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**The Applicant's Comments on the  
April 2025 Planning for new energy  
infrastructure:  
2025 revisions to National Policy  
Statements Consultation**

May 2025



# Helios Renewable Energy Project

## The Applicant's Comments on the April 2025 Planning for new energy infrastructure: 2025 revisions to National Policy Statements Consultation

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**Prepared on behalf of Enso Green Holdings D Limited**

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Overview

- 1.1.1. This document sets out the comments from Enso Green Holdings D Limited (the 'Applicant') regarding the April 2025 Planning for new energy infrastructure: 2025 revisions to National Policy Statements Consultation in relation to the Development Consent Order Application (the 'DCO Application') for the Helios Renewable Energy Project (the 'Proposed Development').
- 1.1.2. The relevant Energy National Policy Statements (NPSs) comprise EN-1 Overarching National Policy Statement for energy, EN-3 National Policy Statement for renewable energy infrastructure, and EN-5 National Policy Statement for electricity networks infrastructure.
- 1.1.3. References to the DCO Application documentation, as received by the Planning Inspectorate on 2 July 2024, are provided in accordance with the referencing system as set out in the Planning Inspectorate's 'Helios Renewable Energy Project Examination Library'.

### 1.2. Status of the Revised Draft National Policy Statements

- 1.2.1. In April 2025<sup>1</sup>, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero ('DESNZ') published drafts updates to NPSs EN-1, EN-3 and EN-5 which are subject to consultation from 25<sup>th</sup> April until 29<sup>th</sup> May 2025. The updates have *"strengthened the process for delivering major new infrastructure in England and Wales, reinforcing the government's ambition to deliver Clean Power by 2030 and net zero"*.
- 1.2.2. The consultation proposes amendments to the NPSs currently in force and dated January 2024 ('the Current NPSs'). The Applicant submitted Accordance Tables at Deadline 2 to demonstrate the compliance of the Proposed Development with Current NPSs EN-1 [REP2-024], EN-3 [REP2-025] and EN-5 [REP2-026].
- 1.2.3. As set out in consultation draft EN-1 Section 1.6 'Transitional provisions following review', *"for any application accepted for examination before the final publication of*

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<sup>1</sup> DESNZ (2024) Planning for new energy infrastructure: 2025 revisions to National Policy Statements (Open Consultation). Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-new-energy-infrastructure-2025-revisions-to-national-policy-statements>

*the approved 2025 amendments, the 2024 suite of NPSs should have effect in accordance with the terms of those NPSs.*" The Proposed Development will therefore be assessed against the Current NPSs, as per the Deadline 2 Accordance Tables [REP2-024], [REP2-025] and [REP2-026].

- 1.2.4. However, Section 1.6 goes on to state that *"any emerging draft NPSs (or those designated but not yet having effect) are potentially capable of being important and relevant considerations in the decision-making process. The extent to which they are relevant is a matter for the relevant Secretary of State to consider within the framework of the Planning Act 2008 and with regard to the specific circumstances of each Development Consent Order application."*
- 1.2.5. Whilst the revised draft NPSs, which are currently under consultation, are not material considerations for the Proposed Development, it is considered likely that by the time the Secretary of State ('SoS') is making his decision further to the Examining Authority's ('ExA') recommendations, these revised NPSs could be in effect. The purpose of this document is therefore to provide comments on the revised draft NPSs, as they currently stand, to assist the SoS with assigning weight to the same should they be in force at the time that a decision in relation to the DCO is being determined.
- 1.2.6. It is the view of the Applicant that the proposed amendments in the revised draft NPSs should be given very limited weight given that they are under consultation. Amendments to the NPSs will not be binding even if made and so should also be given very limited weight by the SoS at such later date.

