site contains land utilised for agricultural purposes that is under regular change, and therefore of low ecological value. Therefore, considering this factor, it is unlikely sensitive ecological receptors have established within the land.</p> <p>Through the implementation of appropriate measures during construction, effects can be managed and are unlikely to be unusually complex or significant. The location of the proposed solar farm also provides an opportunity to enhance biodiversity and strengthen ecological networks, particularly in relation to field boundaries. Biodiversity can be enhanced through additional on-site planting and potential installation of bat and nesting bird boxes, bee hotels, woodpiles. Fencing used on site will have small mammal gateways fitted to enable free access. These enhancement measures will be fully clarified following a Phase 1 Habitat Survey and species assessment.</p> <p>It is therefore considered from the initial analysis undertaken that significant ecological effects are unlikely to arise from the Proposed Development and can be adequately assessed within ecological assessments accompanying a planning submission.</p>
<p><b>Land</b></p>	<p>The construction of the Proposed Development will involve the temporary use of circa 73.1ha of greenfield/agricultural land during the operational life of the development (up to 40 years). Once operational farming such as sheep grazing can continue on land amongst the solar panels, which has been implemented at many solar farms around the U.K. Therefore, the development would lead to the limited loss of natural resources, thus significant impacts are not anticipated on the land.</p> <p>Construction of a solar farm generally requires very low levels of direct and permanent land taken (typically less than 5% footprint on the ground). BRE guidance states that, as panels are raised above the ground on posts, over 95% of a site used for solar farm development is still accessible for plant growth and complementary agricultural activities, such as conservation grazing.</p> <p>The Proposed Development offers the opportunity once renewable electricity generation has ceased for the land to be returned to agricultural use as the development is reversible. Solar Farms can be easily and economically decommissioned and removed from the Site at the end of their economic life, with the aim that there would be little or no trace that the solar farm had existed following decommissioning. With the land having a period of time to rest following intensive agricultural activity it is considered the soil health of the Application Site will generally improve greatly over the lifetime of the solar farm.</p>

<p><b>Soil</b></p>	<p>The development will lead to the temporary loss of an area of greenfield/agricultural land for a period of 40 to 55 years until being decommissioned.</p> <p>The NPPF as amended 2021 (paragraphs 174 and 175) require consideration of development which affects the best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land, i.e., ALC Grade 1, Grade 2 and Subgrade 3a (Natural England Technical Information Note 0149). According to Provisional Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) mapping (Natural England Open Data), the soil at the Site is classified as Grade 3 'Good to Moderate' land in the eastern half of the Site and Grade 2 'Very Good' land in the western extend of the Site. Sequentially the wider area is predominantly Grade 3 and Grade 4 'Poor Quality' land according to the Natural England Agricultural Land Classification Map. An Agricultural Land Classification Survey will be undertaken and submitted with any future planning application to confirm the grading.</p> <p>Once renewable electricity generation has ceased the land will be returned to agricultural use as the development is fully reversible. With the land having a period of time to rest following intensive agricultural activity it is considered the soil health of the Application Site will improve greatly over the lifetime of the solar farm.</p> <p>Due to the nature of solar farms, it is unlikely that the construction of the Proposed Development would lead to the loss of soils as appropriate construction techniques will be implemented to reduce below ground works and as such significant effects are not considered likely.</p> <p>Although it is deemed unlikely for any contamination to be present on Site, it will be controlled during construction through the imposition of appropriate planning conditions to ensure any contamination risks are addressed. Furthermore, most of the soil will not be physically impacted from the development and therefore its degradation is considered unlikely. No significant effects are therefore anticipated.</p>
<p><b>Water</b></p>	<p>The northern section and the majority of the western boundary of the Application Site is located within Flood Zone 3, which has the highest risk of flooding with a 1 in 100 (1%) or greater chance of flooding each year from Rivers; or with a 1 in 200 (0.5%) or greater chance of flooding each year from the Sea. The remainder of the Site is located within Flood Zone 1 and is of low risk of flooding with a 1 in 1000 annual probability of river or sea flooding. The majority of the Site is classed as having a low or very low risk of surface water flooding, with the exception of the area surrounding the unnamed watercourse running north-south through the centre of the Site which is classed as having a high risk of surface water flooding.</p> <p>The solar panels themselves will not result in the loss of flood storage area due to their nature. Built form associated with the development such as the substation and battery storage station will be located in Flood Zone 1 to</p>

