

Chief Planning Officer
Wokingham Borough Council
Civic Offices Shute End
Wokingham
RG40 1BN

Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks
Solent Park Depot
Walton Road
Cosham
PO16 1UJ

11th October 2024

Dear Sir / Madam

**The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017
Request for a Screening Opinion 11kV (11,000 Volt) Network Improvement Scheme**

Southern Electric Power Distribution plc (SEPD) is proposing to replace Two (2) 11kV electricity wood pole structures on its Crowthorne (CROW) E10L5 11kV Circuit as detailed herein and as shown on the attached plan (accompanying Form B). This work is required due to the condition of the existing poles.

The benefits of the work will be felt by our customers in the form of a more reliable and secure electricity supply as a result of the network being effectively maintained.

The pole replacements will fall under Schedule 2 as it will be installed above ground in a sensitive area the installation of which (or the keeping installed of which) will require a Section 37 consent but is not Schedule 1 development. Please accept this as a formal request for a screening opinion from the DESNZ / Local Planning Authority regarding our proposals.

Construction

The replacement of the Two (2) wood poles will take a team of four personnel no more than 3 days to complete. Interruptions to electricity supplies will be kept to a minimum during this time using generation where suitable. Full consultation will be undertaken with the landowners/occupiers and those with an interest in the land to agree the practicalities of replacing the wood poles, the access thereto and any specific conditions which require to be taken into account.

Environmental Effects and Landscape

The Two (2) poles are located within a UK designated site within Longmoor Bog SSSI. Natural England have been consulted about the scheme (Assent requested and granted) to ensure that appropriate mitigation is employed to protect the designated features. The new poles will be of a construction equivalent to those being removed and will occupy the same position within the landscape.

Population

The pole replacements proposed on this section of overhead network will reinforce the electricity supplies for the customers in the area and the wider network. Care will be taken to install equipment sympathetically keeping mind the practical need to maintain electricity supplies and the need to improve the overall impact on the area. It is not expected that the replacement of the poles will have any direct impact on the local population other than the presence of our construction teams for the duration of the works. Every endeavor will be made to ensure that disturbance to the working of the land and other economic activity is minimised.

Flora & Fauna

Natural England has been consulted about the scheme and through dialogue have been willing to grant conditional Assent for the works to proceed. We are happy to work with Natural England to accommodate as reasonably as possible their requirements and in this regard have agreed specific timings and access routes to minimise disturbance to the aforementioned features. Should any amendment to the method statement for these works be necessary we will maintain an open dialogue with Natural England to enable them to make further comment on our proposals. A copy of the Natural England Assent has been included with this screening letter and the accompanying Form B.

Soil

Low ground pressure vehicles will be used during the works and access will be affected along routes previously agreed with landowners/occupiers to ensure there is minimum disturbance. Existing tracks and access gates will be used wherever possible.

Water

There are not anticipated to be any effects on water courses as a result of these wood pole replacements.

Air and Climatic Factors

The overhead line will have no direct effects on air quality or climatic factors.

Material assets, including the architectural and archaeological heritage

Review has been undertaken and in the case of Longmoor Bog SSSI the presence of Scheduled Monuments has not been identified. SSEN has consulted with the Berkshire County Archaeologist to understand if there are any other areas of archaeological significance within the scheme area. No areas have been identified; further consultation will be undertaken with the County Archaeologist to ensure these are protected during our works if required.

Landscape

The habitat type across the SSSI is predominantly Lowland fens, including basin, flood-plain, open water transition and valley fens, Lowland wet heath & Wet woodland.

It is our view that due to the characteristics, location and potential impact of the pole replacements that this does not constitute an EIA development and therefore will not need to be subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment. The planning given to this scheme to date along with the consultation afforded to stakeholders means that the works will be undertaken in such a way that the impact of the works on the designated features will be kept to a minimum.

A Form B and accompanying plan of the selected pole replacement location has been sent to West Berkshire Council for consideration alongside this EIA Screening Opinion.

I look forward to receiving your comments in due course and confirmation that you are in agreement that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is not required for this scheme.

Yours sincerely



Alex Monk

