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Please ask for: Julie Castree-Denton

SENT BY EMAIL ONLY

Our Ref: SCE.136/501 MW Your Ref: TJC/tjc-1702/6 1 October 2012

Dear Mr. Claxton,

SCE.136/501 MW: REQUEST FOR SCREENING OPINION FOR PROPOSALS TO DEVELOP A SOLAR PARK AND ASSOCIATED INFRASTUCTURE AT NEWBOLD QUARRY

THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) REGULATIONS 2011: REGULATION 5 - SCREENING OPINION

I refer to your letter dated 10 September 2012 in connection with the above development.

In accordance with the above regulations the County Council is required to adopt a "Screening Opinion" to establish whether the forthcoming application should be accompanied by an Environmental Statement.

The County Council has considered the information you supplied and is of the opinion that the proposed development falls within the description provided within Schedule 2 paragraph 3(a) to the above regulations, but in the opinion of the County Council, having taken into account the criteria in Schedule 3 to the above regulations and the indicative threshold criteria currently available in Circular 2/99 'EIA – A Guide to Procedures', the proposed development would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location. Further details are provided in the attached 'Screening Opinion Checklist'.

Under the powers contained in the 'Scheme of Delegation to Officers', this letter therefore confirms that the County Council is of the opinion that the proposed development **is not EIA development** and need not be accompanied by an Environmental Statement.

Nevertheless, as you point out in your letter, the application will need to be accompanied by supporting information to address a range of potential impacts. I would add at this stage that consideration should also be given to the following matters:

- Landscape and Visual Assessment;
- Flood Risk;
- Ecological Assessment;
- Noise;
- Traffic;
- Cultural Heritage;
- The relationship between the solar park and the quarry / other current and future neighbouring land uses e.g. life of the solar park and the duration of the quarrying activities and afteruses; and,
- The proportion of electricity generated that will be exported to the grid and what proportion will be used to supply the quarry.

Yours sincerely

Electronic Copy – Signature Removed

Julie Castree-Denton (Mrs)
Team Leader – Development Control

Encl – Screening Opinion Checklist dated 1 October 2012

Screening Opinion Checklist Julie Castree-Denton……..Date: 1 October 2012 ……. F2

PA/PAD No. SCE.136/501 MW		**Site / Location:** : Newbold Quarry		
Description of development: :… Screening opinion for proposals to develop a solar park and associated infrastructure				
PART 1 - Is a Screening Opinion Required? (ref: EIA Regulations 2011***,*** Circular 2/99 ***and*** DETR EIA – Guide to procedures 2000***)*** See also DCLG note to LPAs on EIA click **here and for DCLG guidance from June 2006 about reserved matters and variations of condition and EIA click here**			**Yes**	**No**
1	Development Description	Do you have enough information to define the size and type of development (a plan, description of type/nature/ purpose and possible effects)?** • **Yes** (proceed to step 2) • **No** - *either take the precautionary principle and assume the worst case or, request more information confirming 3 week deadline not commence until received*; ***Note - **Changes or extensions may also need an EIA!** (Schedule 2, category 13)*	✔	
2	Is it a Schedule 1 development?	• **Yes/No** (explain) **YES** – The development is category…… and a **screening opinion is not required as an EIA mandatory!** **NO** – *If the development is not listed in Schedule 1 it may be listed in Schedule 2* (proceed to step 3)		✔
3	Is it a Schedule 2 development? (Schedule 2, Col 1)	• **Yes/No** (explain) • **YES -** The development falls/could fall within category 3 Energy Industry (a) 'industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam and hot water' (proceed to step 4) • **NO** – If the development is not listed in Schedule 2 a **screening opinion is not required and EIA not required**!	✔	
4	4(a) Does the development fall within the absolute threshold/criteria? (Schedule 2, Col 2)	• **Yes/No** – (explain) The threshold/criteria is/are …. The area of the development exceeds 0.5 hectares…… and the proposal is/are…27 hectares of (mainly) restored land at the quarry…… (proceed to step 4b)	✔	
	4(b) Is the proposal within/near to a 'sensitive area'? (e.g. SSSI, NP, AONB, SAC, RAMSAR, Scheduled Monument)	• **Yes/No –** (explain) **YES** – The development falls within/near to the following designated site(s) Within or …… metres from …… Within or …… metres from…… (OR)		✔
		• *If you have answered **'Yes'** to the threshold/criteria **a screening opinion is required** – proceed to Part 2* • *If you have answered **'No'** to the threshold/criteria and the development **is** within/near a sensitive area **a screening opinion is required** – proceed to Part 2* • *If you have answered **'No'** to the threshold/criteria and the development **is not** within/near a sensitive area **a screening opinion is not required**.*		
5	**Conclusion**	**Screening opinion required?**	✔	

PART 2 – Is an EIA Required? (ref: Schedule 3 - EIA Regulations 2011***,*** Circular 2/99 ***and*** DETR EIA – Guide to procedures 2000***)*** EIA usually required for (i) major developments of more than local importance; (ii) development in particularly environmentally sensitive or vulnerable locations; (iii) developments with unusually complex and potentially hazardous environmental effects. This checklist should be used to determine whether significant effects are likely to arise from the development. **REMEMBER** – the Regs also apply to changes to EIA development and reserved matters / subsequent approvals			
1	Indicative thresholds/criteria	Does the development fall within the indicative thresholds/criteria? (see Circular 02/99 and DETR EIA - links above)	Annex A to Circular 2/99 'EIA will normally be required for power stations which require approval from the Secretary of State at the Department of Trade and Industry (i.e. those with a thermal output of more than 50 megawatts). EIA is unlikely to be required for smaller new conventional power stations'. In this case the proposal is for installed capacity of up to 15megawatts. Small stations using novel forms of generation should be considered carefully in line with the guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework, March 2012 (paragraphs 97 – 98), which replaces PPS22: Renewable Energy. The main considerations are likely to be the level of emissions to air, arrangements for the transport of fuel and any visual impact. The proposed solar park is envisaged as a phased development on three separate areas to the west and northwest of the existing processing and manufacturing facilities within the permitted quarry area. Two of the areas (areas 2 and 3) form part of the restored quarry and the third (area 1), the most northerly, is in agricultural use and is not currently proposed to be extracted. The nearest properties are located to the north of area 1 in the village of Tatenhill.

2	Characteristic of the development:	Size of the development:	The proposed solar park would involve the installation of approximately 62,500 solar photovoltanic panels, to generate electricity to be used onsite with excess to be exported to the national grid. The panels would be treated and coloured matt black to minimise glare, and would be installed in multiple arrays, approximately 6 metres apart, covering 27 hectares of (mainly) restored land at the quarry, and would have an installed capacity of up to 15MW. The panel structures would be angled at approximately 25 degrees and orientated southwards to maximise power generation and would be up to 2.5m high at their highest point.
		Cumulation with other developments	Two of the areas (areas 2 and 3) which form part of the proposed solar park have been worked for sand and gravel and restored. The third area (area 1) is not currently proposed to be extracted and is in agricultural use. Quarrying is ongoing on adjoining land. The solar park would not affect or compromise any aspect of the approved extraction, infill and restoration plan. There are no other solar parks in the vicinity of the site and the site is not located in a 'sensitive area', as defined by the EIA Regulations.
		Use of natural resources	Most components can be recycled on decommissioning and materials used to construct and operate the solar park are not in short supply. The facility is designed to generate renewable energy thus helping to reduce the demand for energy minerals / non-renewable resources.
		Production of waste	Limited to any waste materials during the construction and decommissioning phases.

		Pollution and nuisances	The only pollutants that might be released to air would be exhaust emissions from vehicles delivering to site and working on site. Construction and decommissioning noise impacts will be temporary. Inverter fans will produce very low-level noise during daylight hours.
		Risk of accidents	Established technology so risks are likely to be known and limited – with build in controls and appropriate health and safety procedures.
3	Location of the development (the environmental sensitivity of area likely to be affected):	Existing land use (*include past, present and future (allocated land)*)	Two of the areas (areas 2 and 3) which form part of the proposed solar park have been worked for sand and gravel, backfilled and restored to grassland for grazing and are subject to on-going aftercare. The third area (area 1) is not currently proposed to be extracted and is in agricultural use. During the operation of the solar park, the grass in the fields will be managed by grazing, allowing continued agricultural use between and beneath the panels.
		Relative abundance, quality, regenerative capacity of natural resources	It is reasonable to expect that the panels could be easily removed when the site is decommissioned, allowing the site to be restored to its former condition and returned to full agricultural use with no adverse impacts on land quality.
		Absorption capacity of natural environment (particularly wetlands, nature reserves/parks; SSSIs and international designations; areas where environmental quality standards have been exceeded; densely populated areas; landscapes of historical, cultural or archaeological significance).	The site is not in a 'sensitive area' as defined by the EIA Regulations nor is it in a densely populated area and there are no landscape designations or cultural heritage designations of particular significance within the site boundary or in the vicinity. The nearest locally designated area to the site is the Branston Water Park to the north east. Assets of cultural heritage value are located 2.5 – 5km south of the site.

4	Characteristics of the potential impact	Extent of the impact (area and size of affected population)		The nearest properties are located to the north of area 1 in the village of Tatenhill. Due to the relatively flat topography, views are largely restricted to public rights of way immediately adjacent to or within the site. The land gently rises to the west of the quarry and longer distance views are possible from a small number of publicly accessible locations on more elevated land to the west of Dunstall Road.	
		The magnitude and complexity of the impact		The solar park is a well established technology.	
		The probability of the impact		The impacts are likely to be known as the technology is well known. It is reasonable to expect that the visual effects can be predicted with a reasonable degree of accuracy.	
		The duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact		This would be a temporary use of the land. It would not permanently sterilize any mineral reserves. It is reasonable to expect that the panels could be easily removed when the site is decommissioned, allowing the site to be restored to its former condition and returned to full agricultural use with no adverse impacts on land quality.	
5	Can the significant effects be addressed by proposed mitigation measures?	Are the mitigation measures: • Modest in scope • Plainly and easily achievable		For the reasons stated above it is reasonable to expect that the mitigation measures likely to be required would be modest in scope, and plainly and easily achievable.	
6	**Conclusion**	**ES required?**		**NO**	
	Signed and dated	**Case Officer**	**Julie Castree-Denton** 1 October 2012	**Team Manager**	**Mike Grundy** 1 October 2012

G. Allen Esq
Principal Planning Officer
Planning Policy & Development Control
Staffordshire County Council
No. 1 Staffordshire Place
Stafford
ST16 2LP

AGGREGATE INDUSTRIES

10th September 2012

Our Ref: TJC/tjc-1702/6
Your Ref: PAD1040

Dear Mr Allen,

Proposed Development of a Solar Park and Associated Infrastructure at Newbold Quarry, Barton under Needwood, Staffordshire
Environmental Impact Assessment – Screening Opinion Request

In connection with proposals to develop a solar park at Newbold Quarry, Aggregate Industries UK Limited and AG Renewables request a formal Screening Opinion under Regulation 5 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011. The solar park will cover 27 hectares of (mainly) restored land at the quarry and will have an installed capacity of up to 15MW.

