Mallard Pass
Solar Farm

# Mallard Pass Solar Farm

## Environmental Statement Volume 1
## Chapter 1: Introduction

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## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1. What is the Mallard Pass Solar Farm Project?

1.1.1. Mallard Pass Solar Farm (hereafter 'the Proposed Development') is a proposed Solar Farm which would allow for the generation and export of electricity exceeding 50 megawatts (MW) on approximately 852ha of land within Lincolnshire and Rutland. The Proposed Development will be located within the Order limits (the land shown on the Works Plans **[EN010127/APP/2.2]** within which the Proposed Development can be carried out).

1.1.2. The Proposed Development and associated works required to facilitate the construction, operation and maintenance of the Solar Farm are subject of a Development Consent Order (DCO) Application. The location of the Order limits is shown on ***Figure 1.1: Order limits Location Plan*** **[EN010127/APP/6.3]** and is described in further detail within ***Chapter 3: Description of Order limits,*** of this Environmental Statement (ES) **[EN010127/APP/6.1].**

1.1.3. The principal components of the Proposed Development comprise the following:

a. PV Arrays;

b. Mounting Structures;

c. Inverters;

d. Transformers;

e. Switchgears;

f. Onsite Substation and Ancillary Buildings;

g. Low Voltage Distribution Cabling;

h. Grid Connection Cables;

i. Fencing, security and ancillary infrastructure;

j. Access Tracks;

k. Temporary Construction Compounds;

l. Mitigation and Enhancement Areas; and

m. Green infrastructure (GI).

1.1.4. The Proposed Development is described in further detail within ***Chapter 5: Project Description*** of this ES **[EN010127/APP/6.1].**

1.1.5. The Proposed Development is classed as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) under the Planning Act 2008 **[Ref 1-1],** as the capacity exceeds 50MW and, as such, requires a DCO to proceed. This ES forms part of the DCO Application to construct, operate and maintain the Proposed Development submitted by the Applicant to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) in November 2022. The decision on whether to grant a DCO will be made by the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), hereafter referred to as the 'Secretary of State', pursuant to the PA 2008.

## 1.2. The Applicant

1.2.1. The Applicant is Mallard Pass Solar Farm Ltd, a subsidiary of Windel Energy Ltd.

1.2.2. Windel Energy Ltd, founded in 2018, is a privately held company that specialises in the development and asset management of renewable energy projects and low carbon, including solar, battery energy storage systems, onshore wind and green hydrogen technologies with projects ranging from 10MW to 320MW output across England and Wales. Windel

Energy works closely with landowners, giving them the opportunity to diversify their income stream by leasing their land for solar development.

1.2.3. Canadian Solar Inc is the development partner of Windel Energy. It was founded in 2001 in Canada and is one of the world's largest solar power companies. It is a leading manufacturer of PV Modules and provider of solar energy solutions and has a geographically diversified pipeline of utility-scale solar power projects in various stages of development. Over the past 19 years, Canadian Solar Inc has successfully delivered over 49 GW of premium-quality, PV Modules to customers in over 150 countries.

## 1.3. Environmental Impact Assessment

1.3.1. The Proposed Development is considered to be 'EIA development' as defined by the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended) (hereafter, 'the EIA Regulations') **[Ref 1-2].** The EIA Regulations require an ES to be submitted as part of the DCO Application that presents the findings of the EIA undertaken for the Proposed Development.

1.3.2. The EIA process has considered likely impacts resulting from the construction, operation (including maintenance), and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development, and considers measures to avoid, reduce or mitigate any likely significant adverse effects on the environment and where possible, to enhance the environment. It also identifies 'residual' impacts, defined as impacts remaining following the implementation of mitigation measures.

## 1.4. Structure and Content of the ES

1.4.1. The following paragraphs provide a brief description of how the ES is structured to aid navigation of the document.

