

04/07/2024

FAO Longhedge Public Inquiry Planning Inspectorate

Re: Potential impact of the new pylon included into the proposed Longhedge Solar Farm

This short report has been prepared in response to the Inspector's request for an assessment of the effects of two potential pylon options to connect the Longhedge solar farm to the electricity distribution network. It addresses the potential ecological and ornithological impacts of a new pylon for the proposed Longhedge Solar Farm.

The tower is proposed to be one of two options, hereafter referred to as Option 1, and Option 2 located in similar positions of equal ecological value. Option 1 is for a 23.3m tall pylon predominately constructed of metal, whereas Option 2 is for a 9m tall pylon predominantly constructed of wood. When considering the existing mitigation outlined within the submitted ecological reporting, all facets of potential ecological impacts are suitably mitigated or compensated. No further mitigation is considered necessary to address the impacts of the pylon options. However, biodiversity net gain and potential ornithological and bat collision warrant further comment, as discussed below.

Relating to Biodiversity Net Gain, Option 1 would require approximately 16m² of foot to secure, whereas Option 2 requires 0.14m² to accommodate the poles. Given the scale of the Application Site (91.16ha), neither option would constitute a deviation from the Metric as these new areas total under of 0.002% of the total Application Site.

Potential ornithological impacts comprise in the structure tower being a theoretical collision risk for large birds such as geese or flocking birds such as gulls, however birds have an avoidance rate of over 95% for structures with moving parts such as wind turbines, with a higher avoidance rate for permanent stationary structures. Additionally, the potential presence of these species is considered within the bird hazard management plan, with appropriate measures found therein, as these same species cause concern for the aviation industry. Given the size difference, Option 2 would naturally present a lower risk than Option 1, given the scale of the potential effect on avian features, this variation is minimal. Therefore, given the avoidance rate alongside the overall lack of ornithological interest and features present at the Site, the inclusion of either tower Option would not result in any impacts exceeding a negligible status.

Furthermore, collision risk for bat species would be significantly lower than that of larger birds. Considering the scale of both proposed tower Options, the impact to bat species would be negligible.

Kind Regards,

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