To assist in your determination, we have provided a screening opinion report with the following information:

- A site location;
- A brief description of the nature and purpose of the proposed development;
- A summary of the possible environmental impacts, and how these can be considered against the EIA Regulations, to establish whether an EIA is required;
- Explanation of why we believe an EIA is not required for this development; and
- In addition, we have set out the scope of information that would be provided with the application should the Authority determine that an EIA is not required.

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A member of the Holcim Group

We hope that the report provides Staffordshire County Council with sufficient information to enable it to make an informed decision.

In accordance with the EIA regulations, we look forward to receiving your official opinion within 21 days of receipt of the screening opinion request.

Please feel free to contact me if you require any further information or clarification on any of the matters discussed.

Yours sincerely,

T.J. Claxton
Senior Estates Surveyor

Enc.

AGRenewables

AGGREGATE INDUSTRIES

Newbold Solar Park

Screening Opinion Request Report

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1. Introduction

This report has been produced to assist Staffordshire County Council determine whether proposals for an up to 15MW solar park at Aggregate Industries' Newbold Quarry, Burton-on-Trent, would require an environmental impact assessment. The report provides summary information on the proposed location, a description of the proposed development, and our initial thoughts on the key proposed impacts (positive and negative).

We also set out in this report the process for screening projects, as set out in the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations) 2011, and together with a summary of the key environmental effects, based on our current understanding of issues relating to the site and its surrounds, we have provided a detailed appraisal of the likely significance of environmental effects. To assist us with this process we have utilised an EIA Screening Checklist downloaded from The Planning Portal.

Using this process, we have concluded that the proposed solar park at Newbold is a Schedule 2 development (on the grounds that it exceeds the relevant size threshold), but following an assessment of the likely significant environmental effects, none are of such significance, either alone or in combination, to warrant an environmental impact assessment.

2. Site Location

The site for the solar park is proposed to be located within Aggregate Industries' existing Newbold Quarry boundary. Current plans envisage a phased development with the solar park being developed on three separate areas to the west and northwest of the existing processing and manufacturing facilities (see Appendix 1 for the site location plan, Appendix 2 for a site plan, Appendix 3 for an aerial photograph, and Appendix 4 for a set of indicative site layout plans). Two of the areas (areas 2 and 3) proposed for the solar park form part of the restored quarry and the third (area 1), the most northerly, is in agricultural use and is not currently proposed to be extracted.

The proposed solar farm lies within an extensive area of quarrying located in between the villages of Barton-under-Needwood, Dunstall and Tatenhill to the southwest of Burton-on-Trent. The quarry is bounded primarily by agricultural land to the southwest, west and north west; the village of Tatenhill to the north; the Branston Water Park to the northeast; and industrial estates and the A38 to the east and southeast. The nearest properties to the proposed solar farm are located to the north of area 1 in the village of Tatenhill.

3. Description of the Development

The proposed development would involve the installation of approximately 62,500 solar photovoltaic panels, to generate electricity to be used onsite, with excess to be exported to the national grid.

The panels would be installed in multiple arrays, approximately 6 metres apart, with an estimated generation capacity of up to 15MW. The panels will be angled at approximately 25 degrees and orientated southwards to maximise power generation.

They will be dark matt grey / blue, and will be ground mounted. The steel frames will be piled to a depth of approximately 1.1m depending on ground conditions. This approach could be considered a 'soft' use in line with DEFRA's Agricultural Land Classification (originally produced by MAFF, Oct 1988).) This is due to the fact that the piles are easily removed, and the underlying ground can be converted back to agriculture reasonably easily.

The panel structures will be up to 2.5m high at their highest point. They can be easily removed when the site is decommissioned, allowing the site to be restored to its former condition and returned to full agricultural use.

Approximately 8 inverter kiosks and a substation building will also be installed to facilitate connection to the electricity distribution network.

During the operation of the solar park, the grass in the fields will be managed by grazing, allowing continued agricultural use between and beneath the panels. Figure 1 provides an illustration of a side view for a typical row of photovoltaic panels.

Access to the solar park will be from the existing quarry approach road, site entrance and internal track network. No new access is proposed to the public highway.

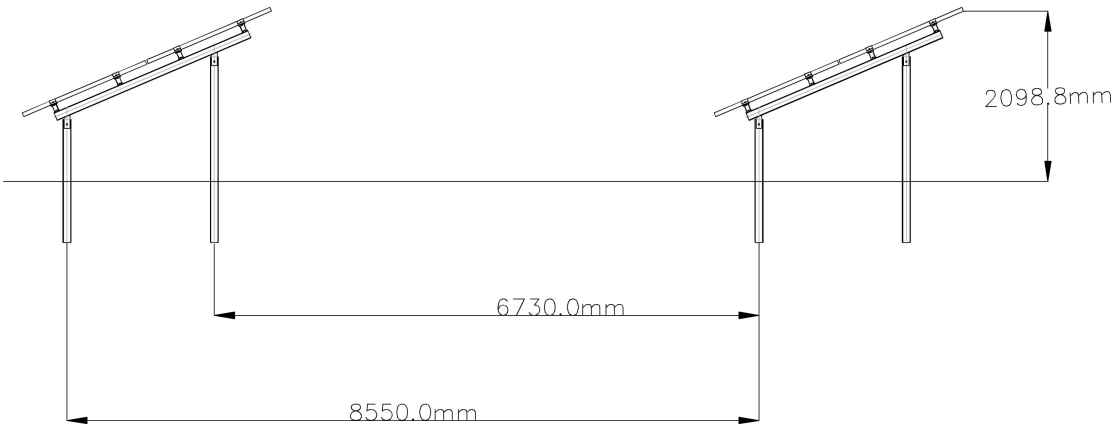

Figure 1. Side view of panels with approximate dimensions

4. Impacts of the Development

With regard to the development's potential effects upon the environment or otherwise, we would note the following:

Positive – The proposed development would provide renewable energy for the site's operations with surplus electricity being delivered to the national grid. This would assist in sustaining the existing Aggregate Industries (AI) business at the Newbold Quarry, thereby protecting jobs, and would complement AI's commitment to the principle of sustainable development and its aim to generate 25% of its electricity requirements from renewable energy developments on the company estate. In addition, the use of renewable energy at the site would reduce reliance on conventional electricity generation and would support national targets for increasing sustainable energy production and reduction of carbon emissions.

Negative – Solar PV development can in some cases give rise to environmental concerns in respect of the potential effects on landscape and visual amenity, flood risk and hydrology; ecology; traffic & highways; cultural heritage; and agricultural land quality.

In Appendices 5 and 6, drawing numbers NSP/SOR 03 & 04 show natural heritage, landscape and cultural heritage designations in the area surrounding Newbold Quarry. These show that no designations will be directly affected by the proposed development.

5. Applying the EIA Screening Process

The EIA Regulations are applied to certain types of development that may have significant effects on the environment. Various development types are categorised in the EIA Regulations as Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 developments, with the nature of the proposals, their location, and their scale being the determining factors, as to whether they are likely to have significant environmental effects.

Developments of a type described in Schedule 1, and those of a type described in Schedule 2 that are likely to have significant environmental effects, are termed EIA

developments. Planning applications for such developments have to be accompanied by an environmental statement prepared in accordance with the EIA Regulations. Screening is the term applied to the process of determining if a development should be categorised as an EIA development.

The first stage of the EIA screening process is to determine whether the development proposals are of a type described under Schedule 1 or Schedule 2. Development described under Schedule 1 is automatically categorised as EIA development, and must be subject to EIA. Development described under Schedule 2 may be EIA development, depending on whether it is likely to have significant effects on the environment.

In the case of Schedule 2 projects, the location of the development must be examined to determine if it is in a sensitive area. This is defined in the EIA Regulations as including sites of special scientific interest, national parks, areas of outstanding natural beauty, world heritage sites, and scheduled monuments. If the site is classed as a sensitive area and the proposals are likely to have significant effects on the environment, then the development is an EIA development and an EIA is required.

If the development site is not in a sensitive area, the next stage in the screening process is to assess whether the development proposals exceed or meet any of the applicable thresholds and criteria for that particular type / class of development. These thresholds and criteria are related to the attributes (e.g. size of the site, production / output, capacity of a facility) of a type of development, and not exceeding or meeting them is a strong indication that an EIA is not required[1]. If the development does exceed or meet any of the applicable thresholds and criteria then it is termed a Schedule 2 development, and the next stage is to assess if it is likely to have significant effects on the environment.

When considering the potential for a development proposal to give rise to significant environmental effects, the advice provided in Circular 02/99 should be taken into consideration:

"Authorities should bear in mind that what is in question at this stage is the broad significance of the likely environmental effects of the proposal. This should not require as much information as would be expected to support a planning application" (excerpt from paragraph 56).

EIA screening guidance provided by the European Commission[2] is that "*people with the qualifications and experience typically found in competent authorities and using the information which is readily available about the project and its environment*" can carry out this determination process. However, any uncertainty that may arise from a lack of information should point to a decision that an EIA is required. If it is concluded that significant environmental effects are likely, then an EIA is required.