**Volume 1:**

1.4.2. Volume 1 of the ES sets out the background, the EIA process, a description of the Proposed Development along with the consideration of the environmental effects associated with different environmental topics, which may result in significant environmental effects. Volume 1 is broken down into chapters as set out below:

Chapter 0 – Glossary

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Chapter 2 – Overview of EIA process

Chapter 3 – Order limits Description

Chapter 4 – Alternatives and Design Development

Chapter 5 – Project Description

Chapter 6 – Landscape and Visual

Chapter 7 – Ecology and Biodiversity

Chapter 8 – Cultural heritage

Chapter 9 – Highways and Access

Chapter 10 – Noise and Vibration

Chapter 11 – Water Resources and Ground Conditions

Chapter 12 – Land Use and Soils

Chapter 13 – Climate Change and Resilience

Chapter 14 – Socio-Economics

Chapter 15 – Other Environmental Topics (comprising Air Quality, Arboriculture, Glint and Glare, Major Accidents and/or Disasters, Utilities/EMF, Waste)

Chapter 16 – Interaction of Effects and Cumulative Effects

Chapter 17 – Summary of Effects

1.4.3. Each topic is presented in a separate technical chapter and details the results of the environmental assessment, likely significant effects arising from the Proposed Development, and the proposed mitigation measures. The exception to this structure is ***Chapter 15: Other Environmental Topics*** **[EN010127/APP/6.1]**, which presents assessments relating to topics where no individual chapter was warranted, either due to the brevity of the assessment or the small impact associated with the Proposed Development.

1.4.4. Each chapter also presents the potential cumulative effects resulting from other present, or reasonably foreseeable projects together (i.e. cumulatively) with the Proposed Development.

1.4.5. To assist with the navigation of this ES and ensure that the ES includes all the information as required by Schedule 14(2) of the EIA Regulations, the environmental topic chapters (***Chapters 6-15***) have been structured as follows:

Section 1: Introduction

Section 2: Baseline Conditions

Section 3: Embedded Mitigation

Section 4: Potential Effects

Section 5: Proposed Additional Mitigation

Section 6: Residual Effects

Section 7: Monitoring Requirements

Section 8: Cumulative Effects

Section 9: Conclusion

Section 10: References

1.4.6. Each Chapter presents information relating to Planning Policy, Legislation and Guidance, Assessment Methodology, and Consultation, as Appendices, so as to keep the chapter proportionate. All Appendices are contained within **Volume 3** of the ES.

**Volume 2**

1.4.7. Volume 2 of the ES includes the supporting figures for Volume 1 to aid the readers' understanding. The supporting figures are provided in a separate volume so that they can be shown at a suitable scale and more easily interpreted.

**Volume 3**

1.4.8. Volume 3 of the ES includes a set of appendices which comprise of planning policy, assessment methodology, consultation commentary, background data, survey data, and technical reports/modelling which support the assessments within the ES.

**Non-technical Summary**

1.4.9. A Non-technical Summary (NTS) **[EN010127/APP/6.4]** is presented as a separate document to provide a concise summary of the ES. The NTS is designed to provide information in an accessible format using non-technical language which can be understood by a wide audience and to

assist interested parties with their understanding of the Proposed Development.

## 1.5. Legislative and Planning Policy Context

1.5.1. The following sections provide an overview of the legislative and planning policy context for the Proposed Development.

## 1.6. Planning Act 2008

1.6.1. The Proposed Development constitutes an NSIP development, in accordance with the PA 2008, as it comprises:

a. The construction or extension of a generating station (Part 3, Section 14(1)(a)); and

b. It is a generating station:

i. Located in England (Part 3, Section 15(2)(a)

ii. It does not generate electricity from wind (Part 3, Section 15(2)(aa))

iii. It is not an offshore generating station; (Part 3, Section 15(2)(b)) and

iv. its capacity is more than 50MW (Part 3, Section 15(2)(c)).

1.6.2. The PA 2008 provides that the Secretary of State is responsible for determining the application for development consent, with the power to appoint a single person or a panel to manage and examine the application (referred to as the 'Examining Authority'). In its role, the Examining Authority will examine the DCO Application for the Proposed Development and make a recommendation to the Secretary of State who will then decide whether to grant a DCO.

## 1.7. National Policy Statements

1.7.1. Where a national policy statement (NPS) has effect an application for development consent will be determined in accordance with Section 104 of the PA 2008. However, the Proposed Development is a type of development where no national policy statement has effect and therefore, the DCO will be determined in accordance with Section 105 (2) of the Planning Act 2008.

1.7.2. Section 105(2) of the Planning Act 2008 provides the basis for deciding the DCO Application and the Secretary of State must have regard to the provisions set out in this section of the Planning Act 2008. This includes any matters which the Secretary of State thinks are both important and relevant to its decision. Therefore, the following NPS's are relevant to the Proposed Development:

a. Overarching NPS for Energy (EN-1);

b. NPS on Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3); and

c. NPS for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN-5).

1.7.3. If granted, the DCO has the effect of providing consent for development and additional other consents and authorisation, where specified, removing the need for some consents (such as planning permission). Section 115 of the Planning Act 2008 also states that a DCO can include consent for 'associated development', which is development that is not an NSIP in its own right but is associated with the Proposed Development. This may be development that supports the construction, operation, or decommissioning of the NSIP; which helps to address the impacts of the NSIP; or is of a type normally brought forward with the NSIP.

**Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) (July 2011)**

1.7.4. The Overarching NPS for Energy (EN-1), adopted by the BEIS (formerly the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC)) in July 2011, sets out the national policy for delivering major energy infrastructure in England and Wales. EN-1 has effect in combination with the relevant technology specific NPS, National Policy for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3), and together they provide the primary basis for decisions made by the Secretary of State.

1.7.5. Part 3 of EN-1 identifies the need that exists for nationally significant energy infrastructure development. With regards to decision making, paragraph 3.1.1. of EN-1 states how "*the UK needs all the types of energy infrastructure covered in this NPS in order to achieve energy security at the same time as dramatically reducing greenhouse gas emissions*".

1.7.6. Paragraph 3.1.2 states: "It is for industry to propose new energy infrastructure projects within the strategic framework set by Government. The Government does not consider it appropriate for planning policy to set targets for or limits on different technologies".

1.7.7. Paragraph 4.1.3 of EN-1 states that "in considering any proposed development, and in particular when weighing its adverse impacts against its benefits, the Examining Authority should take into account:

a. Its potential benefits including its contribution to meeting the need for energy infrastructure, job creation and any long-term or wider benefits; and

b. Its potential adverse impacts, including any long-term and cumulative adverse impacts, as well as any measures to avoid, reduce or compensate for any adverse impacts."

1.7.8. Section 4.2 of EN-1 is related to the requirement for assessment of likely significant environmental effects and reporting within an ES for projects that are subject to the European Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (85/337/EEC).

1.7.9. Paragraph 4.2.2 of EN-1 states that:

*"To consider the potential effects, including benefits, of a proposal for a project, the IPC [now Examining Authority] will find it helpful if the applicant sets out information on the likely significant social and economic effects of the development, and shows how any likely significant negative effects would be avoided or mitigated. This information could include matters such as employment, equality, community cohesion and well-being."*

1.7.10. Paragraph 4.2.3 continues:

*"For the purposes of this NPS and the technology-specific NPSs the ES should cover the environmental, social and economic effects arising from pre-construction, construction, operation and decommissioning of the project."*

1.7.11. Paragraph 4.2.4 states that when considering a proposal, the Examining Authority should:

*"Satisfy itself that likely significant effects including any significant residual effects taking account of any proposed mitigation measures or any adverse effects of those measures, have been adequately assessed. In doing so the IPC [now Examining Authority] should also examine whether the assessment distinguishes between the project stages and identifies any mitigation measures at those stages. The IPC [now Examining Authority] should request further information where necessary to ensure compliance with the EIA Directive."*

**1.7.12.** Where relevant, the EIA process will take into account the requirements of EN-1.

1.7.13. **Table 1-1** presents details of where information requirements of EN-1 are addressed within this ES.

**Table 1-1 ES Response to Requirements in EN-1**

| Source | Topic | Chapter of this ES |
|---|---|---|
| **EN-1 (Part 4 Assessment Principles)** | Environmental Statements | This document constitutes the ES. |
| | Habitats and Species Regulations | Chapter 7 |
| | Alternatives | Chapter 4 |
| **EN-1 (Part 5 Generic Impacts)** | Air quality and emissions | Chapter 15 |
| | Biodiversity and geological conservation | Chapter 7 |
| | Dust, odour, artificial light, smoke, steam and insect infestation | Chapter 15 |
| | Flood risk | Chapter 11 |
| | Historic environment | Chapter 8 |
| | Landscape and visual | Chapter 6 |
| | Land use including open space, green infrastructure and Green Belt | Chapter 6 and 12 |
| | Noise and vibration | Chapter 10 |
| | Socio-economic | Chapter 14 |
| | Traffic and transport | Chapter 9 |
| | Waste management | Chapter 5 and 15 |
| | Water quality and resources | Chapter 11 |

### National Policy Statement on Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) (2011)

1.7.14. The NPS on Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3), published by BEIS (formerly DECC) in July 2011, taken together with EN-1, provides the primary basis for decisions by the examining authority on applications it receives for nationally significant renewable energy infrastructure.