## 2. Overview of Proposed Amendments

### 2.1. Clean Power Action Plan 2030

- 2.1.1. As set out in the Consultation document<sup>2</sup>, EN-1 has been amended in order *“to bring Clean Power 2030 front and centre as the primary policy that NPSs enable”*. The Clean Power Action Plan, formed in December 2024, proposes that clean sources produce at least 95% of the UK's generation by 2030. The capacity ranges to be filled, set by the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero, are 43-50GW for offshore wind, 27-29GW for onshore wind, and 45-47 GW for solar. The Consultation document continues to state that *“Projects relevant for Clean Power 2030 can be deemed Critical National Priority (CNP), with a presumption in favour of consent.”* CNP policy makes it unlikely that consent would be refused on the basis of residual impacts remaining after the mitigation hierarchy has been applied. This allows the SoS to consider the importance of low-carbon infrastructure in the decision-making process.
- 2.1.2. The Clean Power 2030 Action Plan is outlined within Section 2.3 of the revised draft EN-1, and the policy and guidance for applicants and the SoS decision-making has been amended throughout to reference Clean Power 2030. Paragraph 3.2.5 advises that applicants should consider the Clean Power 2030 Action Plan and the pathways to 2030, the Strategic Spatial Energy Plan, and the Centralised Strategic Network Plan, which comprise the government's strategic framework, together with other relevant considerations.
- 2.1.3. Resilience and security are also goals of the Clean Power Action Plan. Furthermore, underlying the draft EN-1 statement is the need for a more flexible system that is more resilient in dealing with unexpected events and managing threats to national security. EN-1 identifies that severe weather events are expected to increase in intensity and frequency as a result of climate change.
- 2.1.4. In the consultation, the government seeks responses to the extent the inclusion of Clean Power 2030 policy in the draft EN-1 provides sufficient guidance for

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<sup>2</sup> DESNZ (2025) Consultation – Planning for New Energy Infrastructure: Revised draft National Policy Statements for energy infrastructure. Available at:  
<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6808b69692d50839757a61ed/planning-new-energy-infrastructure-revised-nps.pdf>

developers, and whether the updates to CNP policy help bring forward higher-quality applications.

- 2.1.5. EN-3 and EN-5 have also been amended accordingly to reference Clean Power 2030.

## **2.2. The reintroduction of onshore wind**

- 2.2.1. NPS EN-1 and EN-3 have been amended to scope in onshore wind following its proposed reintroduction to the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) regime. A new section has been proposed within EN-3 (Section 2.12) to guide the assessment and determination of onshore wind.

## **2.3. Amendments to offshore wind**

- 2.3.1. NPS EN-3 has been amended to provide greater clarity on how applicants can consider and potentially mitigate the impact of inter-array wake effects between their proposed scheme and other relevant consented and operational offshore wind farms, and how they could demonstrate how they have managed those effects, whilst allowing for a variety of approaches based on individual circumstances.

## **2.4. Amendments to electricity networks infrastructure**

- 2.4.1. The proposed changes to NPS EN-5 aim to support the construction of new electricity network infrastructure, to enable it to be built faster, whilst maintaining a rigorous process to minimise costs and impacts. The revised draft supports the electricity transmission recommendations to be set out in the Centralised Strategic Network Plan and reference the Electricity Transmission Design Principles (once published) as a relevant document for transmission owners alongside the Holford and Horlock rules.

### **3. Implications for the Proposed Development**

- 3.1.1. As set out in Section 1.2, the Proposed Development will be assessed against the Current NPSs. However, it is noted that the draft consultation NPSs are capable of being material considerations in the decision-making process should they be implemented in their current form. The Applicant has therefore provided commentary within this section regarding the proposed amendments to the Current NPSs which hold relevance for the Proposed Development and the implication of these for decision-making.
- 3.1.2. The Applicant considers that the proposed amendments in the revised drafts should be given very limited weight given that they are under consultation. Amendments to the Current NPSs will not be binding even if made and so should also be given limited weight by the SoS at such later date.

#### **3.2. Relevance to the Proposed Development**

- 3.2.1. Section 2 of this document set out four main proposed material updates to the NPSs. Of the four areas identified, the following are not relevant to the Proposed Development:
- The reintroduction of onshore wind
  - Amendments to offshore wind

#### **3.3. Clean Power 2030 Action Plan**

- 3.3.1. The Clean Power 2030 Action Plan sets out that Great Britain needs to transition to a system in which clean sources produce at least as much power as Great Britain consumes in total, and in which clean sources produce at least 95% of Great Britain's generation. Within the Action Plan, the UK government published the DESNZ 'Clean Power Capacity Range' which includes 45-47GW of solar in 2030.
- 3.3.2. The inclusion of Clean Power 2030 Action Plan within the revised consultation NPSs indicates a direction of travel towards increased policy support for developments for clean power generation including solar.

#### **3.4. Draft EN-1**

- 3.4.1. Paragraph 2.1.1 of Draft EN-1 confirms that the NPS '*considers the large-scale*



*infrastructure which will be required to ensure the UK can provide a secure, reliable, and affordable supply of energy, while also meeting our decarbonization targets'. Paragraph 2.3.4 goes on to confirm the pace at which delivery of infrastructure is required – 'We need to rapidly increase deployment of all relevant infrastructure to meet the Clean Power 2030 Mission capacity ranges and decarbonize the power sector'. Paragraph 2.3.5 confirms that the rapid and mass deployment of renewables includes solar makes reference to the capacity range of 45-47 GW for solar that is set out within the Action Plan. Paragraph 2.3.6 again reiterates the pace of deployment required by stating that 'Meeting the renewable capacities set out in the DESNZ 'Clean Power Capacity Range' is achievable but will require deployment at a sharply accelerated scale and pace'.*

- 3.4.2. The Grid Connection Statement **[REP6-014]** confirms that the Applicant has entered into a Bilateral Connection Agreement with National Grid Energy System Operator (NGESO). Through the DCO Application the Applicant has demonstrated that the Proposed Development is deliverable, with a connection date of 2029 (subject to obtaining the necessary consents), and that any adverse impacts are outweighed by the benefits of the provision of renewable energy. In addition, the Proposed Development will make a significant contribution towards the solar capacity range set out within the Action Plan.
- 3.4.3. EN-1 highlights the need to ensure that the country's supplies of energy remain secure, reliable and affordable. Paragraph 2.4.6 of draft EN-1 introduces the Clean Power 2030 Action Plan to the topic of energy security and highlights the interaction between the Government, Ofgem, key stakeholders and the National Energy System Operator (NESO) in relation to energy supply. Paragraph 2.4.8 states that *'The NESO has all the tools it needs to operate the electricity system reliably. It can call on a range of technologies to balance electricity supply and demand, including....flexible technologies such as batteries...'*
- 3.4.4. The Proposed Development includes a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) which will perform a valuable balancing function to the grid.
- 3.4.5. Chapter 4 of the EN1 and the consultation draft EN-1 addresses 'Assessment Principles', including the matters the SoS should take into account when weighing the adverse impacts of a proposed development against its benefits. Draft EN-1 addresses the issue of residual impacts by stating:

*Where this NPS or the relevant technology specific NPSs require an applicant to mitigate a particular impact as far as possible, but the Secretary of State considers that there would still be residual adverse effects after the implementation of such mitigation measures, the Secretary of State should weigh those residual effects against the benefits of the proposed development. For projects which qualify as CNP Infrastructure, it is likely that the need case will outweigh the residual effects in all but the most exceptional cases.*

