

Date: 18 December 2013
Our ref: 106910
Your ref: Y/87/13



Mr C Cronin
Arun District Council

planning.responses@arun.gov.uk

BY EMAIL ONLY

Customer Services
Hornbeam House
Crewe Business Park
Electra Way
Crewe
Cheshire
CW1 6GJ

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Mr Cronin

Planning consultation: Installation of solar farm comprising erection of solar arrays, inverters, transformers, equipment housing, security fencing, internal tracks & ancillary equipment. Departure from the Development Plan

Location: Land Southwest of Drove Lane Farm Yapton

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 12 December 2013 which was received by Natural England on the same day.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Soils and Land Quality

Based on the information available to us we consider this application is likely to impact on a significant amount of 'best and most versatile' agricultural land (paragraph 112 of the National Planning Policy Framework refers). However, the proposals would not appear to lead to the long term loss of best and most versatile land as the panel arrays would be fixed with limited soil disturbance being secured through pins in to the ground every few metres, and could be removed when planning permission expired with no likely loss of agricultural land quality.

Whilst soil would be disturbed in some parts of the site through the construction of the switch station and access tracks and installing of buried cables this amounts to a relatively small area and much of the soil disturbance may be reversible during decommissioning. We note that the planning application is for a limited period of 30 years and would expect that any planning approval would require the site to be decommissioned and restored to its former condition when planning permission expired.

We would draw to your attention to paragraph 27 of the recently published DCLG Planning Practice Guidance for Renewable and Low Carbon Energy (July 2013) and advise you to fully consider the best and most versatile agricultural land issues relating to this proposal in accordance with that guidance

General guidance for protecting soils during development is also available in Defra's [Construction Code of Practice for the Sustainable Use of Soils on Construction Sites](#), and should the development proceed, we recommend that relevant parts of this guidance are followed, e.g. in relation to handling or trafficking on soils in wet weather.

If you advise us of any specific points on which you need Natural England's advice, we would be pleased to discuss the matter further.

Protected Species

We have not assessed this application and associated documents for impacts on protected species.

Natural England has published [Standing Advice](#) on protected species. The Standing Advice includes a habitat decision tree which provides advice to planners on deciding if there is a 'reasonable likelihood' of protected species being present. It also provides detailed advice on the protected species most often affected by development, including flow charts for individual species to enable an assessment to be made of a protected species survey and mitigation strategy.

You should apply our Standing Advice to this application as it is a material consideration in the determination of applications in the same way as any individual response received from Natural England following consultation.

The Standing Advice should not be treated as giving any indication or providing any assurance in respect of European Protected Species (EPS) that the proposed development is unlikely to affect the EPS present on the site; nor should it be interpreted as meaning that Natural England has reached any views as to whether a licence may be granted.

If you have any specific questions on aspects that are not covered by our Standing Advice for European Protected Species or have difficulty in applying it to this application please contact us at with details at consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

We really value your feedback to help us improve the service we offer. We have attached a feedback form to this letter and welcome any comments you might have about our service.

We would be happy to comment further should the need arise but if in the meantime you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us.

For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter only please contact Francesca Barker on 0300 060 0873. For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

We really value your feedback to help us improve the service we offer. We have attached a feedback form to this letter and welcome any comments you might have about our service.

We also welcome your feedback on Natural England's revised standing advice in terms of its usability (ease of access, presentation), quality of content and, its clarity and effectiveness as a tool in guiding decision-making. Please provide this, with any suggested improvements, by filling in the attached customer feedback form or by emailing your feedback direct to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

Francesca Barker – Lead Advisor
Land Use Operations – Ashford Team