1.7.15. The importance of generation of electricity from renewable sources is stated at Paragraph 1.1.1 of EN-3:

*"Electricity generation from renewable sources of energy is an important element in the Government's transition to a low-carbon economy. There are ambitious renewable energy targets in place and a significant increase in generation from large-scale renewable energy infrastructure is necessary".*

1.7.16. EN-3, whilst providing an assessment and technology-specific information on certain renewable energy technologies, does not include Solar Farm development, and only covers projects for biomass/waste and offshore and onshore wind. This is because at the time of publishing EN-3, utility scale solar development was not feasible.

**National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN-5) (2011)**

1.7.17. The NPS for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN-5) was published by BEIS (formerly DECC) in July 2011 and forms part of the suite of energy NPSs and is to be read in conjunction with the Overarching NPS for Energy (EN-1).

1.7.18. NPS EN-5 is relevant to the Proposed Development as the policy at paragraph 1.8.1 recognises electricity networks as "transmission systems (the long distance transfer of electricity through 400kV and 275kV lines), and distribution systems (lower voltage lines from 132kV to 230V from transmission substations to the end-user) which can either be carried on towers/poles or undergrounded" and "associated infrastructure, e.g. substations (the essential link between generation, transmission, and the distribution systems that also allows circuits to be switched or voltage transformed to a useable level for the consumer) and converter stations to convert DC power to AC power and vice versa."

1.7.19. NPS EN-5 sets out further technology-specific considerations, in addition to those impacts covered in NPS EN-1, for: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation; Landscape and Visual; and Noise and Vibration.

Furthermore, NPS EN-5 sets out technology-specific considerations for the impact of electromagnetic frequencies (EMFs).

## 1.8. Draft National Policy Statements

1.8.1. In light of the commitment to reduce reliance on fossil fuels in favour of cleaner energy sources set out in the Energy White Paper (2020), and to ensure that the planning policy framework enables the delivery of the infrastructure required for the country's transition to net zero carbon emissions, the Government determined that NPS documents EN-1 to EN-5 required updating. As part of the Energy NPS review process, the Government published a suite of Draft Energy NPSs for consultation on 6 September 2021.

1.8.2. In September 2021, (draft) NPSs for Energy were laid before Parliament. The House of Commons Report, with recommendations to Government, was published in February 2022. The report welcomed the intention to update the NPS for energy in line with Government policy commitments. The report recommended that the revised NPSs needed to place greater emphasis on the impact of climate change and the speed at which new infrastructure will need to be built to meet the Government's net zero target. A summary of the draft NPSs for energy that are expected to be important and relevant to the Secretary of State's decision and have taken into account by the EIA are set out below.

### Draft Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) (2021)

1.8.3. In contrast to EN-1, the Draft NPS EN-1, published by BEIS in September 2021, makes specific reference to the generation of solar energy and recognises that there is an urgent need for new electricity generating capacity to meet UK objectives.

1.8.4. Paragraph 3.3.21 of the Draft NPS EN-1 states that: "wind and solar are the lowest cost ways of generating electricity, helping reduce costs and

providing a clean and secure source of electricity supply (as they are not reliant on fuel for generation). Our analysis shows that a secure, reliable, affordable, net zero consistent system in 2050 is likely to be composed predominantly of wind and solar." The Draft NPS EN-1 highlights that Government requires a sustained growth in the capacity of solar in the next decade.

**Draft National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) (2021)**

1.8.5. The Draft NPS EN-3, published by BEIS in September 2021, introduces a new section (Section 2.47) on solar photovoltaic generation, recognising that Solar Farms are one of the most established renewable electricity technologies in the UK and the cheapest form of electricity generation worldwide. Paragraph 2.47.1 states that the government has committed to sustained growth in solar capacity to ensure that the UK is on the pathway to meet net zero emissions by 2050, and as such, solar is a key part of Government's strategy for low-cost decarbonisation of the energy sector.

1.8.6. Section 2.48 of the Draft NPS EN-3 sets out key influences that developers should consider when selecting sites for solar development, including the following factors:

a. Irradiance and site topography;

b. Proximity of a site to dwellings;

c. Capacity of a site;

d. Grid connection;

e. Agricultural Land Classification and land type; and

f. Accessibility.

