Lime Down
Solar Park

Environmental Statement

Volume 1, Chapter 5: Energy Need, Legislative Context and Energy Policy

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5 Energy Need, Legislative Context and Energy Policy

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 This chapter of the ES sets out the legislative and policy framework relevant to the Scheme. It considers the need for energy infrastructure including national energy policies, and outlines the primary legislation, national planning policies and guidance and local planning policies relevant to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). It does not assess whether the Scheme accords with planning policy, which is presented in the **Planning Statement [EN010168/APP/7.2]**.

5.1.2 This chapter is supported by **ES Volume 3, Appendix 5-1: National Policy Statement Requirements [EN010168/APP/6.3]** and should be read alongside the **Statement of Need [EN010168/APP/7.1]** and the **Planning Statement [EN010168/APP/7.2]**. Further details on the policy and guidance set out within the relevant National Policy Statements (NPS) is provided within the technical chapters of the **ES Volume 1, Chapters 7 to 20 [EN010168/APP/6.1]**.

5.1.3 A summary of the key legislative and policy provisions is provided below.

5.2 Energy Need

5.2.1 The Scheme addresses three key requirements of the UK energy market:

- Decarbonisation: The Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019 established the net zero by 2050 target. Carbon budgets set out the Government's framework of actions to meet this commitment. The seventh carbon budget (CB7) (2025) requires the UK to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 87 per cent by 2042 compared to 1990 levels (Ref 5-1);
- The demand for electricity: the UK's demand for electricity is expected to double by 2050 as the country moves away from reliance on imported fossil fuels and towards renewable sources of energy for transport, industry, agriculture and powering homes; and
- The security of supply: "Security of supply" generally means:
  - Ensuring there is enough electricity generation capacity available and operational to meet demand; and
  - Ensuring the appropriate quality of the electricity supplied.

5.2.2 The Government's British Energy Security Strategy (2022) (Ref 5-2-) states that "*if we're going to get prices down and keep them there for the*

long term, we need a flow of energy that is affordable, clean and above all, secure. We need a power supply that's made in Britain, for Britain". The strategy notes that further and faster actions are required to increase UK national energy security and reduce dependency on fossil fuels and the exposure that consumers currently have to volatile energy prices. The war between Russia and Ukraine and the consequent impact on fuel prices demonstrated how the UK is exposed to volatile energy prices through international energy markets in gas and oil. Exposure is particularly high when demand increases in other countries, or where conflict leads to the weaponisation of energy supplies. Accelerating the domestic supply of clean and affordable electricity, such as that provided by the Scheme, reduces the nation's dependency on volatile imports.

5.2.3 With this in mind, there is an urgent need to generate electricity using renewable and low carbon sources to provide sufficient reliable, affordable sources of electricity. Solar is one of the quickest and cheapest technologies to deploy in order to meet this growing demand. Paragraph 3.3.20 of the Overarching National Policy Statement for energy (EN-1) (NPS EN-1) (Ref 5-3) sets out that solar and wind energy will make up the majority of the UK's energy generating system in 2050.

5.2.4 Clean Power 2030 (Ref 5-4) sets out the Governments ambitions of delivering 45-47 GW of solar power by 2030, which builds on Powering Up Britain (March 2023) (Ref 5-5) which sets out the Government's ambition to increase solar five-fold by 2035, increasing the installed capacity up to 70GW. The National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) (NPS EN-3) (Ref 5-7) and the British Energy Security Strategy (2022) also set out the same expectation for a five-fold increase in solar capacity. This represents very significant growth from the country's current solar capacity and requires deployment of large-scale solar developments to meet the target.

5.2.5 Further, solar will play a critical role in security of energy supply by contributing to the UK's overall energy mix. Renewable energy sources such as solar and wind are variable generators in that they are reliant on sun irradiance, or the wind blowing. The success of UK's energy supply is therefore reliant on deployment of a mix of renewable technologies which provides more stability to cope with seasonal demand levels. Wind and solar are mutually compatible technologies in that they generally generate most of their electricity at different times, i.e. solar generates more electricity in the summer months when it is lighter and the days are longer, and wind farms generate more electricity when it is windy, which is more frequent in winter months. This, combined with other energy sources such as nuclear, hydrogen and other emerging technologies, helps to create a

diverse and resilient range of energy sources, ensuring security of supply and reliability of costs for the consumer.