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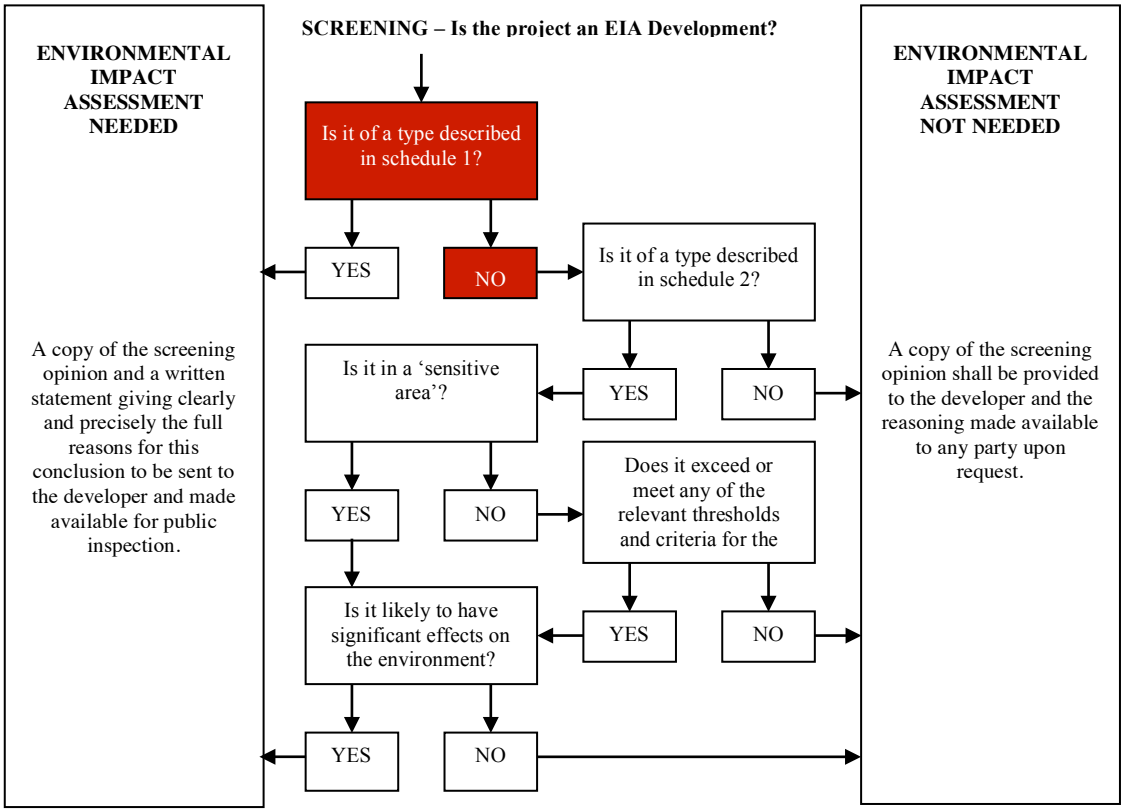
1 Regulation 4(8) of the EIA Regulations enables the Secretary of State to direct that a development described in Schedule 2 is EIA development even if it falls below the exclusive thresholds. The local authority or a member of the public is able to make a request to the Secretary of State for such a direction.

2 Guidance on EIA: Screening, June 2001, Office for official publications of the European Communities

This screening opinion request report follows the above screening process as it applies to this development proposal to Staffordshire County Council in determining whether it is an EIA development and so requires the preparation of an environmental statement to accompany any planning application. The flow chart from Circular 02/99 has been used as a guide to the various stages of the process.

5.2 EIA Schedule 1

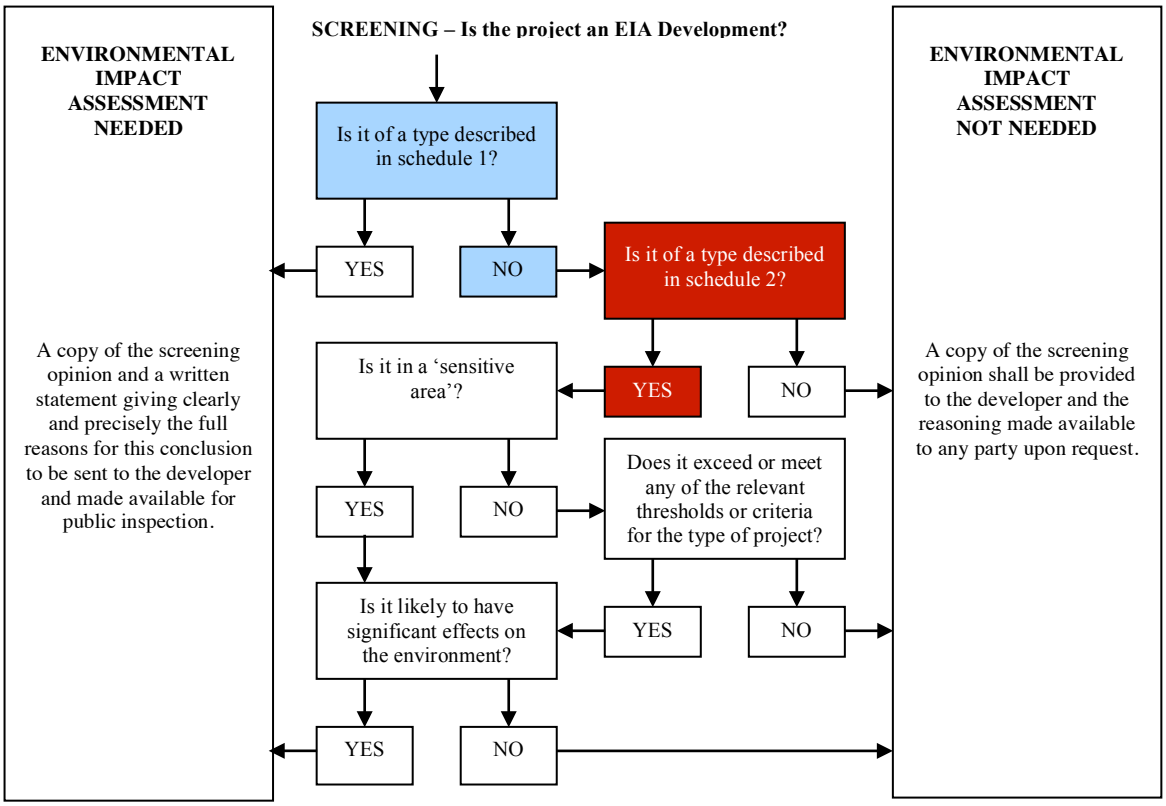
The development proposal is not listed under Schedule 1 of the EIA Regulations. Therefore, the requirement for EIA is not mandatory. See diagram on the following page.



5.3 EIA Schedule 2

If the development does not fall under Schedule 1 of the EIA Regulations, it may be described under Schedule 2. Where development is of a type described in Schedule 2, an EIA is more likely to be required if the site is located in a sensitive area, or the scale of the development meets or exceeds the applicable threshold, both of which indicate the potential for significant environmental effects.

Standalone solar parks are not specifically listed in Schedule 2, but it is considered that as the development's principal purpose is the production of electrical energy, it is of a type described under Section 3(a) – Energy industry (industrial installations for the production of electricity).

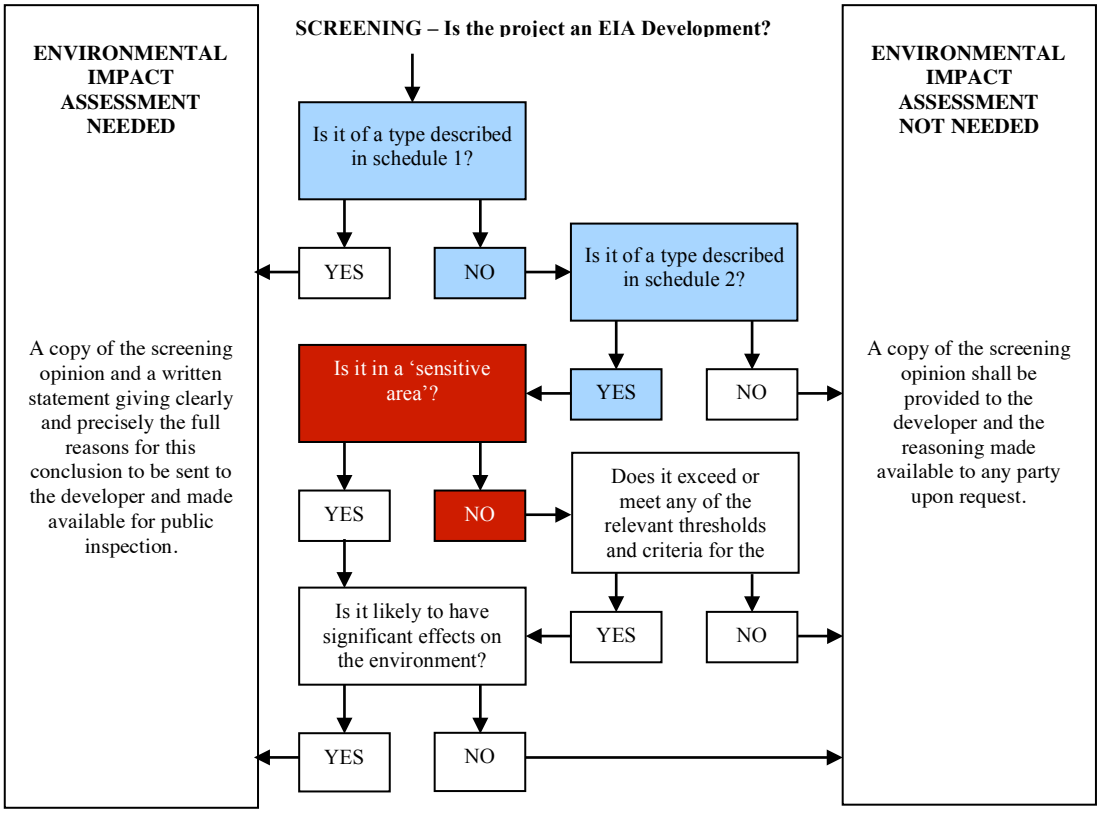


5.4 Sensitive Areas

Where a development is listed under Schedule 2, the next stage is to identify whether the development is located in a 'sensitive area'. Sensitive areas defined in the EIA Regulations include:

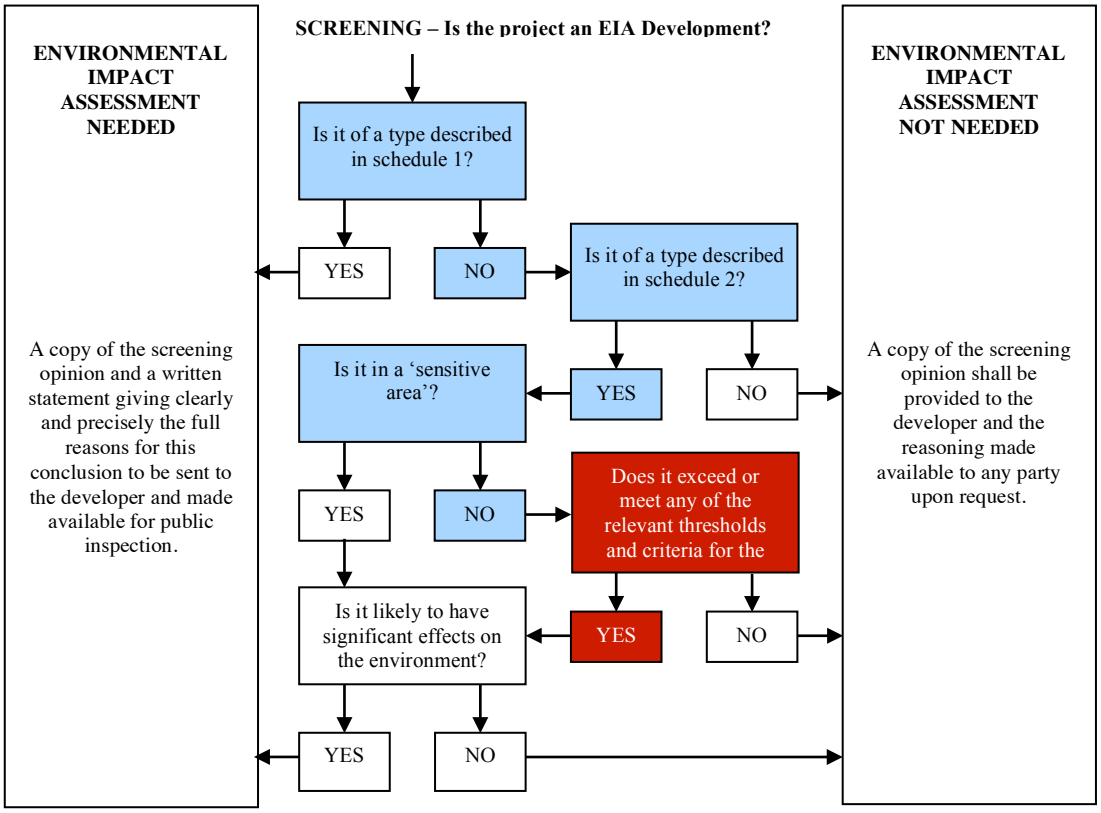
- Sites of special scientific interest and their consultation areas
- Land under nature conservation orders and international conservation sites
- National parks (including the Broads)
- Areas of outstanding natural beauty
- World heritage sites
- Scheduled monuments

None of the designations listed above is applicable to the site or the immediate surrounding area. The site is therefore not located in a 'sensitive area', as defined in the EIA Regulations.



5.5 Applicable Thresholds and Criteria

When a proposed development is of a type described in Schedule 2 and not sited in a sensitive area, the applicable thresholds and criteria for that type of development need to be examined. For 'industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam and hot water', the applicable size threshold is 0.5 hectares. Therefore, as the proposed solar park could be classed as Schedule 2, Section 3(a), development, and has a potential size of 27 hectares, the proposal should be classed as Schedule 2 development. The requirement for EIA now rests on whether the proposed development will have significant environmental effects.



6. Potential Key Environmental Issues

6.1 Landscape and Visual Effects

The site is not covered by any landscape designations and there are no landscape designations in the study area extending 5km from the site (see Appendix 5).

The solar panels are likely to be up to 2.5m in height and the panels will be treated and coloured matt black to minimise glare. The relatively flat topography, intervening vegetation and buildings minimise local inter-visibility with the site such that views are largely restricted to public rights of way immediately adjacent to or within the site. Longer distance views are possible from a small number of publicly accessible locations on more elevated land to the west of Dunstall Road. From these locations, the sites are partially obscured by intervening vegetation and comprise a small element of the wider viewing field.

There are no views of the site from the villages of Dunstall (west) (although there are partially screened views of the sites from Dunstall Hall) and Barton-under-Needwood (southwest) which both lie approximately 1.5km from the nearest part of the proposed solar farm. The northern area of the site lies to the south of Tatenhill although a substantial intervening block of semi-mature woodland planting obstructs any views into the site from residential properties. The southwest built up area of Burton-on-Trent and the village of Walton-on-Trent are both east of the A38, and allow no views to the site.

A landscape and visual appraisal will be submitted with the planning application, although no significant effects are anticipated.

6.2 Cultural Heritage

There are no cultural heritage designations within the site boundary. A plan showing cultural heritage assets in a 5km study zone is included as Appendix 6. The cultural heritage designations plan shows that there are a number of listed buildings located in and around the villages of Barton-under-Needwood, Dunstall, Tatenhill and Walton-on-Trent within 2.5km of the site and a cluster of scheduled ancient monuments, principally to the southwest between 2.5km and 5km from the site. The archaeological records show a scheduled ancient monument within the quarry (but outside of the proposed solar farm areas) however, as this area has been extracted, it is assumed that this record is incorrect. The planning statement would consider and assess potential views from these listed buildings and any associated impact on settings, however, due to the distance between the proposed solar park sites, the low level nature of the development and the intervening buildings and vegetation, it is not envisaged that there will be any significant impacts on any cultural heritage assets or their settings.

There would be no direct impacts on undiscovered cultural heritage interests at the two areas that have been extracted and infilled. The area that has not been extracted would be subject to a walkover survey however given that the photovoltaic panels will be ground mounted and will not require intrusive foundations, no significant effects on below ground archaeological remains are predicted.

6.3 Natural Heritage and Ecology

There are no internationally or nationally designated nature conservation areas within 5 km of the site and the site itself is not the subject of any designations. The nearest locally designated area to the site is the Branston Water Park to the north east of the central part of the proposed solar park. The water park is a local nature reserve and recreational centre comprising a 40 acre lake with 2km of surfaced paths running round the lake and linking a variety of small habitat areas, with interpretation boards. These habitats include wildflower meadow, large reed bed and Willow Carr woodland.

There is one ancient woodland within 2.5km of the proposed solar park, and a number of other ancient woodland blocks within the 5km study zone.

The northern site is currently grazed with well-established boundary hedges and trees. The central and southern sites have been extracted for sand and gravel, backfilled and restored to grass meadow. Field boundary and dividing hedgerows have been planted and are reasonably well established, and new tree planting has been established beyond the field boundaries.

The fields will remain in agricultural use, as managed grassland and grazed, whilst the solar farm is operational. The majority of hedgerows will not be affected by the proposals with the exception of a management regime to reduce overshadowing in certain locations and the removal of some short sections of young hedgerows to enable a more efficient layout of arrays. Any hedgerows removed will be replaced when the site is restored, and new planting will be produced as part of a landscape management plan. Once the solar park has been removed the land can return to full agricultural use.

A Phase 1 ecology survey was undertaken on 3rd September 2012 and the results and subsequent report will be submitted with a planning application. The results of the surveys showed that the vegetation on site consists largely of species poor communities with little ecological value. There is some potential for common nesting bird species within the hedgerows and fields on site. In area 1 and within a small part of area 3 there is some potential for the presence of common reptile species, a Phase 2 survey is due to be carried out in September and early October 2012. A local Biological Record Centre (BRC) datasearch request has been lodged but the results of this have not been received at the time of the preparation of this document.

Based on the results of the surveys to date it is not anticipated that there will be a significant negative impact on the ecological features of the site. Enhancements may include the provision of new hedgerows and the creation of areas of wildflower meadow.

6.4 Traffic and Transport

The proposals will generate a small number of daily traffic movements during construction, which will include HGV and staff vehicles. It is anticipated that vehicles will access the site via the main quarry entrance and slip road from the A38. There is the potential for a small increase in traffic during the construction period as a result. However, the existing road network already accommodates significant HGV movements associated with the quarry operations and any increase in HGV traffic will be temporary and insignificant compared to the daily HGV flows to and from the site. Therefore it is not considered that there is the potential for significant effects on the local road network or local amenity.

Once operational, a very small number of infrequent vehicle movements associated with standard maintenance are expected, which will not have an appreciable effect on the local road network.

6.5 Noise

There will be a small amount of noise associated with the construction phase of the development. This will be short term and unlikely to affect nearby residential receptors due to the separation distance (in particular the southern and central areas) and existing background noise levels associated with the mineral extraction, transport and processing, the infill operations and noise from traffic on the A38. Residential receptors are closer to the proposed solar arrays in area 1 however construction impacts will be temporary and will generate low level noise impacts. All noise impacts will be considered in the planning application and if necessary, as advised by the Environmental Health Officer, will be supported by background noise monitoring and assessment of impact.

Post-construction, the passive operation of the solar panels and occasional visits for maintenance will not give rise to any noticeable noise at residential receptors.

6.6 Water Environment

The development site is in a floodplain with Areas1 and 3 both largely within flood zones 2 and 3 (medium and high risk from flooding) with Area 2 largely, but not entirely, free from flood risk.

.

As the site area exceeds 1 ha, a full flood risk assessment will be submitted with the planning application, in accordance with the requirements of National Planning Policy Statement.

The Environment Agency has been contacted with regards to the FRA (flood risk assessment) to provide data for both flood levels and extents of flood zones.

At this stage, we believe that the solar park development will have a limited impact onto the flood risk in the area, and would propose mitigation to divert any excess water run off to the quarry's existing land drainage system.

6.7 Agricultural Land / Land Use

Two of the three areas proposed to be developed as a solar farm have been extracted for their minerals, backfilled and restored. These areas have been restored to grassland for grazing and are subject to on-going aftercare. The third area has not been extracted and is currently in agricultural use for grazing. The proposals currently envisage the land between and beneath the solar panels continuing to be used for grazing, albeit less intensively than currently. The construction and decommissioning of the solar park will have limited impact on the land quality and the fields will easily be returned to more intensive grazing on removal of the solar park and associated infrastructure. Therefore with on-going agricultural use and implementation of an appropriate decommissioning and restoration plan the solar park will have no adverse impacts on land quality or its future agricultural use.

7. EIA Screening Checklist

To assist Staffordshire County Council determine whether the proposed development is likely to have significant effects on the environment, we have incorporated the EIA checklist used by the National Planning Casework Unit and The Planning Inspectorate when screening for EIA. This checklist has been downloaded from the Planning Portal, and the questions answered based on our current understanding of the local environment and our provisional proposals for the solar park. The answers have been informed by: Aggregate Industries knowledge and information relating to the Newbold quarry operations; GIS databases of designations; site visit work; initial landscape and ecology survey work; and AGRenewables' experience of developing solar park developments.

	Questions to be considered	Likely/Unlikely – briefly describe	Is this likely to result in a significant effect? Yes/No - why?
1	Will construction, operation or decommissioning of the Project involve actions, which will cause physical changes in the locality (topography, land use, changes in water bodies, etc.)?	**Likely** The principal land use will be changed from agriculture to energy production.	**Not significant** This will be a temporary use of the land with limited physical impact and grazing will continue between the arrays.
2	Will construction or operation of the Project use natural resources such as land, water, materials or energy, especially any resources which are non-renewable or in short supply?	**Likely** Energy and materials will be used in the manufacture of the solar park and energy in its construction.	**Not significant** Materials used are not in short supply and most components can be recycled on decommissioning. The facility is designed to generate electricity and reduce reliance on non-renewable resources.
3	Will the Project involve use, storage, transport, handling or production of substances or materials, which could be harmful to human health or the environment or raise concerns about actual or perceived risks to human health?	**Likely** The solar park will generate electricity, which would be harmful to human health without proper safeguards during construction and operation. Construction and decommissioning activities, including damage to panels could be harmful to human health.	**Not significant** Industry standard health and safety safeguards will be deployed for site operatives and visitors during construction / decommissioning and as during O&M works. Only suitably qualified staff and contractors will have access to site. The site will be fenced and security measures deployed to deter unauthorised access.

4	Will the Project produce solid wastes during construction or operation or decommissioning?	**Likely** Small quantities of waste might be produced during construction and decommissioning.	**Not significant** Any non-recyclable waste produced is likely to be insignificant in type and quantity
5	Will the Project release pollutants or any hazardous, toxic or noxious substances to air?	**Likely** The only pollutants that might be released to air would be exhaust emissions from vehicles delivering to site and working on site.	**Not significant** Impacts are not expected to be adverse or significant.
6	Will the Project cause noise and vibration or release of light, heat energy or electromagnetic radiation?	**Likely** Temporary noise impacts likely during construction and decommissioning and low level noise from inverters during operation.	**Not significant** Construction & decommissioning noise impacts will be temporary and controllable to industry standards. Inverter fans will produce very low-level noise during daylight hours.
7	Will the Project lead to risks of contamination of land or water from releases of pollutants onto the ground or into surface waters, groundwater, coastal waters or the sea?	**Unlikely** The only potential releases of pollutants would be from vehicles accessing the site and machinery used on site.	**No impact predicted** With normal safeguards in place there should be no significant or adverse impacts arising.
8	Are there any areas on or around the location, which are already subject to pollution or environmental damage e.g. where existing legal environmental standards are exceeded, which could be affected by the project?	**Unlikely** The site has been worked for minerals and backfilled, and quarrying activity and landfill continue in the general area.	**Not significant** The quarrying and landfill operations are carried out under existing planning and environmental controls and the proposed solar farm will not impact on these operations.

9	Will there be any risk of accidents during construction or operation of the Project, which could affect human health or the environment?	**Unlikely** Although with any construction site there is always a risk of accident or incident.	**Not significant** Appropriate health and safety procedures will be deployed to ensure site operatives and visitors (invited or otherwise) to site are safeguarded during construction, operation and decommissioning.
10	Will the Project result in social changes, for example, in demography, traditional lifestyles, and employment?	**Likely** The construction, operation and decommissioning of the solar park will generate new employment.	**Not significant** Whilst the construction will generate a number of jobs preparing the site, installing and connecting the panels and carrying out fencing & planting etc. these jobs will be temporary. Employment impacts during construction will principally be limited to security, landscape maintenance and O&M
11	Are there any areas on or around the location, which are protected under international or national or local legislation for their ecological, landscape, cultural or other value, which could be affected by the project?	**Unlikely** The only local ecological designation is associated with the water park to the northeast. Assets of cultural heritage value (SAMs) are located 2.5 to 5km south of the site.	**Not significant** Due to the nature of solar park construction, operation and decommissioning, and also distance and intervening buildings, plant and vegetation, it is not anticipated that there would be any impacts on these interests.
12	Are there any other areas on or around the location, which are important or sensitive for reasons of their ecology e.g. wetlands, watercourses or other water	**Unlikely** See response to Q11 above in respect of the water park.	**Not significant**

	bodies, the coastal zone, mountains, forests or woodlands, which could be affected by the project?		
13	Are there any areas on or around the location which are used by protected, important or sensitive species of fauna or flora e.g. for breeding, nesting, foraging, resting, overwintering, migration, which could be affected by the project?	**Unlikely** The only area where such interests may be found is the water park referred to in Q's 11 and 12.	**Not significant** Ecological surveys will be undertaken of the site, bounding hedgerows and the immediate area to assess ecological impacts however due to the nature of solar park construction, operation and decommissioning, and also distance, it is not anticipated that there would be any significant or adverse impacts on these interests.
14	Are there any inland, coastal, marine or underground waters on or around the location, which could be affected by the project?	**Unlikely** The existing water park and proposed restoration of the quarry (involving the creation of new water bodies) will be the only inland water bodies in the local area.	**Not significant** For the reasons outlined above no significant or adverse impacts are predicted.
15	Are there any areas or features of high landscape or scenic value on or around the location, which could be affected by the project?	**Unlikely** There are no designated areas of landscape or scenic value in or around the site.	**No impact predicted**
16	Is the project in a location where it is likely to be highly visible to many people?	**Unlikely** The land gently rises to the west of the quarry where some views might be experienced.	**Not significant** Distance, the low level nature of the development, intervening vegetation, limited numbers of residential receptors and the locational context within a

			major operational quarry and landfill site are likely to limited and mitigate any limited views of the proposed solar park.
17	Are there any routes on or around the location, which are used by the public for access to recreation or other facilities, which could be affected by the project?	**Likely** Routes used to access the country park and a public right of way through the quarry are the only routes that could be affected. Views from the A38 are screened by existing vegetation and buildings	**Not significant** Walkers using the PROW will experience the solar farm as a small part of a significant quarrying and landfill operation and views of the low level solar panels will be in part screened / mitigated by boundary planting. It is not envisaged that routes to and from the country park would have any views of significance of the solar park.
18	Are there any transport routes on or around the location which are susceptible to congestion or which cause environmental problems, which could be affected by the project?	**Unlikely** The road network serving the quarry, landfill and associated activities generate a significant number of HGV movements within consented limits.	**No impact predicted** The temporary construction and decommissioning works will general a only a very small increase in HGV movements and operational impacts will be negligible
19	Are there any areas or features of historic or cultural importance on or around the location, which could be affected by the project?	**Likely** See response to Q11.	**Not significant** See response to Q11.
20	Is the project located in a previously undeveloped area where there will be loss of greenfield land?	**Likely** Two of the three areas (areas 2 and 3) have been previously extracted and restored to grazing. One area (area 1) is greenfield.	**Not significant** There will only be a partial and temporary loss of grazing land. Grassland between the panels will be grazed and the site will be easily restored to grassland after the site is

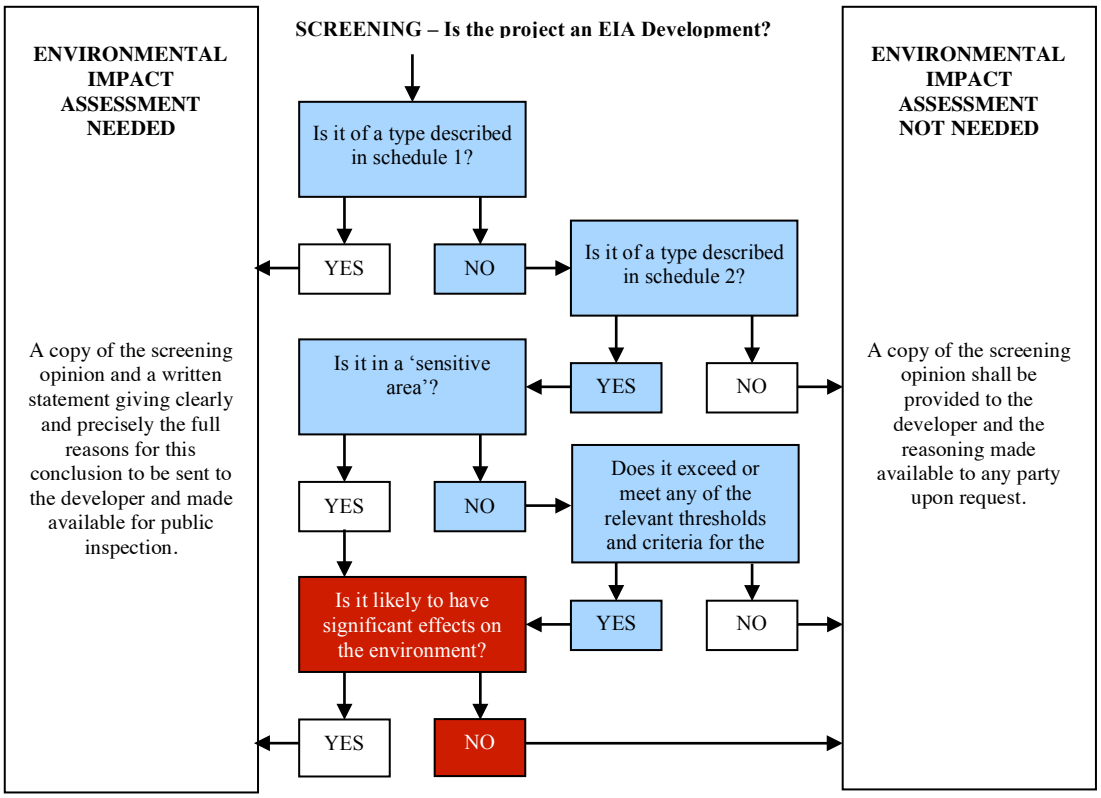
			decommissioned.
21	Are there existing land uses on or around the location e.g. homes, gardens, other private property, industry, commerce, recreation, public open space, community facilities, agriculture, forestry, tourism, mining or quarrying which could be affected by the project?	**Likely** The site is located alongside quarrying activities and close to a country park.	**Not significant** The solar park will not have any impact on the operation of the quarry, nor will it permanently sterilize any mineral reserves. Due to the low impact construction and decommissioning activities and benign operational impacts there are not anticipated to be any adverse or significant impacts on the country / water park.
22	Are there any areas on or around the location, which are densely populated or built-up, which could be affected by the project?	**Likely** The villages of Barton-under-Needwood, Dunstall and Tatenhill lie beyond the quarry boundaries. Other built up areas including Walton-on-Trent and the built up edge of Burton-on-Trent are further distant and screened.	**Not significant** Due to topography, intervening vegetation, buildings and structures and wider impacts of being located in proximity to a major quarry & landfill and west of the A38 it is not anticipated that there will be any adverse or significant impacts on views or residential amenity during the construction, operation and decommissioning of the solar park.
23	Are there any areas on, or around, the locations, which are occupied by sensitive land uses e.g. hospitals, schools, places of worship, community facilities, which could be affected by the project?	**Unlikely** No such uses are known to exist in the area surrounding the site.	**No impact predicted**

24	Are there any areas on or around the location which contain important, high quality or scarce resources e.g. groundwater, surface waters, forestry, agriculture, fisheries, tourism, minerals, which could be affected by the project?	**Unlikely** No such important resources are known to exist with the exception of the mineral reserves at Newbold	**No impact predicted** As noted above in the response to Q21, the solar park will not impact on current and future planned mineral extraction.
25	Is the project location susceptible to earthquakes, subsidence, landslides, erosion, flooding or extreme or adverse climatic conditions e.g. temperature inversions, fogs, severe winds, which could cause the project to present environmental problems?	**Likely** The area is on a floodplain	**Not significant** The proposed solar park will be designed to avoid adverse impact on the existing drainage regime, and despite its limited built footprint a full flood risk assessment will be undertaken to support the planning application.
26	Are there any plans for future land uses on or around the location, which could be affected by the project?	**Likely** The quarry has an approved extraction, infill and restoration plan. The solar park will not affect or compromise any aspect of the restoration plan, with the exception of the potential need to trim adjoining vegetation to reduce shadowing of the panels and potentially remove some newly established internal field hedges.	**Not significant** Any internal field hedges will be replaced as part of the decommissioning phase and new hedge planting will be proposed to help screen or mitigate views from the public right of way
27	Are there any other factors, which should be considered, such as consequential development, which could lead to environmental effects, or the	**Unlikely** There are no anticipated consequential impacts with the exception potentially of any off site grid connection works undertaken by the DNO to connect the solar farm outwith the solar park	**Not significant** Any off site grid connection works are likely to involve underground cabling and works to existing sub station facilities and the site will co-exist with the

	potential for cumulative impacts with other existing or planned activities in the locality?	planning application. The solar farm will be a temporary use of fields within the wider operational quarry boundary, which will be progressively extracted, filled and restored during and post the operation of the solar park. No other developments that may have a cumulative impact are currently known.	approved operating and restoration plan for the quarry.

8. Summary

Having examined all the potential key issues and the relevant criteria from schedule 3, it is considered that the proposal will not have the potential to generate significant environmental effects and hence is not an EIA development for which an EIA should be required.



9. Conclusion

AGR/AI is formally requesting a screening opinion from Staffordshire County Council to determine whether the proposed solar park and associated infrastructure constitute an EIA development.

We have assessed the proposals in accordance with the screening process set out in the EIA Regulations and have concluded that:

- The development is of a type described in schedule 2
- The development site is not within a sensitive area
- The development is above the applicable threshold and is therefore a schedule 2 development
- The development is not considered likely to have significant environmental effects
- The development is not an EIA development

Whilst the decision rests with Staffordshire County Council, this report concludes that the proposed development will not require EIA, as it is considered unlikely to result in significant environmental effects.

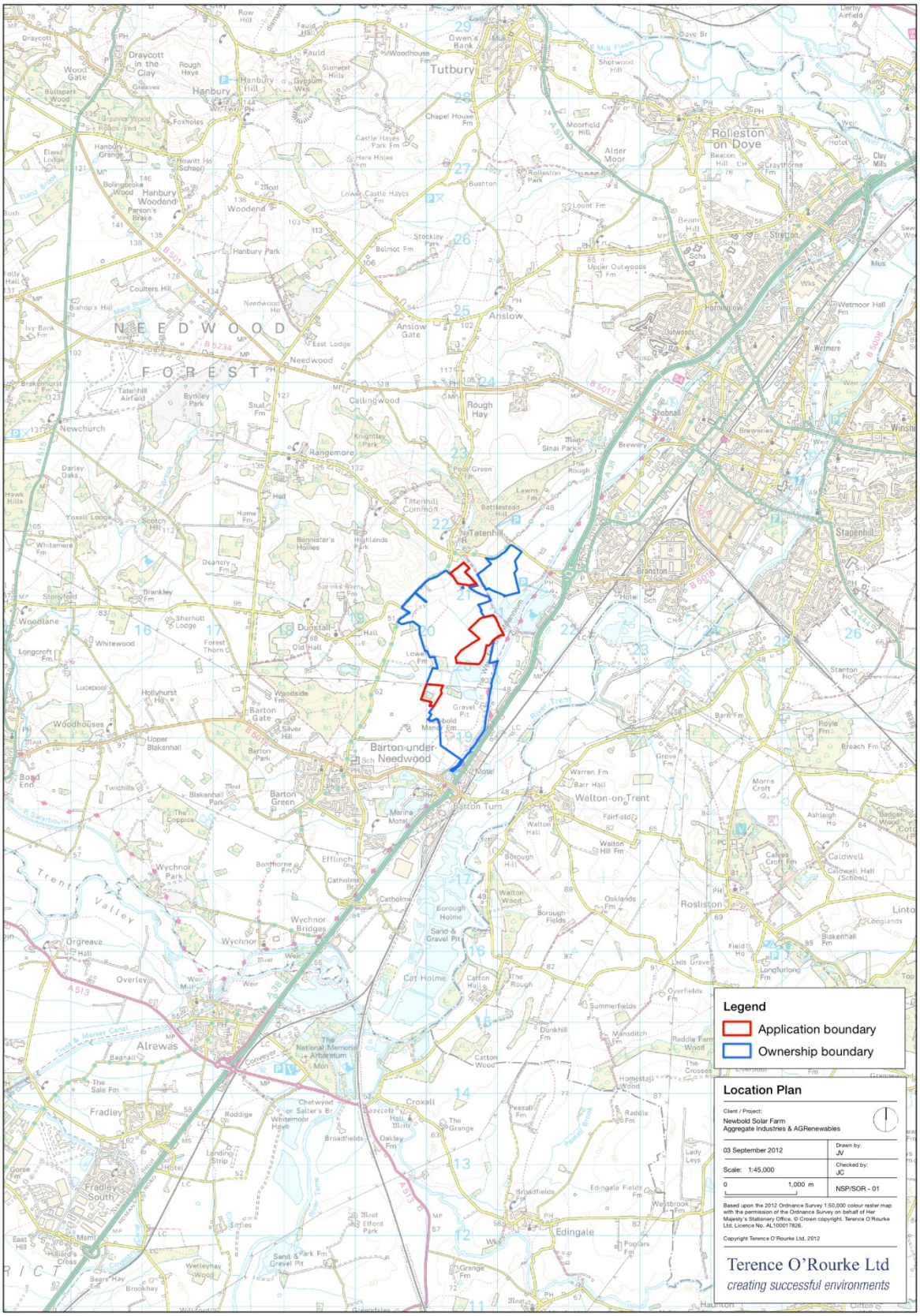
9.1 Proposed Scope of the Planning Application

The following supporting information will be submitted with the planning application so that the council has sufficient information on which to determine it:

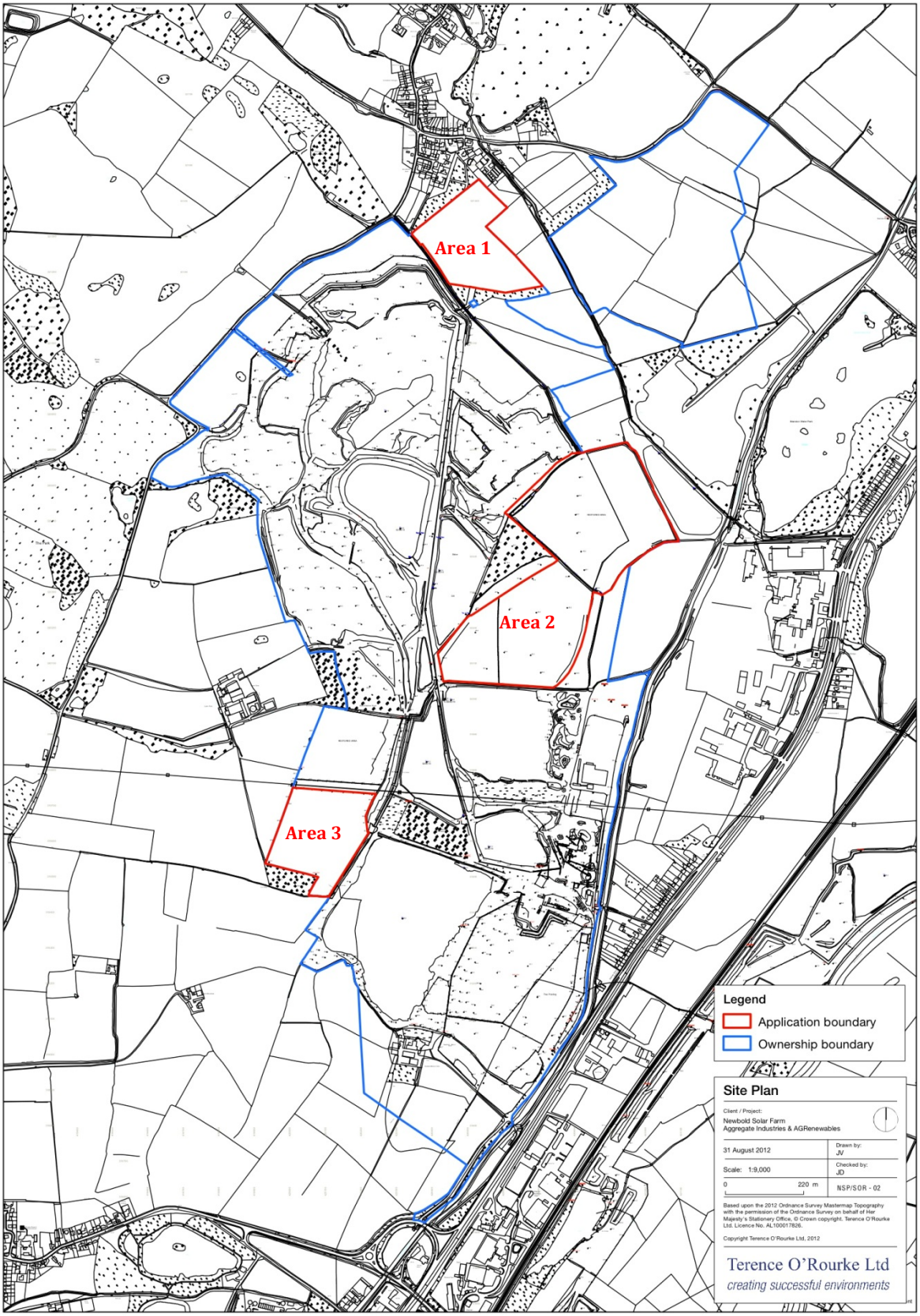
- Description of the Proposed Development;
- Landscape and Visual Assessment;
- Flood Risk and Hydrology Assessment;
- Ecological Assessment;
- A section addressing other secondary issues including noise; traffic; cultural heritage; and
- A Design and Access Statement.