1.8.7. Sections 2.50 – 2.54 of the Draft NPS EN-3 provides topic-specific requirements for solar development, setting out how applicants should consider impacts within technical assessments, proposed mitigation measures and considerations informing the Secretary of State's decision-making, for the following topics:

a. Biodiversity and nature conservation;

b. Landscape, visual and residential amenity;

c. Glint and Glare;

d. Cultural heritage; and

e. Construction including traffic and transport noise and vibration.

**Draft National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN-5) (2021)**

1.8.8. The Draft NPS EN-5 was published by BEIS in 2021 and recognises that new electricity networks required for electricity generation, storage and interconnection infrastructure are vital to achieving the nation's transition to net zero. Draft NPS EN-5 includes a new section on 'Environmental and Biodiversity Net Gain' at Section 2.8, which states that when planning and evaluating a projects contribution to environmental and biodiversity net gain, it will be important, for both the Applicant and Examining Authority, to recognise that *"the linear nature of electricity networks infrastructure allows excellent opportunities to: i) reconnect important habitats via green corridors, biodiversity stepping zones, and re-establishment of appropriate hedgerows; and/or ii) connect people to the environment, for instance via footpaths and cycleways constructed in tandem with biodiversity enhancements."*

## 1.9. National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

1.9.1. While not determinative under the Planning Act 2008, the Examining Authority can consider other important and relevant matters, including national and local planning policy.

1.9.2. The NPPF was published by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (formerly the Department for Communities and Local Government) in March 2012 and was updated in July 2021. The NPPF sets out Government's planning policies and how these should be applied for England.

1.9.3. The NPPF does not contain specific policies for NSIPs; however, Chapter 2 of the NPPF 'Achieving sustainable development' sets out that the planning system should contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, considering economic, social and environmental objectives.

1.9.4. Paragraph 152 of the NPPF states:

*"The planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure."*

1.9.5. Whilst the local planning authority is not the determining authority for the application for development consent, Paragraph 158 continues to state that when determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should:

*"a) not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions; and*

*b) approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable …".*

## 1.10. Local Planning Policy

1.10.1. Local development plans do not carry the same weight under the PA 2008 in respect of decision making concerning NSIPs, as they do with determining planning applications made pursuant to the Town Country Planning Act 1990. The NPSs are the primary consideration for NSIP applications. Nevertheless, a local development plan is still a matter which can be considered important and relevant when determining an application for an NSIP. However, in the event of any conflict, the NPS prevails.

1.10.2. The Proposed Development lies within the administrative areas of Rutland County Council (RCC), South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) and Lincolnshire County Council (LCC), as shown on ***Figure 1.2: Administrative Boundaries*** **[EN010127/APP/6.3]**. Therefore, the relevant local planning policies of the adopted local development plans for each of the 'host' planning authorities will be considered as part of the assessment. The local planning policies relevant to the Proposed Development comprise the following:

**Lincolnshire County Council**

a. The Lincolnshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan (Core Strategy and Development Management Policies adopted 2016 and Site Locations adopted 2017)

b. Lincolnshire County Council Green Masterplan 2020 – 2025 (adopted 2020)

c. Joint Lincolnshire Flood Risk and Water Management Strategy 2019-2050

d. 4th Lincolnshire Local Transport Plan 2013/14-2022/23 (adopted April 2013)

e. Lincolnshire County Council Highway and Flood Authority, Development Road and Sustainable Drainage Specification and Construction March 2021

**Rutland County Council**

a. Rutland Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2011 – 2026 (adopted 2011)

b. Rutland Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document 2011 – 2026 (adopted 2014)

c. Space for Wildlife: Leicestershire, Leicester, and Rutland Biodiversity Action Plan 2016 – 2026 (Adopted 2016)

d. Rutland Minerals Core Strategy and Development Control Policies October 2010 (Adopted October 2010)

**South Kesteven District Council**

a. South Kesteven Local Plan 2011 – 2036 (adopted 2020)

b. Carlby Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan 2018-2036 (adopted 2019)

1.10.3. Rutland County Council consulted on the Regulation 19 version of their Local Plan (2018 – 2036) from 27 August to 6 November 2020. Following a special full council meeting, the Local Plan (2018 -2036) was withdrawn on 1 September 2021 and is anticipated that the new Local plan will be adopted in 2025.