	<p>ensure minimal loss of flood storage. Surface water run-off will be managed on-site during the construction and operational phases.</p> <p>National planning policy requires all planning applications above certain thresholds to include a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA), including mitigation in the form of a drainage strategy which will include appropriate flood compensation measures. An FRA drainage strategy will be provided as part of a planning application. However, it is recognised that the updated NPPF (2021) has set out within Annex 3: Flood risk vulnerability classification that solar farms are classed as 'Essential infrastructure', which means that a sequential test is not needed as part of a planning application as the essential infrastructure status allows development in such flood risk areas.</p> <p>The Proposed Development is unlikely to have a significant effect in regard to flood risk when considered against the EIA Regulations.</p>
<b>Air</b>	<p>The Site does not lie within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) or is within close proximity to an AQMA. The closest AQMA is Southampton AQMA No.5, circa 26km north-east of the Site.</p> <p>Whilst there may be some dust generated during construction, this can be reduced using construction management measures. Therefore, it is considered unlikely that the proposals will have a significant effect on air quality during construction.</p> <p>Once operational, the only vehicle movements would be from the occasional maintenance vehicle that would not give rise to a significant effect on air quality. Less vehicles will attend the Site once in operation compared to the current vehicle movements needed to operate the farm. No significant effects are therefore anticipated for air quality.</p>
<b>Climate</b>	<p>It is acknowledged that construction of the Proposed Development will result in the gaseous emissions associated with construction vehicles. Although, considering the temporary nature of the development and the low level of physical construction work required, it is considered that these emissions are unlikely to be complex or significant.</p> <p>Once operational the facility will be generating energy from renewable sources (sunlight). Therefore, the development will only contribute positively to the climate through reducing the requirement for fossil fuel-based energy production facilities.</p> <p>It is noted that New Forest District Council declared a Climate Emergency in October 2021 and are yet to release their Climate Change and Nature Emergency Action Plan. The Proposed Development will assist in the Council's commitment to reduce the carbon footprint of the area.</p>
<b>Material Assets</b>	<p>Construction would require the use of natural resources as is standard with construction works, i.e., power/water/construction materials. This is not considered to be an unusual or complex operation with the construction</p>



	<p>period limited to circa 6 – 9 months and accordingly no significant effects are anticipated.</p> <p>Due to the nature of the development, no natural resources would be required for the operation of the facility once constructed. No significant effects are therefore anticipated.</p>
<p><b>Risk of Major Accidents and Disasters</b></p>	<p>The Site is not known to be susceptible to land instability or extreme and / or adverse climatic conditions. During the construction phase, the contractor(s) would implement measures in accordance with Health and Safety legislation / requirements to minimise the risks of accidents that would have effects on people of the environment. There are no anticipated significant risks of accidents during operation as the Proposed Development does not involve users dealing with hazardous substances.</p> <p>There will be no harmful materials or substances used during either the construction or operational phases. The operational development is not expected to involve the use, transport or production of substances or materials which could be harmful to the environment.</p> <p>Considering the nature and location of the Proposed Development, it is not considered to be vulnerable to, or give rise to significant impacts in relation to the Risk of Accidents and Major Disasters.</p>
<p><b>Archaeology and Cultural Heritage</b></p>	<p>The Site is not located within any statutory heritage designated sites. A total of nine non-designated 'monuments' are recorded within the Site by Hampshire Historic Environment Records. These include cropmarks of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• possible prehistoric burial mounds,</li> <li>• prehistoric enclosures,</li> <li>• post-medieval trackway and field system, and possible quarry,</li> <li>• site of a Second World War anti-aircraft battery, and</li> <li>• earthwork of a modern spoil heap and crater.</li> </ul> <p>A site walkover survey was carried out on 16th November 2022 by a Pegasus Group Heritage Consultant, and no structural remains of the anti-aircraft battery and no surface indications of the cropmark features were observed. The site of the battery is, however, within a small copse and so it is possible that vegetation has grown over any surviving concrete pad. Furthermore, it is possible that there are buried archaeological remains of the cropmark features, which could be detected through non-intrusive survey in the first instance.</p> <p>There are no World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments or Listed Buildings within the Application Site; nor does the Application Site lie within a Conservation Area or Registered Parks and Garden.</p> <p>Within a 1km of the Site boundary there are 24 Listed Buildings; of these 1 is a Grade II* Listed Building, the Church of St Michaels and All Angels (reference:</p>

