



**POWER
FOR GOOD**

Chapter 5: Planning Policy

Preliminary Environmental Information Report

Volume 1

Steeple Renewables Project

Land at Sturton le Steeple, Nottinghamshire

5. Planning Policy Context

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 This chapter sets out an overview of the relevant planning policy context against which the application for development consent will be determined.

5.2 Planning Policy

5.2.1 This section summarises the key planning policy documents that will inform the EIA process. In addition, each topic chapter of the PEIR sets out the policy relevant to that topic.

National Policy Statements for Energy, Renewable Energy and Electricity Networks Infrastructure

5.2.2 The Planning Act requires that in deciding applications for development consent, regard must be had to any National Policy Statement (NPS) which has ‘effect’ in relation to development of the description to which the application relates (a ‘relevant national policy statement’). Applicants should ensure that their applications are consistent with the instructions and guidance within the NPSs, and the Statements may also be helpful to Local Planning Authorities in preparing their local impact reports.

5.2.3 In 2011 the Government published National Policy Statements (NPS) for Energy (EN-1), Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3), and Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN-5). The 2020 Energy White Paper¹ comprised a review of the 2011 NPSs, pursuant to section 6 of the Planning Act 2008². That review resulted in a number of amendments to the NPSs.

5.2.4 The ‘Overarching’ NPS for Energy EN-1³ sets out how the energy sector can help deliver the Government’s climate change objectives by clearly stating the need for new low carbon energy infrastructure to contribute to climate change mitigation.

¹ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (2020) Energy White Paper: Powering our Net Zero Future [online] available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/energy-white-paper-powering-our-net-zero-future> [last accessed 8th November 2024].

² UK Public General Acts (2008) Planning Act 2008

³ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (2023) Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) [online] available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/overarching-national-policy-statement-for-energy-en-1> [last accessed 8th November 2024].

- 5.2.5 NPS EN-1 sets out the UK's commitments to delivering its 2050 net zero target with respect to the energy sector, stating that:
- “Given the urgent need for new electricity infrastructure and the time it takes for electricity NSIPs to move from design conception to operation, there is an urgent need for new (and particularly low carbon) electricity NSIPs to be brought forward as soon as possible, given the crucial role of electricity as the UK decarbonises its economy.”***
- 5.2.6 Further, NPS EN-1 explains that the Government's objective is to ensure the UK's supply of energy always remains secure, reliable, affordable and consistent with meeting the target to cut greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050, stating 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”* (Paragraph 2.3.6).
- 5.2.7 With fossil fuels accounting for approximately 76% of the UK's energy supply in 2020, NPS EN-1 states that the country will *“need to dramatically increase the volume of energy supplied from low carbon sources”* (Paragraph 2.3.5). With wind and solar comprising the lowest cost ways of generating electricity, NPS EN-1 concludes that *“a secure, reliable, affordable, net zero consistent system in 2050 is likely to be composed predominantly of wind and solar”* (Paragraph 3.3.20).
- 5.2.8 NPS EN-3⁴ should be read in conjunction with NPS EN-1, which emphasises the Government's commitment to sustained growth in solar capacity to ensure that the UK is 'on a pathway' that allows it to meet net zero emissions. NPS EN-3 affirms at Paragraphs 2.10.9 that:
- “The Government has committed to sustained growth in solar capacity to ensure that we are on a pathway that allows us to meet net zero emissions by 2050. As such, solar is a key part of the government's strategy for low-cost decarbonisation of the energy sector.”***

⁴ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (2023) National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) [online] available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-policy-statement-for-renewable-energy-infrastructure-en-3> [last accessed 8th November 2024].

- 5.2.9 NPS EN-5⁵ should be read in conjunction with NPS EN-1 and NPS EN-3 and is concerned with the impacts and other matters that are specific to electricity networks infrastructure or where, although the impact or issue is generic and covered in EN-1, there are further specific considerations arising from this technology. The policies set out in this NPS are additional to those on generic impacts set out in EN-1 and do not replace them.

Renewable Energy Framework

- 5.2.10 Both national legislation and international agreements set targets for the reduction of carbon emissions and the increase in renewable energy generation. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)⁶ sets out at Paragraph 2 that planning decisions must reflect relevant international obligations, and the UK's legally binding commitments to energy targets is also an important material consideration.
- 5.2.11 The overarching context here is set by the Paris Agreement of the United Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2015⁷ which introduced Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) - national climate plans that include commitments to increasing renewable energy provision, such as solar.
- 5.2.12 In 2019 the Government amended the Climate Change Act 2008⁸ by introducing a target for at least a 100% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (compared to 1990 levels) in the UK by 2050. This is the well-known commitment to 'net zero', requiring a major shift to greater renewable energy generation.
- 5.2.13 These national and international objectives and commitments were endorsed by the COP26 summit hosted within the UK in November 2021. In order to accelerate action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change almost 200 countries agreed to the Glasgow Climate Pact, to limit the rise in global temperature to 1.5 degree Celsius from pre-industrial levels.

⁵ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (2023) National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure [online] available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-policy-statement-for-electricity-networks-infrastructure-en-5> [last accessed 8th November 2024].

⁶ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2024) National Planning Policy Framework [online] available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2> [last accessed 12th December 2024].

⁷ United Nations (2015) The Paris Agreement [online] available at <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement> [last accessed 8th November 2024].

⁸ UK Public General Acts (2008) Climate Change Act 2008 [online] available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/27/contents> [last accessed 8th November 2024].

Energy White Paper (December 2020)

5.2.14 The White Paper was issued by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to address the transformation of the UK's energy system towards the 2050 target for net-zero emissions. The foreword states that:

“The UK has set a world-leading net zero target, the first major economy to do so, but simply setting the target is not enough – we need to achieve it. Failing to act will result in natural catastrophes and changing weather patterns, as well as significant economic damage, supply chain disruption and displacement of populations.”

5.2.15 The foreword concludes that:

“The way we produce and use energy is therefore at the heart of this. Our success will rest on a decisive shift away from fossil fuels to using clean energy for heat and industrial processes, as much as for electricity generation.”

5.2.16 The White Paper recognises the progress made to increase deployment of renewables and sees the expansion of renewable technologies as a key contributor to achieving an affordable clean electricity system by 2050. It states (page 45):

“Onshore wind and solar will be key building blocks of the future generation mix, along with offshore wind. We will need sustained growth in the capacity of these sectors in the next decade to ensure that we are on a pathway that allows us to meet net zero emissions in all demand scenarios.”

The Carbon Budget Order

5.2.17 The UK was the first country to enter legally binding long-term carbon budgets into legislation, first introduced through the 2008 Climate Change Act. Five carbon budgets have subsequently been put into law to eliminate the UK's contribution to climate change by 2050 and target net zero emissions. In April 2021 the Government announced new targets⁹ to cut emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels (63% relative to 2019); at the time this represented the world's most ambitious climate change target.

5.2.18 In line with the recommendation from the independent Climate Change Committee (CCC) - the independent, statutory body established under the Climate Change Act

⁹ UK Statutory Instruments (2021) The Carbon Budget Order 2021 [online] available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2021/750/contents/made> [last accessed 8th November 2024].

2008 - the sixth Carbon Budget will limit the volume of greenhouse gases emitted over a 5-year period from 2033 to 2037.

“The Carbon Budget will ensure Britain remains on track to end its contribution to climate change while remaining consistent with the Paris Agreement temperature goal to limit global warming to well below 2°C and pursue efforts towards 1.5°C.”

5.2.19 The CCC advise that the rapid roll out of renewable electricity generation will form a key part of achieving this carbon budget.

Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener (October 2021)

5.2.20 In 2020, the Prime Minister of the UK at that time (Boris Johnson) set out the Government’s ‘Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution’¹⁰. In October 2021 the Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener Policy Paper¹¹ was published which builds upon that Ten Point Plan with regard to the UK’s carbon budgets, 2030 Nationally Determined Contribution and 2050 net zero target.

5.2.21 It was set out that the Net Zero Strategy would be submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as the UK’s second Long-Term Low Greenhouse Gas Emission Development Strategy under the Paris Agreement. The Strategy addresses the objective of a decarbonised power system by 2035 (Section 3i), with a list of delivery commitments including to:

“Take action so that by 2035, all our electricity will come from low carbon sources, subject to security of supply, bringing forward the government’s commitment to a fully decarbonised power system by 15 years...”

5.2.22 The Strategy confirms at Section 3i paragraph 11 that:

“...the Energy White Paper’s fundamental approach remains unchanged. A low-cost, net zero consistent electricity system is most likely to be composed predominantly of wind and solar generation, whether in 2035 or 2050”.

5.2.23 The Strategy affirms that the UK needs to continue to drive rapid deployment of renewables so that it can reach substantially greater capacity beyond 2030 (Chapter

¹⁰ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (2020) The Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution [online] available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-ten-point-plan-for-a-green-industrial-revolution> [last accessed 8th November 2024].

¹¹ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (2021) Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener [online] available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/net-zero-strategy> [last accessed 8th November 2024].

3i, paragraph 35). Section 3i paragraph 36, which states that the Sixth Carbon Budget also requires:

“A sustained increase to the deployment of land-based renewables such as locally supported onshore wind and solar in the 2020s and beyond.”

5.2.24 Finally, given the current international situation, with the global increase in gas prices and threats to its supply, the Strategy recognises that there is an important economic and social dimension to the generation of low carbon energy. The Strategy (Technical Annex, Paragraph 87) states that:

“...Gas will continue to play a role in setting the electricity price for some years to come but, over time, will do so less frequently, as more and more low carbon generation (such as wind and solar) connect to the electricity system - consistent with the commitment to a fully decarbonised power system by 2035. This will help put downward pressured [sic] on wholesale electricity prices.”

5.2.25 The Government published its British Energy Security Strategy in April 2022¹². This policy paper set out the steps that the Government is taking to accelerate progress towards net zero, seen as ‘fundamental to energy security.’ The Government expects a five-fold increase in the deployment of solar energy by 2035 and the policy paper states that the Government will support the *“effective use of land by encouraging large scale projects to locate on previously developed, or lower value land, where possible, and ensure projects are designed to avoid, mitigate, and where necessary, compensate for the impacts of using greenfield sites.”*

National Planning Policy Framework

5.2.26 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in 2012 and updated in 2018, 2019, 2021, 2023 and 2024 (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2023).

5.2.27 The NPPF sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these are to be applied in relation to the determination of planning applications made under The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

5.2.28 Paragraph 5 states that the NPPF does not contain specific policies for NSIPs. These are to be determined in accordance with the decision-making framework set out in

¹² Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (2022) British Energy Security Strategy [online] available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/british-energy-security-strategy/british-energy-security-strategy> [last accessed 8th November 2024].

the Planning Act and relevant NPSs for nationally significant infrastructure, as well as any other matters that are considered both important and relevant (which may include the NPPF). The NPPF does however state that the planning system should support the transition to net zero by 2050 and take full account of all climate impacts including overheating, water scarcity, storm and flood risks and coastal change (Paragraph 160) and that local planning authorities should, when determining planning applications for such development, approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable.

- 5.2.29 The NPSs provide the predominant policy context; whilst noting that the PEIR has had regard to NPPF and Guidance, where any inconsistencies may exist between them and the relevant NPSs, it is policies within the latter that prevail.

National Planning Practice Guidance

- 5.2.30 On 6 March 2014, the then Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) (now Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, MHCLG) launched the planning practice guidance web-based resource to support the NPPF. The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) provides guidance across a range of topic areas, including in relation to environmental topic areas relevant to the EIA process.

Local Planning Policy

- 5.2.31 The Planning Act 2008, as amended, does not incorporate Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, which provides the principal basis in legislation for the determination of planning applications under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, namely that they must be determined in accordance with the statutory development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Applications for development consent made under the Planning Act are determined as set out above. The local development plan is not therefore the starting point for the consideration of an application for development consent. Nevertheless, local policy has been considered through the EIA process where relevant.
- 5.2.32 Table 5.1 below outlines the key local planning policy documents that are under consideration during the EIA process. Where relevant, emerging policy documents are also listed.

Table 5.1: Key Local Planning Policy

Policy Document	Adopted Policy
Bassetlaw District Council's adopted Local Plan 2020 - 2038	Policy ST1: Bassetlaw's Spatial Strategy; Policy ST33: Design Quality; Policy ST35: Landscape Character Policy ST37: Green and Blue Infrastructure; Policy ST38: Biodiversity and Geodiversity; Policy 39: Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows; Policy 41: Heritage Assets; Policy 46: Protecting Amenity; Policy 47: Contaminated and Unstable Land; Policy ST40: The Historic Environment; Policy ST49: Renewable Energy Generation; Policy ST50: Flood Risk and Drainage; Policy ST51: Protecting Water Quality and Management; and Policy ST56: Provision and Delivery of Infrastructure.
Sturton Ward Neighbourhood Plan 2021 – 2037	Policy 1: Sustainable Development, Infill and the Development Boundary; Policy 2a: Protecting the Landscape Character, Significant Green Gaps and Key Views; Policy 2b: Enhancing Biodiversity; Policy 4: Reducing the Risk of Flooding; Policy 5: Design Principles; Policy 6: Protecting the Historic Environment; and Policy 12: Energy Efficiency, Renewable Energy and Climate Change