NORTH FALLS

Offshore Wind Farm

ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT

Appendix 23.10 Green Infrastructure

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NORTH FALLS
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Contents

Tables

Plates

Glossary of Acronyms

BNG	Biodiversity Net Gain
DCO	Development Consent Order
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DESNZ	Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
ECC	Essex County Council
EMP	Ecological Management Plan
ES	Environmental Statement
GI	Green Infrastructure
GIP	Green Infrastructure Plan
km	Kilometres
LPA	Local Planning Authority
NFOW	North Falls Offshore Wind Farm
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NPS	National Policy Statement
NSIP	Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects
OLEMS	Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Strategy
PRoW	Public Rights of Way
RWE	RWE Renewables UK Swindon Limited
SSER	SSE Renewables Offshore Windfarm Holdings Limited
2021 Act	The Environment Act

Glossary of Terminology

Landfall	The location where the offshore export cables come ashore at Kirby Brook.
Onshore cable corridor(s)	Onshore corridor(s) considered at PEIR within which the onshore cable route, as assessed at ES, is located.
Onshore cable route	Onshore cable route within which the onshore export cables and associated infrastructure will be located.
Onshore export cables	The cables which take the electricity from landfall to the onshore substation. These comprise High Voltage Alternative Current (HVAC) cables, buried underground.
Onshore project area	The boundary in which all onshore infrastructure required for the Project will be located (i.e. landfall; onshore cable route, accesses, construction compounds; onshore substation and National Grid substation extension), as considered within the ES.
Onshore substation	A compound containing electrical equipment required to transform and stabilise electricity generated by the Project so that it can be connected to the National Grid.
The Applicant	North Falls Offshore Wind Farm Limited (NFOW).
The Project Or 'North Falls'	North Falls Offshore Wind Farm, including all onshore and offshore infrastructure.

1 Introduction

1. Royal HaskoningDHV was commissioned by North Falls Offshore Wind Farm Ltd. to prepare a Green Infrastructure Plan (GIP) for the North Falls Offshore Wind Farm (NFOW) project (herein 'North Falls' or 'the Project'), in support of the project's Development Consent Order (DCO) application under the Planning Act 2008.

1.1 Purpose of this report

2. This report sets out a plan for assessing and securing Green Infrastructure (GI) for onshore elements of the project, and includes the following:

    - Relevant legal and policy background;
    - Proposed approach to incorporating GI within the Project, pre- and post-consent;
    - Existing GI baseline; and
    - Details of how North Falls have incorporated GI within the Project's design and assessment to date.

1.2 The need for Green Infrastructure

3. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), 2021) defines GI as "*a network of multi-functional spaces, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate,* local *and wider communities and prosperity.*"

4. This GIP has been developed following a request by Essex County Council (ECC) made within the Scoping Opinion in 2021 (Document Reference: 7.26). In the Scoping Opinion, ECC commented:

    - "*Essex County Council currently provides advice on green infrastructure (GI) schemes for major developments. Essex County Council have been a consultee on GI since the 2018. Although there are no statutory requirements for GI, the 25-Year Environment Plan and emerging Environment Bill will place significant importance on protecting and enhancing GI, accessibility and biodiversity net gain.*
    - *Having reviewed the Environment Impact Assessment Scoping report, we would advise the following recommendations are considered for enhancements to the scheme that would improve the GI network and help achieve net environmental gains.*
    - *Essex County Council look to ensure that adequate provision, protection and improvements of high-quality GI comply with the objectives and planning principles set out in the following documents:*
        - *Tendring's Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2017), Tendring's Open Spaces Strategy (2008)) and associated Infrastructure Delivery Plan, as well as Tendring's Local Development Plan policies regarding the Council's approach to GI provision in the local authority area. Essex*

Green Infrastructure Strategy, 2020 aims to enhance the urban and rural environment, through creating connected multi- functional GI that delivers multiple benefits to people and wildlife. It meets the Council's aspirations to improve GI and green spaces in our towns, cities and villages, especially close to areas of deprivation.

- *The Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) and Environment Statement (ES) will need to identify appropriate measures for avoiding or reducing significant adverse effects on the functionality of GI assets*" (see Table 23.1 Consultation Responses of Environmental Statement (ES) Chapter 23 Onshore Ecology (Document Reference: 3.1.25)).

5. Following the publication of The 25 Year Environmental Plan in 2018, (Defra, 2018), ECC identified the need to improve and invest in GI within the county, as it "*is an essential part of a successful and liveable county, attracting families and setting for businesses to invest in, from the surrounding area and around the world*" (ECC, 2020).

6. The Environment Act 2021 sets out the requirement to prepare an environmental improvement plan to ensure growth and enhancement of the natural environment and secures need to have regard to 25 Year Environment Plan. The 25 Year Plan encourages the provision of high-quality GI within rural and urban areas for the "*promotion of social interaction*" within communities, and its role in "*sequestering carbon, absorbing noise and surface water and reducing high temperatures"* (Defra, 2018).

7. The NPPF encourages Local Planning Authorities (LPA) to "*take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital*" (NPPF, 2021), and to ensure that GI is considered in local plans and in new developments.