## 1.11. National Energy Policy

### A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment (2018)

1.11.1. The 25 Year Environment Plan **[Ref 1-3]** published in 2018 sets out the Government's 25-year plan to improve the environment within a

generation. It aims to deliver cleaner air and water in our cities and rural landscapes, protect threatened species and provide richer wildlife habitats. It calls for an approach to agriculture, forestry, land use and fishing that puts the environment first.

1.11.2. It sets out 10 goals which include the achievement of and management of pressures by providing: clean air; clean and plentiful water; thriving plants and wildlife; reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards like flooding and drought; the more sustainable and efficient use of resources from nature; enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment; mitigation and adaption to climate change; minimisation of waste; management of exposure to chemicals; and enhanced biosecurity.

**Net Zero: Opportunities for the Power Sector (2019)**

1.11.3. In June 2019 the Government raised the UK's ambition on tackling climate change by legislating for a net-zero greenhouse gas emissions target for the whole economy by 2050. Decarbonising the power sector is integral to achieving this goal and requires major investment in proven technologies, such as solar, which are supported by planning policy at local and national levels.

1.11.4. The National Infrastructure Commission (NIC), official advisor to the Government on infrastructure, subsequently produced 'Net Zero: Opportunities for the Power Sector' in March 2020 **[Ref 1-4]**,which sets out the infrastructure required in order to meet the 2050 target, including the amount of new renewable energy development that would need to be deployed. Importantly, the NIC recommends the generation mix is up to around 90% renewables. The report recommends that across all scenarios significant solar, onshore wind, and offshore wind, with between 129-237 GW of renewable capacity is in operation by 2050, including:

a. 56-121 GW of solar;

b. 18 -27 GW of onshore wind; and

c. 54 - 86 GW of offshore wind.

1.11.5. In the Assessment, the Commission argued that the best way to achieve a low-cost low carbon electricity system for the UK was to deliver at least 50 per cent renewable generation by 2030, as part of the transition to a highly renewable generation mix. Although the above figures are high-level, they demonstrate the amount of new infrastructure that is required. The scale of this need is such that it must be shared throughout the UK and in recognition that climate change is a national and global issue.

**National Infrastructure Strategy (2020)**

1.11.6. The National Infrastructure Strategy (NIS) published in November 2020 **[Ref 1-5]** sets out plans to transform UK infrastructure, with one of the aims being to put the UK on the path to meeting its net zero emissions target by 2050. The NIS acknowledges that the UK's commitment to achieving net zero emissions by 2050 will require profound changes that will provide huge opportunities for the UK to build back better. The NIS identifies that to deliver net zero the share of generation from renewables needs to dramatically increase, and it notes that greater generation capacity will need to come from onshore wind and solar. To support this the government has included solar within the auction round for Contracts for Difference in 2021. To increase the amount of renewable capacity needed to further decarbonise power, the government announced an ambition for the 2021 Contracts for Difference Auction to support up to double the renewable capacity procured in the 2019 round, subject to maintaining competitive tension in the auction.

**Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener (2021)**

1.11.7. The Net Zero Strategy, published by Government in October 2021 **[Ref 1-6]**, builds on Government's commitments made in the Energy White

Paper (2020) and sets out the long-term strategy, policy and proposals to keep the UK on track for future carbon budgets and sets the vision for a decarbonised economy by 2050. Key policies in the Strategy related to UK power generation include:

*"By 2035 the UK will be powered entirely by clean electricity, subject to security of supply; […]*

*40 GW of offshore wind by 2030, with more onshore, solar and other renewables – with a new approach to onshore and offshore electricity networks to incorporate new low carbon generation and demand in the most efficient manner that takes account of the needs of local communities […]*

*Deployment of new flexibility measures including storage to help smooth out suture price spikes."*

**British Energy Security Strategy (2022)**

1.11.8. In April 2022, the Government published the British Energy Security Strategy **[Ref 1-7]** which demonstrates that the need of secure, clean, and affordable British energy for the long term. The Government will be supportive on the effective use of land by encouraging large scale projects to locate on previously developed, or lower value land, where possible, and to ensure projects are designed to avoid, mitigate, and where necessary, compensate for the impacts of using greenfield sites. The Government will also support solar that is co-located with other functions (for example, agriculture, onshore wind generation, or storage) to maximise the efficiency of land use.