5.2.6 Battery storage also plays a key role in the nation's energy infrastructure and the move towards low carbon energy generation. Paragraph 3.3.25 of NPS EN-1 states that "*Storage has a key role to play in achieving net zero and providing flexibility to the energy system, so that high volumes of low carbon power, heat and transport can be integrated*." The benefits of battery storage are set out in Paragraphs 3.3.26 to 3.3.27 of NPS EN-1 including reduced electricity system costs, better reliability of supply (through storing surplus electricity in periods of low demand to provide when demand is higher) and maximising the usable output from intermittent low carbon generation, such as solar (as less energy produced when the sun is shining, but demand is low goes "unused") thereby reducing the total amount of generation capacity needed on the system. Paragraph 3.3.27 of NPS EN-1 goes on to state that storage can provide a range of balancing services to help operate the system and reduce constraints on the networks, helping to defer or avoid the need for costly network upgrades as demand increases. Battery storage therefore plays an important role in the transition to net zero and provides additional storage capacity to benefit the wider electricity system.

5.2.7 NPS EN-1 states that there is a Critical National Priority (CNP) for the provision of low carbon infrastructure including low carbon electricity generation such as solar power and battery storage. Paragraph 3.3.63 of NPS EN-1 states that:

5.2.8 "*Subject to any legal requirements, the urgent need for CNP Infrastructure to achieving our energy objectives, together with national security, economic, commercial, and net zero benefits, will in general outweigh any other residual impacts not capable of being addressed by application of the mitigation hierarchy. The government strongly supports the delivery of CNP infrastructure and it should be progressed as quickly as possible*".

5.2.9 This paragraph clearly reflects the urgent need for the Scheme, as a form of CNP, which will outweigh other residual effects not being addressed by the application of the mitigation hierarchy.

5.2.10 In summary, the Scheme addresses all important aspects of government policy. It will help to address the increase in demand for electricity, and will make a critical and timely contribution to decarbonisation and security of supply in the UK, which will help to shield consumer bills from volatile energy prices.

5.3 Overview of the Consenting Framework

5.3.1 The Scheme falls within the definition and thresholds of a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) under Section 14(1)(a) and 15(2) of the Planning Act 2008 (Ref 5-6) comprising an onshore generating station in England exceeding 50MW generating capacity. Under Section 115(1)(b) of the Planning Act 2008, the Scheme also includes elements considered to be 'associated development', such as the Battery Energy Storage System (BESS).

5.3.2 Under the Planning Act 2008 regime, the framework for determining planning applications for development consent is provided by National Policy Statements (NPS). Section 5 of the Planning Act 2008 allows the Secretary of State (SoS) to designate NPSs which set out national policy in relation to the types of NSIP listed in Section 14 of the Planning Act 2008.

5.3.3 For the Scheme, the relevant NPSs are as follows:

- Overarching NPS for Energy (EN-1) (Ref 5-3);
- NPS for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) (Ref 5-7);
- NPS for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN-5) (Ref 5-8).

5.3.4 These NPSs set out the Government's energy policy for the delivery of nationally significant energy infrastructure, the need for new energy infrastructure, and guidance for the determination of an application for a DCO. Section 2.10 of NPS EN-3 sets out policy requirements specific to solar generation.

5.3.5 The above NPSs came into effect on 17 January 2024. In July 2024 the government launched a review of the above energy NPSs to ensure they reflected the government's energy policy and could support the delivery of investment in infrastructure needed to achieve clean power by 2030 and net zero by 2050. The government's Clean Power 2030 Action Plan sets out the pathway to a clean power system by 2030 and was published in December 2024 (see Section 5.5 of this Chapter). Following a review of the energy NPSs EN-1 to EN-5, the government has drafted updates to NPS EN-1 (Ref 5-9), NPS EN-3 (Ref 5-10) and NPS EN-5 (Ref 5-11) which the government is currently consulting upon. These drafts do not yet replace the current energy NPSs, which still have effect.

