



Our ref: KM/JB/SM NH D1

Your ref: 20048646

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2 October 2024

Via E-Mail to:

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Dear Mr Gould,

FIVE ESTUARIES OFFSHORE WIND FARM – EN010115

DEADLINE 1 SUBMISSION

National Highways is the government owned company which operates, maintains and improves the Strategic Road Network (SRN) as the strategic highway company appointed under the provisions of the Infrastructure Act (2015) and in accordance with the Licence¹ issued by the Secretary of State for Transport.

National Highways is a statutory consultee to the planning process. It has a specific obligation to deliver economic growth through the provision of a safe and reliable SRN, in line with the provisions set out in DfT Circular 01/2022: The strategic road network and the delivery of sustainable development². The Circular sets out how National Highways will work with developers to ensure that specific tests are met when promoting a scheme. This includes ensuring the transport impact is understood, any mitigation (or other infrastructure) is designed in accordance with the relevant standards and that environmental impacts are appraised and mitigated accordingly.

In this context, I attach National Highways' Deadline 1 submission for the Five Estuaries DCO application. The attached document summarises National Highways' oral representations at the Issue Specific Hearings on 19 September, concerning Environmental Matters (Terrestrial Transport Impacts) and the draft DCO respectively.

¹ [Highways England: licence \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/614242/Highways_England_licence_publishing.service.gov.uk)

² [Strategic road network and the delivery of sustainable development - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/614242/Strategic_road_network_and_the_delivery_of_sustainable_development_-_GOV.UK_(www.gov.uk))

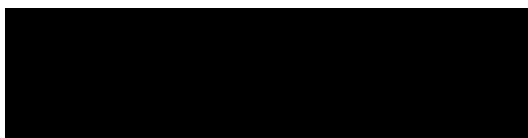


In summary, the principal concerns to National Highways relate to impacts on the SRN during construction and can be summarised as follows:

1. Traffic modelling queries.
2. Demonstration of the adequacy of mitigation works proposed at the junction of the A120 and Bentley Road.
3. Outstanding risks associated with the Abnormal Indivisible Loads proposals.
4. Protective Provisions.

The Applicant has engaged with National Highways on the proposals over the past few months and we will continue to work with them to resolve these outstanding matters.

Yours sincerely,



Kelly Milburn
Spatial Planning Manager

Project: Five Estuaries Offshore Wind Farm (ref:EN010115)

Subject: Summary of the Points of Concern raised by National Highways at Issue Specific Hearings 2 and 3 and other Outstanding Matters

Date: 2 October 2024 (Deadline 1)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This note summarises the issues raised by National Highways at the Issue Specific Hearing 1 concerning Environmental Matters (specifically in relation to Effects for Terrestrial Traffic and Transportation) and Issue Specific Hearing 2 in respect of draft Development Consent Order matters.
- 1.2 National Highways confirms that its concerns currently relate to the construction impacts on the Strategic Road Network (SRN) of the proposed development only. It is not anticipated that the development will have any adverse effects on the SRN during its operation once constructed.
- 1.3 The sections of the SRN which are potentially affected by the proposed development are the A120 to the east of A12 Junction 29 in Colchester, where the A120 meets the A12, through to and including the roundabout of the A120 with Parkeston Road in Harwich, where the SRN ends. The A120 is a key east to west route in the East of England, running between M11 Junction 8 in the west to Harwich Port in Essex to the east.
- 1.4 The proposed onshore substation for the Wind Farm will be in Ardleigh area. Construction access to this site will be via Bentley Road, which connects to the SRN at the A120. Right-hand turns from the Harwich direction of the A120 onto Bentley Road are not permissible due to the existence of a Vehicle Restraint System, which was implemented on the central reserve in recent years, as a road traffic safety measure. Therefore, vehicles travelling from Harwich, would need to undertake a 360 degree turn at the next roundabout to access Bentley Road.

2. Traffic Modelling

- 2.1 National Highways' technical consultants, Aecom, reviewed the application documentation and provided advice in respect of the traffic modelling documented in the Transport Assessment. Ten critical concerns and a series of other matters were raised and have been shared with the Applicant.

2.2 A meeting was held with the Applicant and their technical consults, SLR Consulting, on 2 October to discuss the points raised and explain how many of them had been addressed. It has not been possible within the timescales of Deadline 1 to give full consideration to the Applicant's response. However, National Highways' view is that the direction of travel is positive. It is proposed that National Highways' updated position in respect of the traffic modelling will be provided in response to the ExA's Written Question TT 1.03, the deadline for which is 22 October 2024.

2.3 In the meantime, the matters which remain outstanding include *inter alia*,

- Some slight discrepancies on AADT data.
- The need for consideration of the impacts of summer seasonal traffic on the A120.
- Identification of a collision cluster on the A12 Junction 29 which requires consideration.
- A construction phasing worst-case scenario should be tested.
- The methodology for deriving trip assignment needs to be clarified.
- Junction capacity assessments should be undertaken at any SRN junctions that experience an increase of more than 30 vehicles in a peak hour.
- Clarification of the parameters used to derive the growth factors is required.
- Assessment of the impacts of HGVs between A12 Junction 29 and the A113 should be undertaken.

