



THE PLANNING ACT 2008

THE INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING (EXAMINATION PROCEDURE) RULES
2010

Rampion Two Offshore Wind Farm

Appendix I6 to the Natural England Deadline 6 Submission

**Natural England's Final Position Statement for Seascape, Landscape Visual Impact
Assessments**

For:

The construction and operation of the Rampion 2 Offshore Windfarm located approximately
13km off the Sussex coast in the English Channel.

Planning Inspectorate Reference EN010117

01 August 2024

Natural England's Closing Statement on the Seascape, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Impacts on Designated Landscapes

Natural England is the Government's statutory adviser on landscape, the designating authority for National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and the defining authority for Heritage Coasts. Natural England advises that the project will significantly and adversely harm the statutory purposes of the South Downs National Park (SDNP), and the special character of Sussex Heritage Coast (SHC). The proposal will also harm the special qualities of the Chichester Harbour National Landscape/Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Isle of Wight National Landscape/AONB.

Natural England's fundamental advice to the Applicant on project design and impacts to statutory designated landscapes has remained unchanged since the pre-application stage. Natural England does not agree that the Rampion 2 Design Principles fulfil the requirement for good design as set out in the Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1). It is of particular concern that the Applicant continues to propose that Wind Turbine Generators (WTGs) are constructed in the Zone 6 area.

- The WTGs are too big and located too close to the coastline of the SHC portion of the SDNP. Their sheer size and lateral spread, combined with the marked contrast in height with the existing Rampion 1 WTGs will be visually incoherent, clutter-up the seascape setting of the SDNP and dramatically degrade views out to sea, particularly from Beachy Head to Birling Gap.
- The expansion of the influence of turbines westwards through development within the Rampion extension area will increase the industrialisation of the seascape setting of the SDNP, particularly for inland locations located to the west of Wilmington Hill. Their presence in the seascape setting of the SDNP will further degrade the quality of views out to sea which are already adversely influenced by the turbines of the Rampion 1 array, and will lead to further loss of the natural beauty for which this landscape was designated.
- The westward expansion will also result in significant effects on the seascape setting of the CHAONB (although this will be limited) and more extensively the eastern portions of the IoWAONB at Bembridge Down and St. Boniface Down, resulting in further loss of natural beauty for these designations as well.
- All necessary evidence to enable a full evaluation of the significance of impacts to the statutory purposes of designated landscapes (from offshore infrastructure) has still not been provided by the Applicant (INSERT cross ref).

Natural England considers that the *further harm* (in addition to the harm caused to the SDNP and SHC from Rampion 1) to the statutory purposes of the SDNP from the Rampion 2 array is significant and that the acceptability of this harm should be a key policy test applied within the decision.

Section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023

Natural England considers that the proposed compensation package does not provide for impacts to seascape. Accordingly, we consider that they have not adequately demonstrated how the project proposes to *further the statutory purposes* of the SDNP (in accordance with section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023). This matter is of considerable concern given the assessment of significant adverse impacts from the offshore infrastructure

on the SDNP. We emphasise that the Rampion 2 decision makers must apply the Duty (section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023) and consider the extent to which the project has identified relevant measures to further the statutory purposes, and evaluate these in the specific context of the predicted seascape impacts.

Natural England anticipates that Defra guidance on the section 245 duty may be published in due course, which we hope will assist the Secretary of State in determining how best to discharge the duty.