5.3.6 The relevant NPS requirements, together with an indication of where in the ES the information is provided to address these requirements, are provided in **ES Volume 3, Appendix 5-1: 'NPS Requirements' [EN010168/APP/6.3].**

5.3.7 Where an NPS has effect, the SoS is directed under Section 104(2) of the Planning Act 2008 to determine the application in accordance with:

- the relevant NPSs;
- the views of the host authority set out in a local impact report;
- any relevant matters prescribed in regulations; and
- any other matters the SoS believes to be both "important and relevant".

5.3.8 Although they have limited weight currently, the draft energy NPSs may be considered to be important and relevant in the decision making process.

5.3.9 The determination of the application in accordance with the above applies unless under Section 104(4) to (8) this would:

- lead to the United Kingdom (UK) being in breach of its international obligations;
- be in breach of any statutory duty that applies to the SoS;
- be unlawful;
- result in the adverse impacts of the development outweighing the benefits; or
- be contrary to any condition prescribed for deciding an application otherwise than in accordance with the relevant NPS.

5.3.10 Matters which the SoS may consider important and relevant include the draft energy NPSs, government energy and climate change policy, national planning policy and local planning policy (discussed further below).

5.4 National Policy Statements

5.4.1 The following section sets out the key provisions of the designated NPSs relevant to the Scheme.

Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy EN-1

5.4.2 NPS EN-1 sets out the overarching national policy for energy infrastructure, including the urgent need for significant amounts of large-scale energy infrastructure, together with general policies for the submission and assessment of energy infrastructure applications.

5.4.3 Paragraph 2.1.3 of NPS EN-1 provides that a significant amount of energy infrastructure is needed at both local and national scale in order to produce the energy required for the UK, and to ensure it can be transported to where it is needed. Paragraph 2.1.4 of NPS EN-1 highlights

the Government's commitment to putting the UK on the path to meeting its net zero emissions target by 2050 by taking action to decarbonise the UK's power networks, and taking steps to adapt to the risks of climate change.

5.4.4 Section 2.3 'Meeting net zero' of NPS EN-1 highlights the need for new energy infrastructure in order to realise the UK's net zero targets. In particular, Paragraph 2.3.6 of NPS EN-1 provides that:

"we need to transform the energy system, tackling emissions while continuing to ensure secure and reliable supply, and affordable bills for households and businesses. This includes increasing our supply of clean energy from renewables, nuclear and hydrogen manufactured using low carbon processes (low carbon hydrogen) and, where we still emit carbon, developing the industry and infrastructure to capture, transport and store it."

5.4.5 Paragraph 2.3.7 of NPS EN-1 goes on to emphasise that the UK is likely to become more dependent on some forms of energy to reduce emissions from transport, heating and industry, which could lead to more than half of the final energy demand being met by electricity in 2050, representing a doubling in the demand for electricity.

5.4.6 Section 2.5 'Security of energy supplies' of NPS EN-1 stresses the importance of providing secure, reliable and affordable energy by reducing dependence on imported oil and gas, improving energy efficiency, remaining open minded about onshore reserves including shale gas, and accelerating deployment of renewables, nuclear, hydrogen, carbon capture utilisation and storage (CCUS) and related network infrastructure.

5.4.7 Section 2.6 'Sustainable development' of NPS EN-1 confirms (Paragraph 2.6.1) that the Government's wider objectives for energy infrastructure include contributing to sustainable development and ensuring that our energy infrastructure is safe. Paragraph 2.6.2 of NPS EN-1 is clear that sustainable development is relevant, not just in terms of addressing climate change, but because the way energy infrastructure is deployed affects the well-being of the environment, society and the economy, for both current and future generations. For example, the availability of appropriate infrastructure supports the efficient working of the market so as to ensure competitive prices for consumers. The regulatory framework also encourages the energy industry to protect the more vulnerable.