- 3.4.6. It should be noted that the presumption referred to above does not apply to residual impacts which present an unacceptable risk to, or interference with, human health and public safety, defence or irreplaceable habitats, which do not apply to the Proposed Development.
- 3.4.7. There are four significant residual landscape and visual effects for the Proposed Development. One is a significant residual cumulative effect on the landscape character and three are viewpoints. The Applicant has demonstrated that the residual cumulative impact on the landscape character area cannot be mitigated and that further screening of the viewpoints could be considered, in the context of other environmental effects including landscape and visual but that this is likely to lead to other effects (as per paragraph 4.3.10 of the Written Summary of the Applicant's Oral Submissions – Issue Specific Hearing 2 **[REP5-012]**).
- 3.4.8. The Proposed Development qualifies as CNP Infrastructure and there are no exceptional circumstances that would result in these residual effects outweighing the benefits of the scheme.
- 3.4.9. Chapter 4.2 of EN-1 addresses 'The critical national priority for low carbon infrastructure'. Draft EN-1 introduces Clean Power 2030 into this chapter with paragraph 4.2.4 stating that '*...the pace of planning delivery needs to significantly increase to allow the government to meet its Clean Energy targets. Many more development consent applications will have to enter the system, and be examined and decided within the statutory timescales. These decisions must be made in accordance with this NPS, relevant technology specific NPSs, and all relevant legal requirements, and applications must continue to meet the high standards expected.*'
- 3.4.10. This accords with the earlier sections of draft EN-1 referred to above that reiterate the need to increase the pace of delivery of low carbon renewable energy.
- 3.4.11. Paragraphs 4.2.23-4.2.26 of draft EN-1 refer to the Applicant's assessment of a

proposed development. The following text has been inserted into paragraph 4.2.25 (4.2.12 in the January 2024 EN-1):

*'Measures that result in a material reduction in generation capacity for CNP infrastructure are unlikely to be considered to be appropriate as mitigation.'*

- 3.4.12. The Applicant has demonstrated that it has not been possible to avoid all significant effects. The applicant has used the design process and an iterative assessment process to avoid and reduce potential landscape effects where possible. The proposed landscape strategy is considered to be effective in reducing the potential landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development [REP6-034]. Any further measures, such as the removal of solar panels, are likely to result in a material reduction in generation capacity and therefore unlikely to be appropriate as mitigation.

### 3.5. Draft EN-3

- 3.5.1. Section 2.10 of EN-3 and the draft EN-3 is specific to solar photovoltaic generation. Paragraph 2.10.1 of draft EN-3 states that *'The UK has huge potential for solar power: it is a cheap versatile and effective technology'*.
- 3.5.2. Paragraph 2.10.2 of draft EN-3 introduces Clean Power 2030 and states that *'Solar energy is at the heart of our Clean Power 2030 Mission'*. Paragraph 2.10.2 goes onto set out the Government's commitment to increasing solar capacity to *'boost growth across the country, create thousands of high-skill, future proofed jobs and tackle the climate crisis'*.
- 3.5.3. The Applicant has demonstrated through the DCO Application and the NPS EN-3 Accordance table [REP2-025] that the Proposed Development accords with the EN-3. The changes proposed by the draft EN-3 reinforce and strengthen the Government's commitment to solar and do not amend the technical considerations and assessment methodology to be applied to the Proposed Development.

### 3.6. Draft EN-5

- 3.6.1. As with draft EN-1 and draft EN-3, the proposed amendments seek to strengthen the Government's position on the rapid delivery of new energy related infrastructure to support the transition to a low carbon future.
- 3.6.2. As with the draft EN-3, the amendments proposed by the draft EN-5 do not amend

the technical considerations and assessment methodology to be applied to the Proposed Development. The Applicant has demonstrated through the DCO Application and the NPS EN-5 Accordance table **[REP2-026]** that the Proposed Development accords with the EN-5.



## 4. Summary

- 4.1.1. The Proposed Development will be assessed against the current NPSs, with which compliance has been demonstrated in the NPS Accordance Tables **[REP2-024 - REP2-026]**.
- 4.1.2. Whilst the revised draft NPSs are not material considerations as they are currently under consultation, it is likely that these could be in effect when the SoS makes his decision. The Applicant has therefore provided comments on the implications of the proposed amendments within the revised draft NPSs for the Proposed Development.
- 4.1.3. The proposed amendments so far as they relate to the Proposed Development, primarily the inclusion of the Clean Power 2030 Action Plan within the revised draft energy NPSs, indicate a direction of travel towards increased policy support for developments for clean power generation including solar, therefore providing strengthened support for the Proposed Development. The proposed amendments do not amend the technical considerations and assessment methodology to be applied to the Proposed Development.
- 4.1.4. It is therefore considered that whilst very little weight should be applied to the revised draft NPSs, the implication for the Proposed Development is additional policy support.