Assuming the Council reaches the same conclusion that the proposed solar park at Newbold does not require an environmental impact assessment, we would welcome the Council's thoughts on the scope of studies required to support a planning application of this nature.

Appendix: 1 Site Location Plan

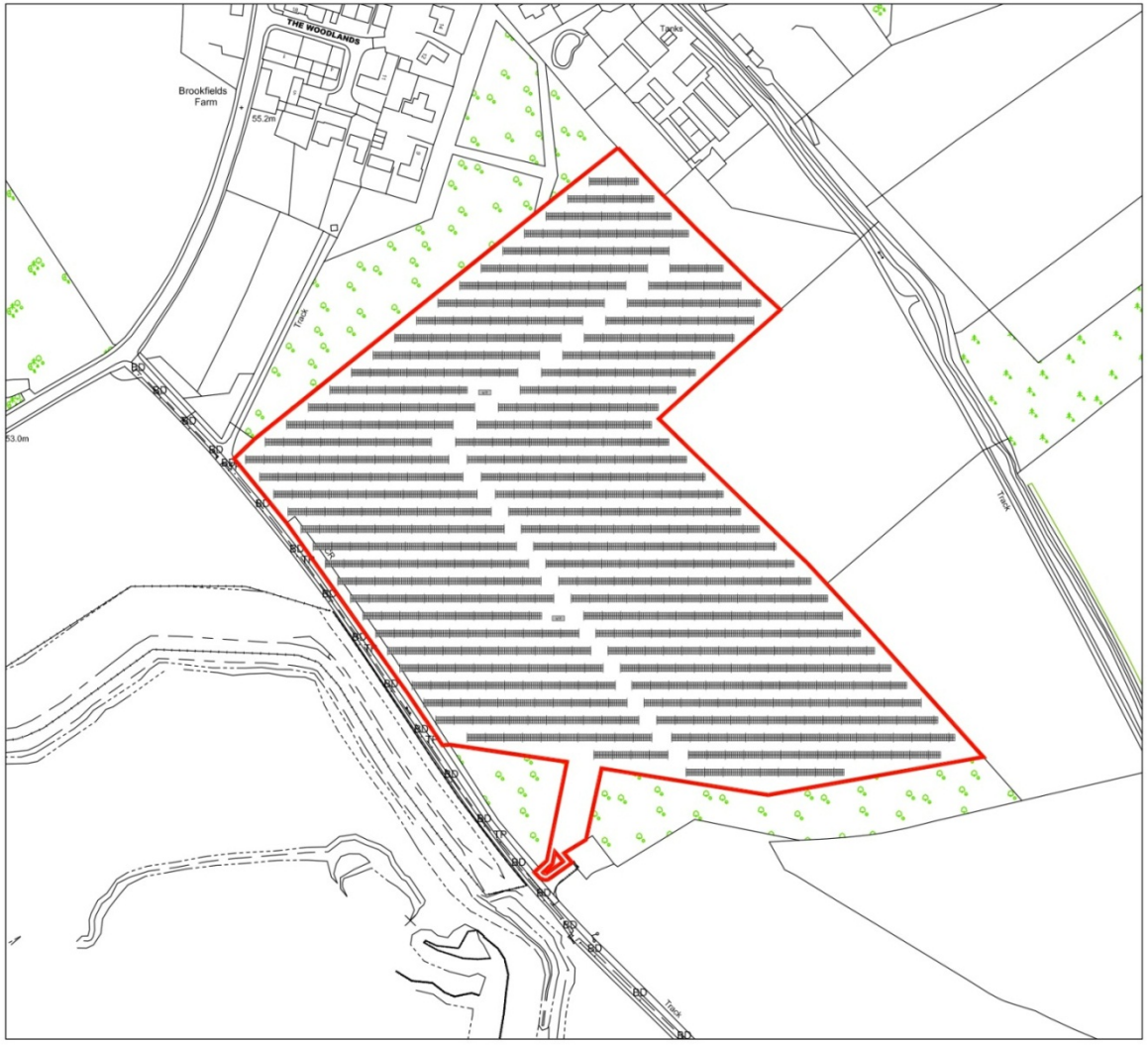


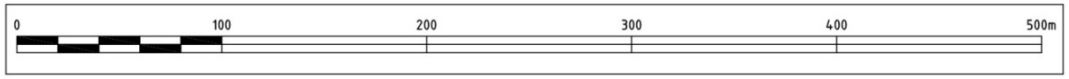
Appendix 2: Site Plan



Appendix 3: Aerial Photo of Site

Appendix 4a: Indicative Site Layout Plans (Area 1)





Solar Power Plant - I -
- PRE PLANNING -

PLANT OWNER

PLANT LOCATION

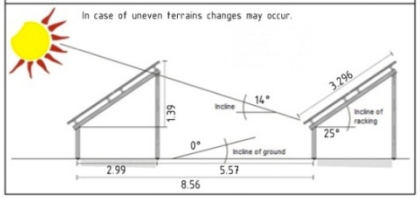
Country	- England
Region	- West Midlands
District	- East Staffordshire
City	- Branston
Coordinates	- 52°47'19" N ; 1°41'51" W

PROJECT INFORMATION

Area of solar system	- 5,64 ha
Fenced area	- 6,00 ha
Length of fence	- 1230m
Position of racks	- Continuous racking
Module type/performance	- CanadianSolar / 240W
Module measurements	- 1638x982x40mm
Quantity of modules	- 11880
Inverters	- 1x Fecon HSC2000S 1x Fecon HSC1000S
Plant performance	- 2,851 MWp

PLANNING PARAMETERS

Racking system	- SPR-Fix
Plant orientation	- South / 25°
Shadow	- The plant is shading itself, Dec 22nd



PLANNING STAGE

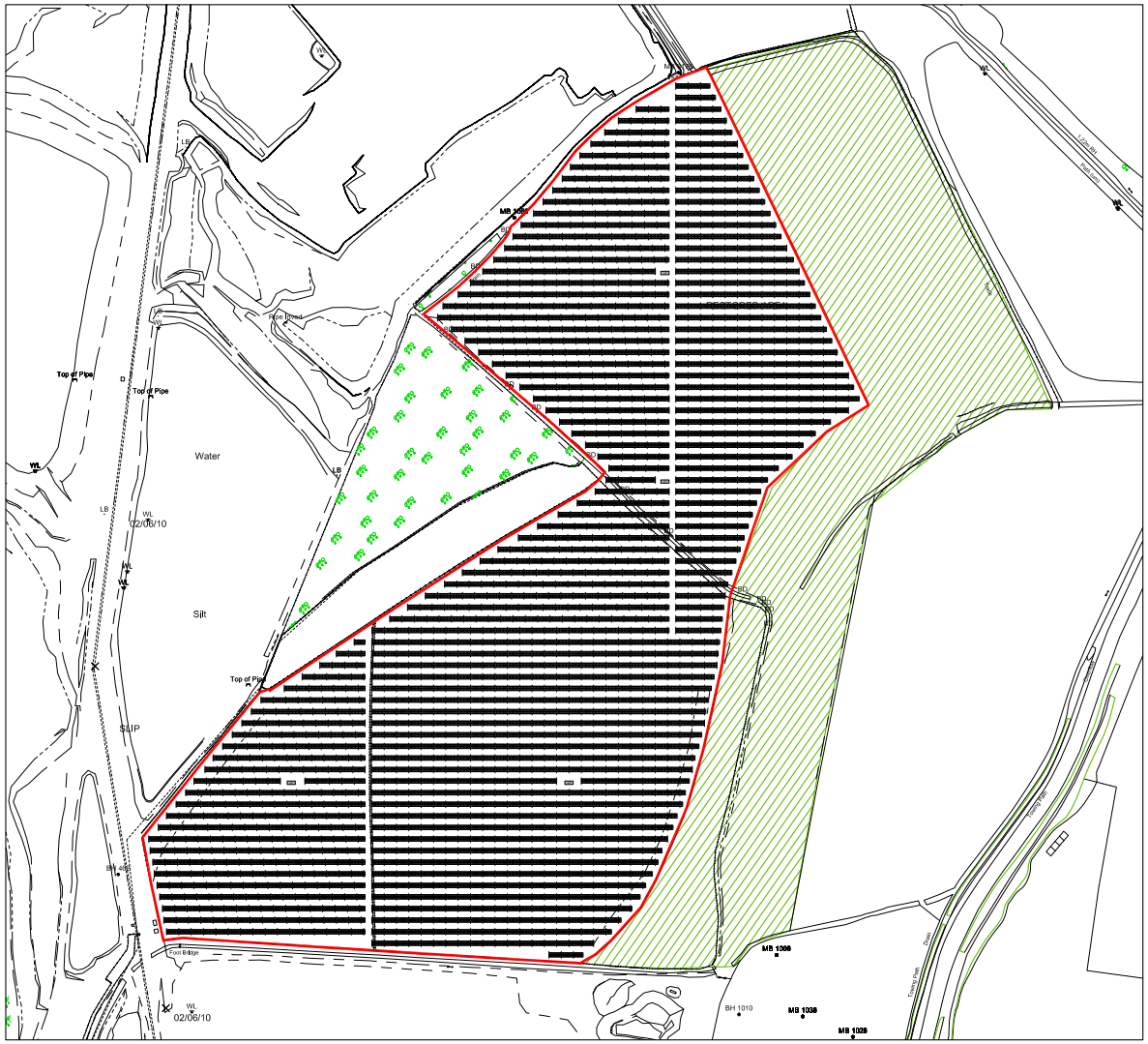
VP-E01	23.08.2012	Erstellt / ENI
Index	Date	Comment

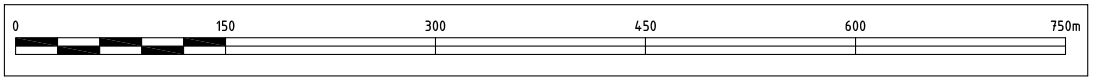
PLANNING OFFICE

Scale - 1:2000
Format - DIN A3
Number - Newbold_Lageplan

SPR SOLARPARK RODENÄS GmbH
Solarpark Rodenäs GmbH
Norddeich 3 · 25924 Rodenäs
Tel.: 04668-95863-0 · Fax: 04668-95863-29

Appendix 4b: Indicative Site Layout Plans (Area 2)