	<p>1302276) located c. 875m south west, and the remainder are Grade II Listed. The closest Listed Buildings to the Site include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11 Priest Lane (reference: 1094954), c. 560m west;</li> <li>• 9 and 10 Priest Lane (reference: 1178882), c. 607m west;</li> <li>• Granary at Middle Ripley Farm (reference: 1356768) c.613m north;</li> <li>• The Laurels (reference: 1178906) c. 662m north;</li> <li>• Marigold Cottage (reference: 1304438) c. 800m south; and</li> <li>• 40 Burley Road (reference: 1153146) c. 881m south.</li> </ul> <p>The Sopley Conservation Area lies c.115msouth-west of the Site at its closest point. The Grade II Listed Avon Tyrrell Registered Park and Garden (reference: 1001583) lies c. 1.88km north-east of the Site. The Listed Buildings and Registered Park and Garden are separated from the Application Site by intervening agricultural fields, woodland, topography and built form. No key views from these assets towards the Site, and no key views from the Site towards the assets, have been identified.</p> <p>The closest Scheduled Monuments to the Site are 'Oval earthwork on St Catherine's Hill' (ref: 1002368) c. 2.67km south-west and a bowl barrow on Thorney Hill (reference: 1013128) c. 2.74km north-east. These Scheduled Monuments are separated from the Application Site by intervening agricultural fields, woodland, topography and built form. No direct historical or visual associations with the Site have been identified from desk-based research and walkover surveys undertaken to date.</p> <p>Based on currently available information, no designated heritage asset is anticipated to be sensitive to the proposed development through change to its setting.</p> <p>A Heritage Statement will be submitted as part of the application to fully consider the known and potential archaeological resource of the Site, the contribution (if any) made by the Site through setting to the significance of outlying designated heritage assets, and the likely impact of the proposals thereupon. At this stage, no significant impacts to archaeology or built heritage are anticipated to arise from development of the scale and nature proposed, but mitigation may be necessary for the archaeological resource of the Site.</p>
<p><b>Landscape</b></p>	<p>There are no statutory or non-statutory landscape designations covering the Application Site. The Site is located approximately 550m west of the New Forest National Park. The Site is separated from the National Park by existing woodland areas, arable fields with mature hedgerows and trees. The Site also does not contribute the landscape setting of the National Park. Due to this and the relatively flat topography and the existing vegetation significant effects on the National Park are not considered likely.</p>

The Site is located within the Bournemouth Green Belt, and as per the NPPF (revised 2021), paragraph 151, sets out for renewable energy developments, "... developers will need to demonstrate very special circumstances if projects are to proceed." A sequential analysis study will accompany the planning application documentation assessing the site's suitability for a solar farm development in the district, and wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from a renewable energy source.

The Application Site falls into National Character Area 131: New Forest. The Site sits within the south-western section of NCA 131, where the landscape character is formed of areas of farmland and small holdings with small pastures linked by a network of narrow winding lanes and high hedges. Mature hedgerows and trees define the borders of the Site and are located within the Site delineating the field boundaries. The Site is situated between the villages of Sopley and Bransgore providing urban links whilst retaining a rural character.

New Forest National Park's Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) (2015) defines the Application Site in part as landscape type 'LCA 7: Lower Avon Valley' which is outside of the National Park area. The Hampshire County Council LCA (2012) defines the Site as '3a Avon Valley', with the landscape type classed as 'river valley terrace'. The topography of the 'Avon Valley' presents a relatively flat valley floor dominated by pastoral land uses. The current land use of the Site is a farmed landscape within a mosaic of fields, with the four fields currently used for arable farming, including areas of grassland and mature hedgerow and trees.

The Site itself is well screened with intervening vegetation, associated with established hedgerow field boundaries and trees. The existing vegetation provides generally limited views into the Site which lowers the potential for significant effects. Localised visual receptors are likely to include users of the local highway network (School Lane, Derritt Lane and Harpway lane), and a few residential properties within close proximity to the Site. There are individual farms located adjacent to the Sites boundaries including Devils Roost Farm and New Barn House, there are also a series of residential properties located adjacent to the south-eastern corner of the Site on Arnwood Drive. Both the two individual farms and the residential properties have moderate vegetation screening views into the Site. Additional planting would be proposed to provide screening to these properties to limit visual impacts on local residential receptors.