5.4.8 Part 3 of NPS EN-1 sets out the needs case for new nationally significant infrastructure projects. It explains why the UK Government sees a need for significant amounts of new large-scale energy infrastructure to meet its energy objectives and why it considers that the need for such infrastructure will often be urgent. However, it notes at Paragraph 3.1.2 of

NPS EN-1 that it will not be possible to develop the necessary amounts of such infrastructure without some significant residual adverse impacts. of NPS EN-1 goes on to state that these impacts will be minimised by the application of policy set out in Parts 4 'Assessment Principles' and 5 'Generic Impacts' of each technology specific NPS.

5.4.9 Paragraphs 3.2.6 to 3.2.8 of NPS EN-1 provide that the SoS should assess all applications for development consent for the types of infrastructure covered by NPS EN-1 on the basis that the Government has demonstrated there is a need for those types of infrastructure which is urgent. This includes solar development and battery storage as a form of electricity generating plant and electricity storage, discussed further in Part 3.3 of NPS EN-1. In addition, substantial weight should be given to this need when considering applications for development consent, and the SoS is not required to consider separately the specific contribution of any individual project to satisfying the need established in NPS EN-1.

5.4.10 As to the specific need for electricity generating and storing infrastructure, Paragraph 3.3.16 of NPS EN-1 provides that if demand for electricity doubles by 2050, the UK will need a fourfold increase in low carbon generation (including projects such as the Scheme) and significant expansion of the networks that transport power to where it is needed. The Government's Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener (Ref 5-9) includes a commitment to take action so that by 2035, all electricity comes from low carbon sources, subject to security of supply. This means that the majority of new generating capacity needs to be low carbon.

5.4.11 Paragraphs 3.3.20 to 3.3.24 of NPS EN-1 set out the role solar will play in the UK's mix of energy infrastructure. It provides that solar is one of the lowest cost ways of generating electricity and that a secure, reliable, affordable, net zero consistent system in 2050 is likely to be composed of predominantly wind and solar. Paragraphs 3.2.25 to 3.3.31 of NPS EN-1 set out the role of electricity storage, which is stated to play a key role in achieving net zero and providing flexibility to the energy system. In particular, it is needed to reduce costs and increase reliability by storing surplus electricity in times of low demand to provide electricity when demand is higher.

5.4.12 Paragraphs 3.3.57 to 3.3.63 of NPS EN-1 confirms that the Government considers there to be a CNP for the provision of low carbon energy infrastructure, including renewable generation such as solar PV (confirmed by Paragraph 4.2). Paragraph 3.3.63 of NPS EN-1 provides that subject to any legal requirements, the urgent need for CNP Infrastructure to achieving the UK's energy objectives, together with national security, economic, commercial and net zero benefits, will in general outweigh any other residual impacts not capable of being addressed by application of

the mitigation hierarchy. It goes on to say that "*Government strongly supports the delivery of CNP Infrastructure and it should be progressed as quickly as possible*".

5.4.13 Paragraph 4.1.7 of NPS EN-1 confirms that 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. This presumption, however, does not apply to residual impacts which present unacceptable risk to, or interference with, human health and public safety, defence, irreplaceable habitats or unacceptable risk to the achievement of net zero. Further, the same exception applies to this presumption for residual impacts which present an unacceptable risk to, or unacceptable interference offshore to navigation, or onshore to flood and coastal erosion risk.

5.4.14 Part 5 of NPS EN-1 deals with 'Generic impacts' – those impacts that arise from the development of all types of energy infrastructure covered by the energy NPSs. Generic impacts include matters such as air quality and emissions; flood risk; historic environment; landscape and visual; noise and vibration; socio-economic impacts; and traffic and transport, amongst others.

Other National Policy Statements (EN-3 and EN-5)

5.4.15 The NPSs for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) and Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN-5) build on the policies and guidance set out in NPS EN-1 and provide detailed policies specific to solar schemes and electricity networks infrastructure.

5.5 Other 'Important and Relevant' Matters

5.5.1 This section sets out other matters that the SoS is likely to deem important and relevant when determining the DCO application for the Scheme. It provides a summary of the Government's energy and climate change policy, the National Planning Policy Framework, the Planning Practice Guidance and Local Planning Policy.