2 Policy and legislation

8. This GIP has been compiled with reference to the following relevant legislation, policy and standards:

- National Policy Statements (NPS) (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ, 2023)).
- GI Framework - Principles and Standards for England (Natural England, 2023)
- The Environment Act (2021);
- UK Government's 25 Year Environment Plan (Defra, 2018);
- Essex GI Strategy (2020);
- Essex GI Standards (2022);
- Tendring Open Spaces Strategy (2008).

2.1 National Policy Statements (NPS)

9. These are the principal decision-making documents for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs). Those relevant to the Project are:

- Overarching NPS for Energy (EN-1) (DESNZ, 2023a).
- NPS for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) (DESNZ 2023b); and
- NPS for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN-5) (DESNZ 2023c)

10. The NPS provides requirements encouraging a "*holistic approach to delivering wider environmental gains and benefits through the use of nature-based solutions and GI"* (EN-1, Section 4.6.13) (DESNZ, 2023a).

11. NPS EN-1 states that "*GI can also enable developments to provide positive environmental, social, health and economic benefits. Green infrastructure includes green space such as parks and woodlands but also other environmental features such as street trees, hedgerows and green walls and roofs. Well designed and managed green infrastructure provides multiple benefits at a range of scales. It can contribute to biodiversity recovery, sequester carbon, absorb surface water, cleanse pollutants, absorb noise and reduce high temperatures. The Green Infrastructure Framework – Principles and Standards for England can be used to consider green infrastructure in development and plan for good quality and targeted creation or improvement"* (EN-1, Section 5.11.7) (DESNZ, 2023a).

12. The NPS also states that it is important to "*reconnect habitats via the green corridor, biodiversity stepping zones and reestablishment of appropriate hedgerows and or connect people to the environment via footpaths and cycle routes in tandem with environmental enhancements*" for example, the implementation of GI (EN-5, Section 2.5.1) (DESNZ, 2023c).

13. In addition to also maintaining current forms of GI, *"where green infrastructure is affected, the Secretary of State should consider imposing requirements to ensure the functionality and connectivity of the green infrastructure network is maintained in the vicinity of the development and that any necessary works are undertaken, where possible, to mitigate any adverse impact"* (EN-1, Section 5.11.24) (DESNZ, 2023a).

2.2 The Green Infrastructure Framework - Principles and Standards for England (2023)

14. The GI Framework provides principles and standards, for GI quantity and quality (Natural England, 2023).

15. The framework sets out the following 15 principles which underpin promotion for GI:

- Principle Why 1 - Nature rich beautiful places
- Principle Why 2 - Active and healthy places
- Principle Why 3 - Thriving and prospering places
- Principle Why 4 - Improved water management

- Principle Why 5 - Resilient and climate positive places
- Principle What 1 - Multifunctional: GI delivers multiple functions and benefits
- Principle What 2 – Varied: GI includes a mix of types and sizes that can provide a range of functions and benefits to address specific issues and needs
- Principle What 3 - Connected: GI connects as a living network for people and nature at all scales, connecting provision of GI with those who need its benefits
- Principle What 4 - Accessible: GI creates green, liveable places where everyone has access to good quality green and blue spaces routes and features
- Principle What 5 - GI should respond to an area's character
- Principle How 1 - Partnership and vision Partnership working, collaboration and stakeholder engagement; create a vision for GI
- Principle How 2 – Evidence. Use evidence, sound science and good land use practices to underpin plans projects, programmes, and policies
- Principle How 3 - Plan GI strategically to secure GI as a key asset in policies to create and maintain sustainable places
- Principle How 4 - Design GI to create beautiful, well-designed places
- Principle How 5 - Managed, valued, monitored and evaluated. Establish good governance, funding, management, monitoring, and evaluation of GI.

16. The five GI standards detailed in the framework provide an explanation as to what "*good GI looks like for local planners, developer, park and greenspace managers and communities, knowing how to plan it strategically to deliver multiple benefits for people and nature"*. The standards aim to help stakeholders deliver the principles explained above. The key standards relevant for the Project are outlined in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 GI standards for major development (adapted from Natural England, 2023)

Standard	Detail for major development
S1. GI Strategy Standard	*Each major new development has a GI Plan (which may be part of a Design and Access Statement) setting out how the development will deliver the GI Framework's 15 GI Principles and the GI Standards as set out in local GI policies, proposals and development requirements in development plans and local design codes. The GI delivered within (or associated with) major new developments should be managed, maintained and monitored for a minimum of 30 years.*
S2. Accessible Greenspace Standards, including Quality Standards	*Accessible Greenspace Standards – quality criteria: Accessible greenspace meets the Green Flag Award Criteria, (Ellicott, 2016) and best practice in accessibility for all: By All Reasonable Means: Least restrictive access to the outdoors (The Sensory Trust, 2020) in major new developments.*
S3. Urban Nature Recovery Standard	*The developer identifies in the GI Plan for the development (or in the Design and Access Statement, as appropriate), its contribution to nature recovery and the creation and restoration of wildlife rich*

Standard	Detail for major development
	habitats, which can contribute to the delivery of local nature recovery objectives, including the potential for creation or enhancement of Local Nature Reserves or Local Wildlife Sites.
S4. Urban Greening Factor Standard	*Major development meets National Urban Greening Factors of at least 0.3 for commercial development, 0.4 for residential development, (and, where appropriate, 0.5 for residential greenfield development). (User Guide etc, Natural England, 2023a-e)*
S5. