

17 January 2011  
enf.uk/solar/rca

Stratford-on-Avon District Council  
Elizabeth House,  
Church Street,  
Stratford-upon-Avon,  
Warwickshire,  
CV37 6HX

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Proposed Solar PV Project at Elms Farm on land North of the B4087, near to Newbold Pacey**

Enfinity UK Ltd is currently investigating the suitability of a Solar Park at Elms Farm on land North of the B4087 near to Newbold Pacey (see location plan attached below) at NGR: SP294566. The site has been identified as having good potential for PV generation due to its location.

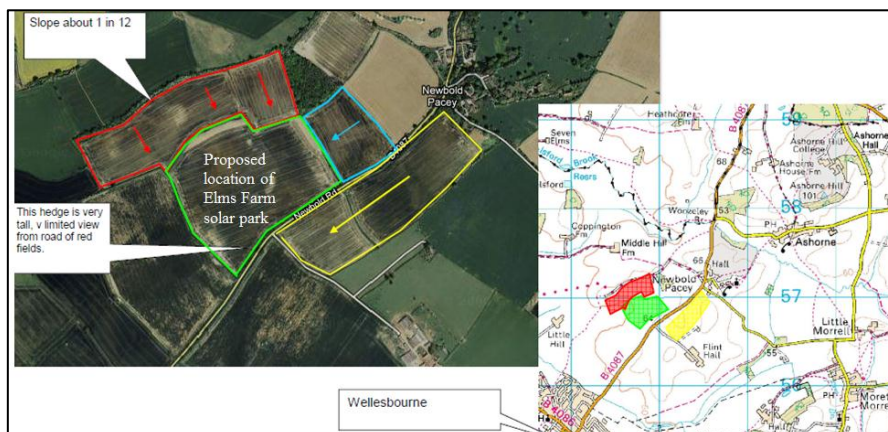
We are writing to request a formal screening opinion as to whether the development is an EIA Development under Part II of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999.

In order to facilitate your decision making process, further information on the background to, and the project, is given below. The Regulations require that a screening opinion request be accompanied by a plan sufficient to identify the land; a brief description of the development and of its possible effects on the environment; and such other information or representations as the person making the request may wish to make or provide. This submission therefore contains the necessary information.

**Description of Development**

The proposal is to install up to 5 MWp of solar panels on land north of the B4087, adjacent to Newbold Road. The land is currently used for growing arable crops.

**Location of Elms Farm**



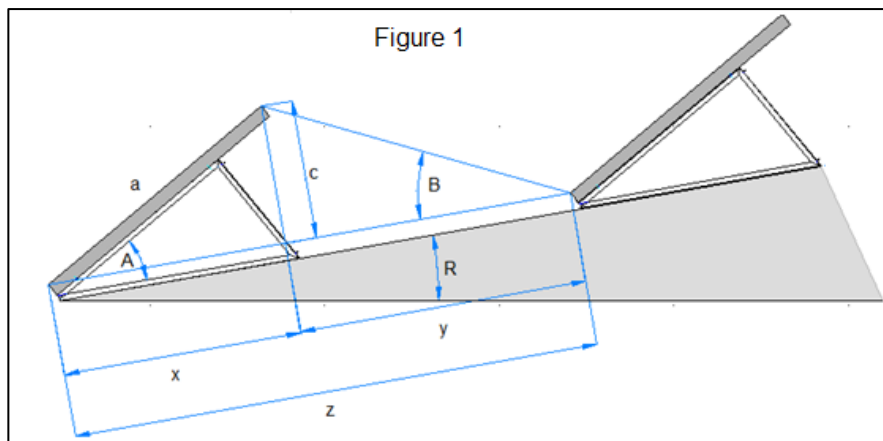
Location of proposed site at Elms Farm



The detail of any PV panel layout may alter for any final planning submission, but it would be within the area identified:

- Installation of PV panels, approximately 1 metre off the ground; with a maximum height of approximately 3m from ground level;
- Panels are installed in an array of 3 panels banked as the section sketch below;
- Construction of ancillary works include access tracks;
- Temporary construction compound;
- Inverter/Substation. The inverter will typically be housed in a weather proof fibre glass proprietary enclosure. The substation will be to standard specification of the Regional Electricity Company to meet their requirements. Building materials can be agreed with the LPA during the planning process.

The final PV panel to be used on this site has not yet been determined as detailed technical site investigations are currently being completed. The findings of these investigations will determine the final layout and panel choice, but as stated above all panels will be located within the area identified. The PV panels will be laid out in arrays of long rows running across the site. Each array will be mounted on a simple metal framework.



Typically the following dimensions will apply:

$a = 3$  metres

$A = 35$  degrees (can vary between 31 degrees and 35 degrees dependent upon topographical survey)

$z = \sim 10$ m

$y = \sim 8$ m

$R =$  dependent upon further information, i.e. slope of the land

Length of the panel arrangements will be dictated by site survey and optimised site layout arrangements, typically the completed sites will be similar to those shown below. We are currently proposing to use a Trina 230Wp solar panel.



### **EIA Regulations**

Schedule 1 of the Environmental Impact Assessment (England and Wales) Regulations 1999 (as amended) identifies developments that require EIA and Schedule 2 identifies development types where, if the relevant criteria are exceeded a formal assessment must be undertaken against Schedule 3 in order to determine if an EIA is required. The installation of PV panels does not fall under Schedule 1, and installation of PV is also not listed as a Schedule 2 development in the Regulations or Circular 2/99: Environmental Impact Assessment. Although the development does not fall under either Schedule 1 or 2, we have reviewed the project in line with the requirements of Schedule 3 below.