Draft National Policy Statements

5.5.2 In July 2024 the Chancellor announced a review of the existing energy NPS to ensure they "*reflect current energy policy and enable a planning policy framework which can deliver investment in the infrastructure needed to achieve Clean Power by 2030 and Net Zero by 2050*". Since the announcement, the government has published the Clean Power 2030 Action Plan, setting out how the government intends to expand low-carbon energy infrastructure to achieve energy security and at least 95% of

generation in Great Britain being produced by clean sources by 2030. As a result of this, several changes are proposed to the energy NPSs and revised energy NPSs were published for consultation in April 2025.

5.5.3 The government's consultation paper, Consultation Planning for New Energy Infrastructure (April 2025) (Ref 5-12) states that while the review of the NPSs is undertaken, *"the current suite of energy NPS remain relevant government policy and EN-1 to EN-5 have effect for the purposes of the Planning Act 2008*".

5.5.4 In terms of transitional arrangement, it is stated in Consultation Planning for New Energy Infrastructure (April 2025) that the Secretary of State has decided that for any application accepted for examination before amending the energy NPSs, the current suite of energy NPS, published in 2024, should have effect. The amended energy NPSs will therefore only have effect in relation to those applications for development consent accepted for examination after the publication of the final amended energy NPSs.

5.5.5 The government does state however, that "*any emerging draft energy NPSs (or those amended but not 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."*

UK Government Energy and Climate Change Policy

The Energy White Paper

5.5.6 The Energy White Paper 'Powering Our Net Zero Future' (EWP) (Ref 5-14), was presented to Parliament in December 2020. At the core of the EWP is the commitment to tackle climate change and achieve net zero. The EWP seeks to put in place a strategy for the wider energy system that transforms energy, supports a green recovery and creates a fair deal for consumers (page 4).

5.5.7 The EWP highlights the increase in reliance on renewables in the last 30 years (pages 40-43) and the need to build upon this foundation to accommodate the projected increase in demand for electricity, which is set to double by 2050. It states (at page 43) that a low cost, net zero consistent system is likely to be composed predominantly of wind and solar, complemented by other technologies to increase reliability when the wind is not blowing or the sun's irradiance levels are insufficient.

Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener

5.5.8 The Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener (NZS) (Ref 5-13) published in October 2021, sets out a long-term plan for the transition to net-zero. It states a key aim to deliver a decarbonised power system by 2035, and provides an indicative delivery pathway for emission reductions to 2037 by sector. The key commitments in the NZS (page 94) include, amongst others:

- Taking action so that by 2035, all the country's electricity comes from low carbon sources, subject to security of supply; and
- Accelerating deployment of low-cost renewable generation, such as wind and solar, through the Contracts for Difference scheme.

5.5.9 Further, the NZS confirms (page 103) that in order to meet the commitments set out in the Government's 6th carbon budget, there will need to be a sustained increase in the deployment of land-based renewables such as solar.

British Energy Security Strategy

5.5.10 The Government's British Energy Security Strategy Policy Paper (published April 2022) (page 6) reiterates that by 2030, 95% of British electricity could be low-carbon; and by 2035 the electricity system will be decarbonised, subject to security of supply. This transition reduces the country's dependence on imported oil and gas and delivers a radical long-term shift in the UK's energy with cleaner, cheaper power, lower energy bills and thousands of high wage, high skilled new jobs.

5.5.11 The policy paper introduced the Government's increased ambition for solar generation, with an expectation to see a five-fold increase solar deployment by 2035. The British Energy Security Strategy includes an explicit ambition for up to 70GW of British solar on roofs and on the ground by 2035 (page 30).

5.5.12 The policy paper also recognises and supports the opportunity to co-locate schemes, including energy storage, to maximise the efficiency of land use.

Powering Up Britain

5.5.13 The Government's Powering Up Britain Strategy (March 2023), comprising Powering Up Britain, Powering Up Britain: Energy Security Plan, and Powering Up Britain: Net Zero Growth Plan, is the UK's blueprint for the future of energy in the country. It sets out how the UK will diversify, decarbonise and domesticate energy production to achieve energy security, promote green growth and meet its net zero targets.