There are a series of PRow's located within the Site itself and also located along the Sites boundaries. Users of these PRow's are likely to experience changes in their view as they pass through the Site however this would be a localised effect and only for the short duration whilst users are passing through the Site. From a greater distance, users of the local PRow network and residential properties in the wider vicinity are unlikely to experience

	<p>significant changes to their view due to the boundary vegetation surrounding the Application Site.</p> <p>In summary, it is considered that the Proposed Development can be accommodated within the local landscape with appropriate design and landscape measures, with limited landscape and visual effects anticipated. Where potential for views into the Site are afforded, it is considered that there is potential for mitigation planting along these boundaries. Visual amenity of residents at nearby dwellings, users of the PRow network, and users of the local highway network can be protected by further establishing hedge and tree screening. Any proposed reinforcement or new planting would utilise native species that are in keeping with local landscape character and consider the nature of views available. A Landscape and Visual Assessment would accompany a planning application.</p>
<p><b>Cumulative and Interactive Effects</b></p>	<p>An exercise has been undertaken to identify any major existing or approved applications within the vicinity of the subject site, which may give rise to significant cumulative effects.</p> <p>Through a search of New Forest District Council's planning data base, no other consented or planned solar farm developments, subject to a valid planning application, have been identified that would be considered as having significant cumulative effects in combination with the Proposed Development. Nor were there any other existing development and/or approved development in the area which were identified as potentially giving rise to cumulative effects with the Proposed Development.</p> <p>It is noted that there is a planning application for a residential development of 100 dwellings proposed on land south of Derritt Lane (ref: 21/11097). This application was submitted in July 2021 and is awaiting decision. As it is not currently a committed application there is no certainty it would come forward at the same time as the Proposed Development. However, with consideration of the environmental assessment undertaken for the residential scheme and mitigation proposed no significant cumulative effects with the Proposed Development are considered likely.</p> <p>Three operational solar farms are within the wider area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hinton Admiral Solar Farm (7.2MW), 4.8km, south-east;</li> <li>• Beckley Solar Farm (1.2MW), 6.2km, south-east; and</li> <li>• Waterditch Solar Farm (18MW), 1.9km south from the Application Site.</li> </ul> <p>The landscape and visual effect of the Proposed Development when viewed in combination or sequence with either of the three operational solar farms is considered to be negligible by the siting of development components within the existing landscape context, and intervening features such as vegetation, buildings and roads as well as physical distance which would help to minimise potential cumulative effects. Considering the temporary nature of the construction of solar farms, and the application of appropriate mitigation and</p>

control measures, no other environmental parameters are anticipated to give rise to significant cumulative or interactive effects.

## Conclusion

It is considered that the proposals fall within the category of under Schedule 2 (3 a) as described in the EIA Regulations 2017. Development proposals described under Schedule 2 require an EIA if they are considered *likely to have significant effects on the environment* by virtue of factors such as nature, size, or location. Given that the Proposed Development exceeds the screening threshold in Schedule 2 (3 a) of 0.5 hectares, it is appropriate to Screen the proposals with the Local Planning Authority to determine if there are significant effects likely to arise from the proposals.

The Screening process should consider the development proposals against the criteria and thresholds which are included within the EIA Regulations and accompanying Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) in determining the requirement for an Environmental Statement (ES) to accompany an application for planning permission.

Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations provides selection criteria for Screening Schedule 2 development, which includes three broad categories for consideration: the characteristics of the development; the environmental sensitivity of the location; and the characteristics of the potential impacts.

The PPG, under the Environmental Impact Assessment section (Paragraph 057), provides further indicative criteria and thresholds, as well as key issues to consider, in the determination of likely significance of effects. For 3 (a) Energy Industry, the criteria and advice given are:

- “Indicative Criteria and Threshold – ‘Thermal output more than 50MW. Small stations using novel forms of generation should be considered carefully.’”
- “Key Issues to Consider – ‘Level of emissions to air, arrangements for the transport of fuel and any visual impact.’”

The operational development is less than 50MW and is unlikely to give rise to significant impacts relating to air, transport or visual impacts or any further wide-ranging effects.

Given the nature of the development proposals, it is considered that whilst there may be some effects upon the environment as a consequence of the proposed development, none of these are considered to constitute ‘significant effects’, as set out in central government guidance. Accordingly, it is considered that the proposals do not constitute EIA development and would not require an Environmental Statement to be submitted with a planning application for a Solar Farm in this location. It should be highlighted that any planning application will be accompanied by an ecological assessment that will include further details on the positive and negative environmental impacts, and what the Applicant will propose to do to minimise the latter, as well as the necessary technical assessments to enable the Planning Authority to consider and determine the planning application.

We look forward to receiving the Council's response to this Screening Request within the designated 3-week timeframe on receipt of this request, as stated in the EIA Regulations (Part 2-6(6)).



Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)  
Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

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