### **Characteristics of the Development**

Schedule 3 states that the characteristics of the development must be considered having regard, in particular, to:

- (a) the size of the development;
- (b) the cumulation with other development;
- (c) the use of natural resources;
- (d) the production of waste;
- (e) the risk of accidents, having regarded in particular to substances or technologies used.

It is considered that this proposal would not have a significant effect on the environment with reference to these criteria, for the following reasons:

- The size of the development will be limited to approximately 14.485 hec (35.7932 acre). The development will comprise approximately 40 rows of panels of which will not exceed 3m in height approximately. (Number of rows will vary depending on final site design);
- There will be no significant cumulative impact, and we are not aware of any other solar parks close to the proposed site;
- The estimated number of panels will be 22,000 approximately.
- The project will generate renewable energy from natural resources in a sustainable manner;
- No waste would be produced by on site processes; and
- Risk of accidents is not considered to be significant due to the nature of the technology proposed.

### **Location of Development**

Schedule 3 states that the environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by development must be considered, having regard, in particular, to:

- (a) the existing land use;
- (b) the relative abundance, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources in the area;
- (c) the absorption capacity of the natural environment with particular reference to certain defined areas.

The PV panels will be located on agricultural landholdings with the area currently being used for growing grape seed crops. It is the intention, post the installation of the panels, for the land to be used to further agricultural use, for example, grazing.

Stratford on Avon District Council Local Plan does not identify the site as having no specific policy guidance. However, subsequent research has identified the site as being within a 'Nitrate Vulnerable Zone' (NVZ) area.

*'NVZs were set up under Council Directive 91/676/EEC and have been established in areas where nitrate from agricultural land is causing, or could cause, pollution of the water environment. In these zones Action Programmes of compulsory measures apply. These measures include a requirement for farmers to limit their applications of livestock manures and, in some circumstances, to observe closed periods for the application of organic manure to agricultural land'.*

**The proposed development is unlikely to contribute to the pollution of water. The post installation use of potentially grazing or pasture provides further alternative use for the site that does not require the applications of livestock manures.**

More generally, there would be no adverse impact on the historic, or landscape setting of settlements. The impact on character and views would be limited because of the small height and little movement of the panels. The proposed development does not encroach upon the links between built up areas within the countryside. The nearest residential properties to the proposed site are those at Flint Hall and further up the B4087 towards Newbold Pacey. It is therefore not considered that the site is located within an environmentally sensitive area as defined in the Regulations. It would be further limited by the reversible nature of the solar panel farm which could be decommissioned after 25 years.

### **Construction**

Construction works include the importing of materials (solar panels and associated equipment) via approximately 100 vehicles over an estimated period of 2 months during the construction phase. The proposal is expected to compromise an overall installed capacity of 5MWp. The total number of solar panels is in the region of 22,000, each panel is 1m x 1.65m and they will be arranged in rows, total number of rows being approximately 40.

The location of any power supply, inverters and details of how the energy is distributed to the grid is indicated on the attachment – preliminary indicative layout plan.

### **Characteristics of the Potential Impact**

Schedule 3 states the potential significant effects of development must be considered in relation to the criteria set out above, and having regard in particular to:

- (a) the extent of the impact (geographical area and size of the affected population);
- (b) the trans frontier nature of the impact;
- (c) the magnitude and complexity of the impact;
- (d) the probability of the impact;
- (e) the duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact.

Due to the panel height not exceeding the approximate height of 3m the visual impact of this proposal on the wider landscape will be limited, particularly when considering the surrounding hedges and tree scape that will be retained.

There are no mechanical parts with the panels reducing the amount of noise generated by their presence on the site, resulting in little noise impact on even the nearest local residents.

In terms of the other criteria, the magnitude and complexity of the impact is expected to be limited and confined to the local area, and is predictable.

The duration and frequency of the potential impacts are not significant and, with the removal of the panels after 25 years, are largely reversible.

In conclusion, the proposal is not a defined Schedule 2 development and further consideration against the criteria in Schedule 3 has determined that a significant environmental impact is not likely to arise and an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is not likely to be necessary in this case.

**Conclusion**

Consideration of the proposed development against the Environmental Impact Regulations 1999 has determined that the proposal is unlikely to result in significant effects in the environment and consequently an environmental impact assessment is not required.

Whilst it is considered that there will be impacts on the area over and above those which already exist due to the installation of PV on agricultural land, such as minimal visual impact to the immediate locality, these are matters that can be dealt with as part of the planning application. This is supported by the fact that that the development is not within, adjacent or in close proximity to any sensitive environmental features.

Should you consider that the proposed works do not require the submission of an Environmental Statement then we would propose to submit a planning application with an Environmental Report covering key environmental aspects and considerations associated with the project as you consider appropriate.

Should you consider that the proposals are likely to result in significant impacts and that therefore the preparation of an Environmental Statement will be a requirement, then we would also request that your Scoping Opinion accompany the requested Screening Opinion. In accordance with the Regulations, we would therefore be grateful if you could provide a screening opinion within three weeks of the date of the receipt of this request.

We hope that the above provides you with sufficient information to make a screening opinion on the project. Should you require clarification on any issue or further details, please do not hesitate to contact me. Otherwise I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Ayres".

.....

Robert Ayres  
For and on behalf of Enfinity UK Limited.