## 1.12. Consideration of Planning Policy in EIA

1.12.1. Within this ES, each of the environmental chapters and its associated appendices will reference the national and local planning policies that are relevant to their topic of assessment. The ES does not consider the planning balance of the Proposed Development in line with planning policy. Instead, this is set out in the Planning Statement which is submitted as a standalone document as part of the DCO Application.

1.12.2. The purpose of considering planning policy in the EIA is two-fold:

a. To identify policies that could influence the sensitivity of receptors, and therefore the significance of effects, and any requirements for mitigation; and

b. To identify planning policies that could influence the methodology of the EIA. For example, a planning policy might require the assessment of an impact or the use of a specific methodology.

## 1.13. Consultation and Preliminary Environmental Information

### Overview

1.13.1. Consultation is integral to the preparation of DCO applications and to the EIA process. The views of consultation bodies and the local community serve to focus the environmental studies and to identify specific issues that require further investigation, as well as to inform aspects of the design of the Proposed Development. Consultation is an on-going process and the publication of the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) in May 2022 formed an important part of that process.

1.13.2. The PA 2008 requires applicants of DCOs to carry out formal (statutory) pre-application consultation on their proposals. There are several requirements as to how this consultation must be undertaken that are set out in the PA 2008 and related regulations:

a. Section 42 requires the applicant to consult with 'prescribed persons', which includes certain consultation bodies such as the Environment Agency and Natural England, relevant statutory undertakers, relevant local authorities, those with an interest in the land, as well as those who may be affected by the Proposed Development, and who are therefore able to make what is called a "relevant claim";

b. Section 47 requires the applicant to consult with the local community on the development. Prior to this, the applicant must agree a Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) with the relevant local authorities. The SoCC must set out the proposed community consultation and, once agreed with the relevant local authorities, a SoCC notice must be published in local newspapers circulating within the vicinity of the land in question. The consultation must then be carried out in accordance with the final SoCC;

c. Section 48 places a duty on the applicant to publicise the proposed application in the 'prescribed manner' in a national newspaper, The London Gazette, and local newspapers circulating within the vicinity of the land and, where relevant, certain marine publications. In addition, the EIA Regulations require certain prescribed consultees to be sent a copy of the Section 48 notice; and

d. Section 49 places a duty on the applicant to take account of any relevant responses received to the consultation and publicity that is required by Sections 42, 47 and 48.

1.13.3. The Applicant has adopted a two-stage approach to pre-application consultation on the Proposed Development. An informal, non-statutory consultation (Stage 1) was carried out during November 2021, and statutory consultation (Stage 2) under Sections 42 and 47 of the Planning Act 2008 was undertaken between 26 May 2022 and 4 August 2022, supported by the PEIR.

1.13.4. The PEIR presented preliminary findings of the environmental assessments undertaken up to that point. This allowed consultees the opportunity to provide informed comments on the Proposed Development, the assessment process, and preliminary findings prior to the finalisation of the DCO Application and this ES. The Applicant sought the views of

consultees on the information contained within the PEIR, and there was an opportunity within the process up to submission of the DCO Application for both the EIA and the project design to have regard to comments received. The PEIR was developed into this ES.

1.13.5. The issues that have been raised through consultation and how these have been considered and addressed within the Proposed Development and the EIA are presented as an Appendix to each chapter of this ES.

1.13.6. The pre-application consultation undertaken by the Applicant is documented within the Consultation Report [**EN010127/APP/5.1]** and **[EN010127/APP/5.2]** and contains details of consultation carried out under the EIA Regulations.

## 1.14. IEMA Quality Mark

1.14.1. LDA Design is an Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) Registered Impact Assessor and holds the IEMA EIA Quality Mark as recognition of the quality in the way we coordinate EIAs and the quality of our ESs. ***Appendix 1.1*** includes a ***Statement of Competence*** **[EN010127/APP/6.2],**outlining the relevant experience, expertise and/or qualifications of the experts who prepared the ES in accordance with Regulation 14(4) of the EIA Regulations.

## 1.15. References


Ref 1-1 Planning Act (2008)

Ref 1-2 Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (2017)

Ref 1-3 The 25 Year Environment Plan (2018)

Ref 1-4 Net Zero: Opportunities for the Power Sector (2020)

Ref 1-5 National Infrastructure Strategy (NIS) (2020)

Ref 1-6 The Net Zero Strategy (2021)

Ref 1-7 British Energy Security Strategy (2022)