3. Proposed Mitigation at the A120 Junction with Bentley Road

3.1 National Highways acknowledges the work undertaken by the Applicant to develop mitigation proposals at the junction of Bentley Road with the A120. Whilst the general approach to widening to enable HGVs, especially Abnormal Loads, to turn into Bentley Road, the precise scope is yet to be agreed.

3.2 The Applicant is required to complete a Road Safety Audit (RSA) 1 and must agree the brief with National Highways in advance. The brief was received on 1 October 2024 and is currently being reviewed. The RSA will need to consider matters pertaining to the SRN, including the ability of the design to accommodate HGV swept paths and the capacity of the design to enable movements without blocking back on the A120 mainline.

4. Abnormal Indivisible Loads (AIL)

- 4.1 The Applicant proposes that the largest and heaviest equipment and components required for the transmission facility at Ardleigh will be brought by sea to the Port of Harwich and from there, via the A120 and Bentley Road, to the site.
- 4.2 National Highways supports this proposal in principle as it complies with its policy of delivering abnormal loads to the nearest port to the site, thereby minimising movements on the SRN. The proposal involves switching carriageways at Horsley Cross Roundabout, to the east of Bentley Road, due to the VRS on the A120 prohibiting right-hand turns. This will require the temporary closure of the A120 during each AIL movement. Again, National Highways agrees to this in principle.
- 4.3 However, there are two specific matters that will need to be resolved before the AIL proposals are agreed by National Highways. Firstly, the Applicant needs to demonstrate that the AILs will be able to negotiate several roundabouts with tight geometry between Harwich and Bentley Road, although it is thought that this is likely to be manageable.
- 4.4 A more serious risk is the future condition of the concrete road surface on the A120, which has reached the end of its design life. Full replacement of the carriageway in the Wix area is required. It is not confirmed to be undertaken during RIS3 and is currently thought likely to be deferred to RIS4, post-2030, due to affordability constraints, with only minimal maintenance interventions expected during RIS3. Whilst these works will maintain the road to minimum standards to ensure the safe passage of vehicles, including HGVs, there is a risk that the road surface will not be able to accommodate particularly large AILs above 300 tonnes, which are being considered for use on this project. National Highways raised its concerns about the potential risk to users of the SRN if there are particularly large AILs above 300 tonnes using the SRN and causing significant damage to the A120 concrete road surface.
- 4.5 National Highways is awaiting an Abnormal Load Assessment Report which will outline the key issues associated with the selected route for the AILs. In particular, it will be important for the Applicant to confirm the specific transportation vehicles to be used and their expected frequency to enable National Highways to assess the implications for the A120.

- 4.6 If National Highways is unable to confirm that the road will be able to support the vehicles proposed for use by the Applicant, there may be a requirement for additional mitigation to be provided, or for an alternative AIL route to be pursued.

5. Protective Provisions

- 5.1 The Applicant's legal team met with National Highways' lawyers on 16 September to discuss Protective Provisions to be incorporated into the DCO. National Highways had previously provided a copy of its standard Protective Provisions to the Applicant. The Applicant had also provided a set of draft Protective Provisions to National Highways for review.
- 5.2 There were a small number of areas of disagreement between the Applicant and National Highways, which would require further discussion before they could be resolved. However, the majority of clauses were agreed.
- 5.3 It was agreed that the Applicant would make a number of amendments to the National Highways standard Protective Provisions and that the draft version would be submitted to National Highways for consideration and review during week commencing 30 September. The Applicant has also requested that the Protective Provisions also need to be agreed with the North Falls DCO promoter as the works affecting the SRN would be identical.
- 5.4 Further meetings will be required with the Applicant to discuss the remaining areas of disagreement, following National Highways' review of the latest draft version.

6. Other Outstanding Matters

6.1 Land Acquisition

- 6.1.1 The Applicant's proposals to temporarily acquire National Highways land, including the A120 verge, for construction access are considered acceptable, as is any conversion of National Highways non-operational land into highway at the Bentley Road Junction for the purposes of widening.
- 6.1.2 However, National Highways does not support the compulsory acquisition of land in its ownership for other purposes and has a specific concern relating to the trenchless cable crossing underneath the A120. The construction of this cable duct at a depth of 9m is considered acceptable by National Highways, subject to approval of the detailed design and construction methodology, which will be covered under the Protective Provisions.

6.1.3 However, the subsoil beneath the A120 is owned by National Highways and has not been included in the Book of Reference. National Highways considers it essential to retain ownership of all subsoil rights as its assets are of long-term strategic importance and it is not possible to foresee any changes to the SRN that may need to be made in the future. National Highways is not prepared to consent to the compulsory acquisition of the subsoil of the SRN. Further discussion is required with the Applicant to resolve this matter. This principle also applies to the compulsory acquisition of any other land which is in National Highways ownership.

6.2 Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP)

6.2.1 Further clarification is required regarding the rationale for only including 18 months of the construction programme in the highway assessment, when the construction period is stated to be 36 months.

6.3 Statement of Common Ground (SOCG)

6.3.1 The Applicant has not yet shared a draft SOCG with National Highways. However, National Highways agrees with the scope of matters to be covered, the status overview and expectations on agreements, as described in the document “Statements of Common Ground – Position Statement” submitted to the ExA by the Applicant at Procedural Deadline B on 13 August 2024 (ref:PD2-001)