Solar Power Plant - II -
- PRE PLANNING -

PLANT OWNER

PLANT LOCATION

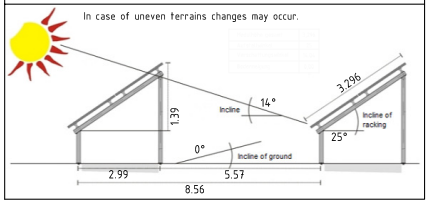
Country	- England
Region	- West Midlands
District	- East Staffordshire
City	- Branston
Coordinates	- 52°46'47" N ; 1°41'37" W

PROJECT INFORMATION

Area of solar system	- 15,68 ha
Fenced area	- 16,30 ha
Length of fence	- 2050m
Position of racks	- Continuous racking
Module type/performance	- CanadianSolar / 240W
Module measurements	- 1638x982x40mm
Quantity of modules	- 34760
Inverters	- 4x Fecon HSC2000S
Plant performance	- 8,342 MWp

PLANNING PARAMETERS

Racking system	- SPR-Fix
Plant orientation	- South / 25°
Shadow	- The plant is shading itself, Dec 22nd



PLANNING STAGE

VP-E01	23.08.2012	Erstellt / ENI
Index	Date	Comment

PLANNING OFFICE

Scale - 1:3000
Format - DIN A3
Number - Newbold_Lageplan

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Norddelch 3 · 25924 Rodenäs
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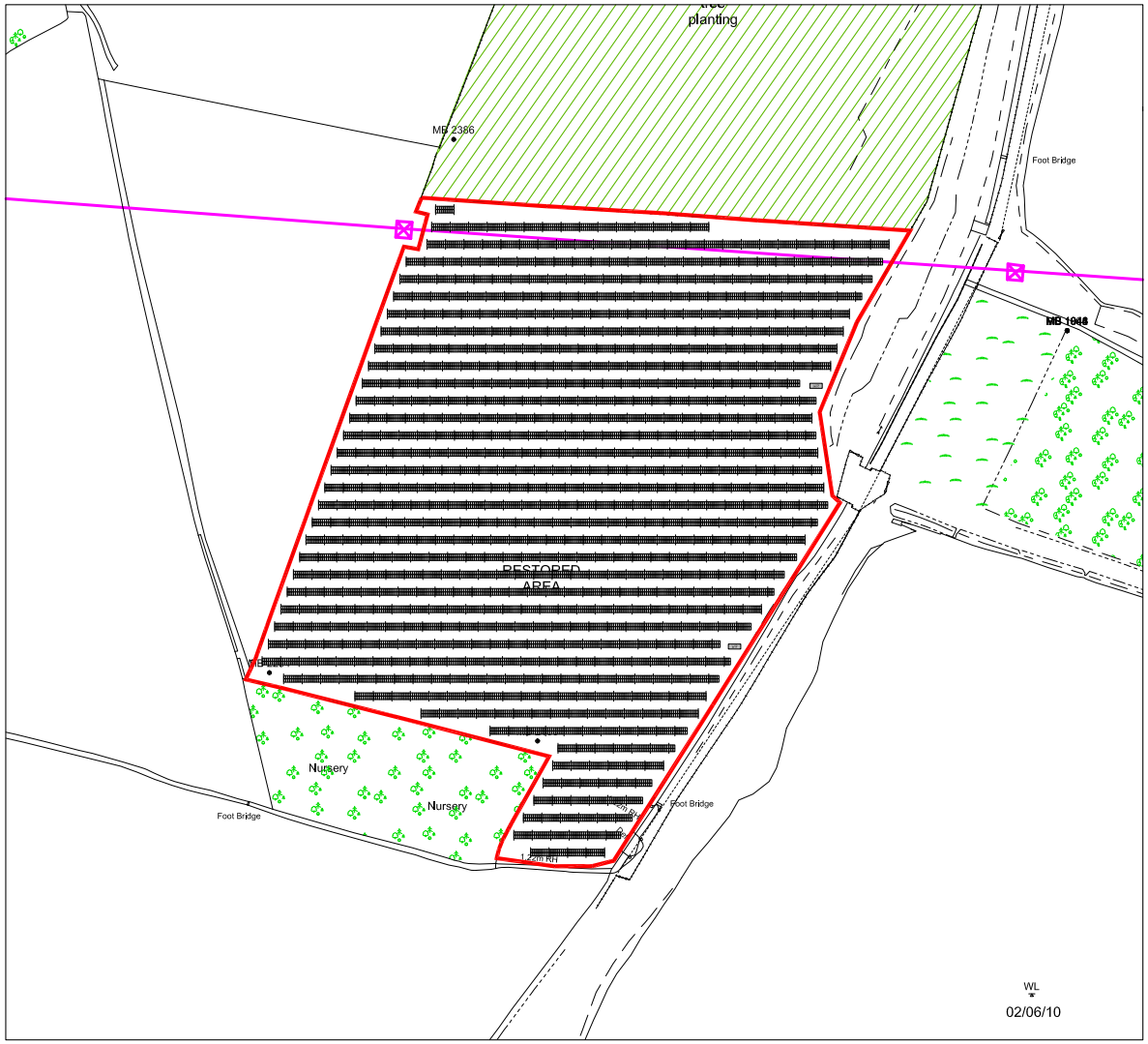
Appendix 4c: Indicative Site Layout Plans (Area 3)



Solar Power Plant - III -
- PRE PLANNING -

PLANT OWNER

PLANT LOCATION

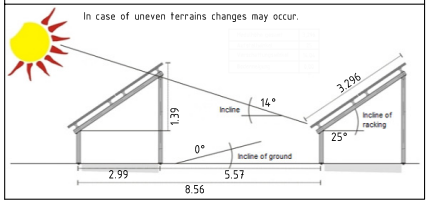
Country	- England
Region	- West Midlands
District	- East Staffordshire
City	- Branston
Coordinates	- 52°46'25" N ; 1°42'13" W

PROJECT INFORMATION

Area of solar system	- 6,15 ha
Fenced area	- 6,48 ha
Length of fence	- 1130m
Position of racks	- Continuous racking
Module type/performance	- CanadianSolar / 240W
Module measurements	- 1638x982x40mm
Quantity of modules	- 13816
Inverters	- 1x Fecon HSC2000S 1x Fecon HSC1000S
Plant performance	- 3,316 MWp

PLANNING PARAMETERS

Racking system	- SPR-Fix
Plant orientation	- South / 25°
Shadow	- The plant is shading itself, Dec 22nd



PLANNING STAGE

Index	Date	Comment
VP-E01	23.08.2012	Erstellt / ENI

PLANNING OFFICE

Scale - 1:2000
Format - DIN A3
Number - Newbold_Lageplan

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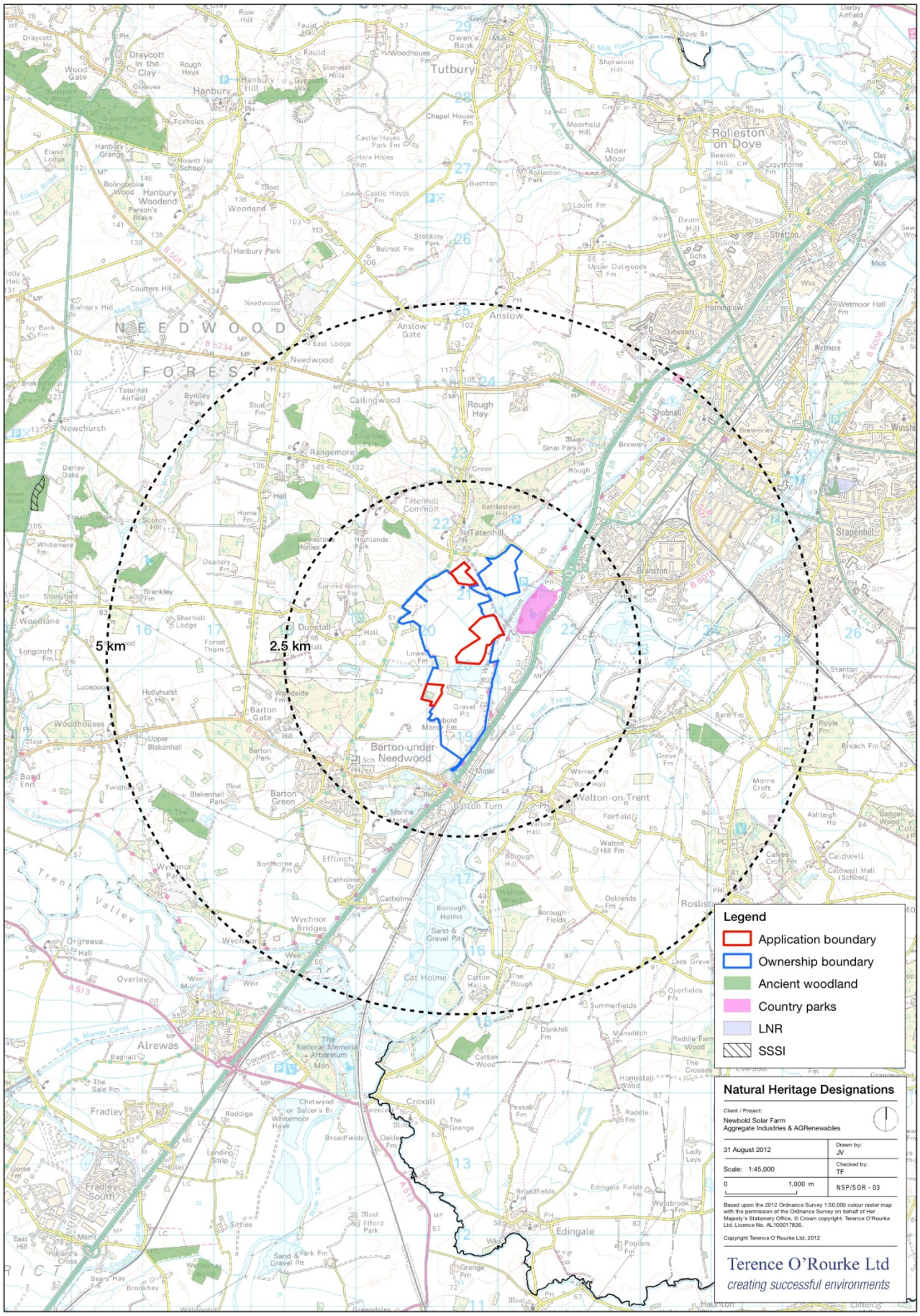
Appendix 5: Natural Heritage Constraints Plan



Appendix 6: Cultural Heritage Constraints Plan