5.5.14 Powering Up Britain provides (page 20) that solar has a huge potential to decarbonise the power sector. It restates that Government's ambition for a five-fold increase in solar by 2035, up to 70GW. It recognises that ground mounted solar is one of the cheapest forms of generation and is readily deployable at scale, and seeks large scale solar development across the UK, looking for development mainly on brownfield, industrial and low/medium grade agricultural land. Therefore, in order to meet net zero targets, it is recognised that both rooftop and ground mounted solar play a part, and some use of agricultural land is anticipated.

Clean Power 2030 Action Plan

5.5.15 The Clean Power 2030 Action Plan (the Action Plan), published in December 2024, sets out how the government will work with the clean power sector, including industry, trade unions, investors, policy makers and others to achieve their clean power goals (page 6). Achieving this will require rapid deployment of new clean energy capacity across the whole of the UK, alongside accelerated expansion and upgrading of the transmission and distribution network.

5.5.16 Table 1 of the Action Plan sets out that current installed capacity for solar is 16.6GW and the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero 'Clean Power Capacity Range' for solar deployment is 47GW (page 32). It is noted on page 34 that delivering capacity that aligns with the capacity range *"requires deployment at a very significant scale and pace, which can only be delivered by taking rapid action to unblock delivery challenges*."

5.5.17 The Action Plan acknowledges that the planning process needs to implement operational and regulatory reforms across the system in order to enable the Government's mission to grow the economy and deliver clean power. This will include equipping organisations with the tools they need to "*flex and prioritise*" their workforce so mission critical projects can be examined faster, updating the National Policy Statements for Energy and Planning Policy Guidance in 2025 to reflect the needs of Clean Power 2030 and improve policy certainty for developers and examining authorities, alongside new and ongoing legislative changes including through the Planning and Infrastructure Bill (page 51). The Action Plan states that the Planning and Infrastructure Bill will *"introduce new measures to prioritise and streamline the delivery process for critical infrastructure through the planning process, including accelerating upgrades to the electricity grid and boosting renewable energy which will benefit local communities*."

5.5.18 The Action Plan recognises that "*Renewable technologies will form the foundation of our clean power system, and we need to see very significant*

deployment to make this a reality. 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." (page 74). In relation to solar specifically, the Action Plan also recognises that there is great potential to bring new solar projects forward and deliver additional capacity beyond what is already planned by 2030 due to shorter lead times.

Planning and Infrastructure Bill

5.5.19 The Planning and Infrastructure Bill (Ref 5-15) was introduced to the UK Parliament on 11 March 2025, and is currently under consideration by Parliament. A key aim of the Bill is to support delivery of the government's Clean Power 2030 target by ensuring that key clean energy projects are built as quickly as possible.

5.5.20 The Bill's has 5 overarching objectives. Of relevance to the Scheme is overarching objective 1 which seeks to '*deliver a faster and more certain consenting process for critical infrastructure'*. The Bill will make it quicker and easier to deliver critical infrastructure projects including through streamlining NSIP consultation requirements, ensuring NPSs are kept up to date, and reducing opportunities for judicial review. According to the government, "*These changes will support the government's Clean Power Action Plan by accelerating the planning process for energy infrastructure and ensuring local communities benefit through the creation of a bill discount scheme for people living closest to new electricity transmission infrastructure."*

National Planning Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework

5.5.21 The current National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Ref 5-16) was published on 12 December 2024 and amended on 7 February 2025.

5.5.22 The NPPF sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied, with a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

5.5.23 The NPPF was written to guide the development of local planning policy documents and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (TCPA 1990). Paragraph 5 of the NPPF makes it clear that the document does not contain specific policies for NSIPs and that applications in relation to NSIPs are to be determined in accordance with the decision making framework set out in the Planning Act 2008 and relevant NPSs, as well as any other matters that are considered both important and relevant.

However, Paragraph 5 goes on to confirm that the NPPF may be a matter that is both important and relevant for the purposes of assessing DCO applications.

