



# Defence Infrastructure Organisation

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Application Ref: EN020027

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Our Reference: DIO10056874

Susan Hunt  
National Infrastructure Planning  
Planning Inspectorate  
c/o QUADIANT  
69 Buckingham Avenue  
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10 April 2026

Dear Susan

## Application by National Grid Electricity Transmission for the Norwich to Tilbury Project

### The Examining Authority's written questions and requests for information (ExQ1): Issued on 20 March 2026

I write to provide the response of the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to the written questions raised by the Examining Authority in relation to the above application.

- **Question ref. GEN 1.6 – Critical National Priority.**

The planning statement [APP-085] references the need for the proposed development in the context of the urgent need for renewable energy generation within the UK, and in doing so, it refers to the presumption specifically in relation to critical national priority (CNP) infrastructure. Paragraph 4.2.7 of NPS EN-1 (2023) makes it clear that the CNP policy does not create an additional or cumulative need case or weighting for each type of energy infrastructure. The policy applies following the normal consideration of the need case, the impacts of the project, and the application of the mitigation hierarchy. It will be given consideration by the ExA when making its recommendation to the Secretary of State, who will apply the CNP policy in its decision making specifically in reference to any residual impacts that have been identified.

NPS EN-1 paragraph 4.1.7 notes 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. Paragraphs 7.2.7 to 7.2.28 of the planning statement [APP-085] sets out a summary of the potential residual impacts (non Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) impacts) which may remain after the mitigation hierarchy has been applied. These relate to the relevant exceptions listed in the CNP policy at NPS EN-1 paragraph 4.2.15: human health and public safety, defence, irreplaceable habitats, the achievement of Net Zero, and flood risk.

Paragraph 4.2.17 of NPS EN-1 sets out that the Secretary of State will also take as a starting point that CNP infrastructure will meet a number of policy tests including in

**relation to green belt, sites of special scientific interest (SSSI), nationally designated landscapes and heritage assets.**

**IPs are invited to review the applicant's consideration of CNP in the planning statement [APP-085] (in particular paragraphs 7.2.52 to 7.2.257) and the policy compliance tracker [REP1-133] (tables 1.4 and 1.5), and state if they agree with its approach, including in respect of the updated NPS published in December 2025 (which the ExA considers to be an important and relevant consideration in decision making)**

**In particular the ExA requests all local authorities and the listed statutory consultees to provide comment on the policy tests on matters of human health and public safety, defence, irreplaceable habitats, flood risk, green belt, sites of special scientific interest, nationally designated landscapes and heritage assets, as well as the HRA.**

The applicant has set out how they have addressed the relevant assessment principle concerning Defence in their planning statement [App -085] at paragraphs 7.2.13 - 7.2.15.

The statements made in paragraphs 7.2.13 and 7.2.14 accurately represent the safeguarding concerns that were identified by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) at the time that this planning statement was compiled (August 2025). It should be noted that since then, the MOD updated its safeguarding position, in the response made on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2026, identifying that the proposed development does infringe the technical site safeguarding zone protecting the East 2 WAM Network. In addition, it also affects statutory height safeguarding zones protecting the critical airspace encompassing the aerodrome at Wattisham Station and the effective operation of air navigation aids located at this air base. It was also identified that further technical assessments are necessary to determine the potential impacts that may be caused by the development to fully account for the limits of variation relevant to the size and location of pylon structures that could occupy these statutory safeguarding zones.

At paragraph 7.2.15, the applicant identifies that it is awaiting the outcome of MOD assessments. Despite this, at paragraph 7.2.29 – Summary of Project against CNP Policy – the applicant concludes that the Project will not present unacceptable risk or unacceptable interference to Defence. In view of the fact the relevant technical assessments have yet to be concluded, it is unclear how this conclusion has been reached and the MOD does not consider this statement to be valid at present.

With respect to the applicant's Policy Compliance Tracker submission [REP1-133], in table 1.4 it is concluded that the Project demonstrates comprehensive application of the mitigation hierarchy through embedded mitigation, standard mitigation and compensation. At present, this conclusion cannot be considered to be applicable to Defence. At table 1.5 the applicant identifies that analysis demonstrates that residual impacts are minimised through the application of the mitigation hierarchy (avoidance, reduction, mitigation, compensation) so that no unacceptable health/safety risks are identified and net positive social/economic outcomes are achieved. This conclusion does not take account of the potential impacts to statutorily safeguarded defence infrastructure.

- **Question ref. SS 1.7 – Wattisham Station.**

**Provide an update on the following issues:**

- a) The effect of the proposed development upon the East 2 WAM Network Statutory Technical Safeguarding Zone, including both the disruption of the microwave link and the impact of any lateral tolerance changes to proposed pylons and OHLs.**
- b) The results of the required recent assessments to consider the vertical and lateral limits of variation proposed in the siting and design of lattice towers as well as for crane or temporal structures that may be used during construction in the statutory aerodrome safeguarding zone**

**c) Confirmation of the mechanism/ how it will be secured in the DCO, or otherwise, to ensure that the proposed development will be submitted for inclusion on lower airspace chart, should consent be granted and how the Defence Infrastructure Organisation will be notified in advance of the deployment of cranes or temporal tall or narrow profile structures 50 metres or greater in height, including details of any aviation warning lighting with which they may be fitted.**

a) The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is currently completing detailed technical assessments to determine the extent to which the proposed installation of pylons and overhead lines, accounting for limits of variation, will impact upon microwave links that form part of the East 2 WAM Network. The outcome of these assessments is not yet available.

b) The MOD is currently finalizing detailed assessments of effects of the proposed siting of pylons (accounting for vertical and lateral limits of variation), as well as impacts of the associated deployment of cranes, upon technical site zones and aerodrome obstacle limitation zones included in the statutory aerodrome safeguarding plan for Wattisham Station. The outcome of these assessments is not yet available.

c) The MOD would propose including a dedicated Requirement in any DCO that may be granted to ensure relevant information is submitted for inclusion in lower airspace charts. In addition, a Requirement is expected to be needed to ensure the applicant liaises with the operator of Wattisham Station to co-ordinate the deployment of cranes within the Wattisham Station statutory aerodrome safeguarding zone to maintain air safety requirements. For cranes/narrow profile structures 50 metres or greater in height to be deployed at locations outside of the Wattisham Station statutory aerodrome zone the applicant has identified they intend to provide relevant notifications to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) using the procedures set out in Civil Aviation Publication (CAP) 1068. Under this process the MOD will receive relevant information for the management of the UK Military Low Flying System.

I trust the responses provided above suitably address the questions raised. Should you require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

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Assistant Safeguarding Manager