5.5.24 Given the above, the NPPF is considered to be important and relevant where policies are applicable to the Scheme and accordingly taken into account in the SoS's decision making.

Planning Practice Guidance

5.5.25 The Planning Practice Guidance Note on Renewable and Low Carbon Energy (Ref 5-17) provides guidance on planning considerations relating to large scale ground mounted solar PV farms, including particular factors that a local planning authority will need to consider include when determining a planning application for ground mounted solar (Paragraph 13). This includes factors such as encouraging the effective use of land by focussing on previously developed and non-agricultural land, the use of planning conditions to deal with reinstatement at the end of a solar farm's period of use, the effect of glint and glare and security lighting and fencing, the effect on heritage assets, what can be done to mitigate landscape and visual effects, and the energy generating potential of the proposal.

5.5.26 Whilst the Scheme is to be determined in accordance with the decision making framework set out in the Planning Act 2008 and relevant NPSs and these will take precedence, the Planning Practice Guidance may still be considered as an important and relevant matter by the Secretary of State in the decision making process.

Local Policy

5.5.27 The majority of the Scheme is located within the administrative area of Wiltshire Council, with two small areas of existing highway within the administrative area of South Gloucestershire Council.

5.5.28 The adopted Local Plan for Wiltshire comprises:

- The Wiltshire Core Strategy (adopted 2015) (Ref 5-18);
- Saved local policies from previous local plans (Ref 5-19);
- The Chippenham Site Allocations Plan (adopted 2017) (Ref 5-20);
- The Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan (adopted 2020) (Ref 5-21);
- Made Neighbourhood Plans (Ref 5-22); and
- The Minerals Core Strategy (adopted 2009) and supporting minerals and waste documents (Ref 5-23).

5.5.29 The adopted Local Plan is currently under review, with the Regulation 19 consultation being undertaken from 27 September to 22 November 2023. The Wiltshire Local Plan Pre-Submission Draft 2020-2038 (Regulation 19) was published as part of the consultation.

5.5.30 The adopted Local Plan for South Gloucestershire comprises:

- The South Gloucestershire Core Strategy (adopted 2013) (Ref 5-24)
- Policies, Sites and Places Plan (adopted 2017) (Ref 5-25)(Ref 5-25)
- The Joint Waste Core Strategy (adopted 2011 (Ref 5-26))

5.5.31 The adopted Local Plan is currently under review. The Draft South Gloucestershire New Local Plan (Regulation 19) (Ref 5-27)underwent consultation between February 2025 and April 2025. Following a review of feedback, submission to the Planning Inspectorate for examination is anticipated to take place in September 2025.

5.5.32 Policies in adopted and emerging Local Plans are frequently considered important and relevant matters and can influence the content of Local Impact Reports, which the SoS will have regard to in their decision making in accordance with s104(2)(b) of the Planning Act 2008.

5.6 Summary

5.6.1 As set out above, there is a clear, critical and urgent need for solar energy developments in the UK and the Scheme assists in meeting that need, in line with Government targets and objectives relating to decarbonisation, meeting increased electricity demand and energy security.

5.6.2 The Scheme is classed as a NSIP under the Planning Act 2008 and a CNP under NPS EN-1. The designated energy NPSs represent the principal policy documents against which an application for the Scheme would be determined. They set out a number of generic impacts considered relevant to the scoping of projects, and assessment principles with which applications for NSIPs are expected to comply.

5.6.3 In addition to these key documents, other “important and relevant” matters which the SoS is likely to consider include the draft energy NPSs, key Government energy and climate change policy documents set out above together with the NPPF and local planning policy where relevant.

5.7 References

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Ref 5-3 Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) (2024) Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1). Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65bbfbdc709fe1000f637052/overarching-nps-for-energy-en1.pdf [Accessed 25 August 2025]

Ref 5-4 Department for Energy Security and Net Zero. Clean Power 2030 Action Plan. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/clean-power-2030-action-plan [Accessed 25 August 2025]

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Ref 5-6 The Planning Act 2008 (as amended). Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/29/contents [Accessed 25 August 2025]

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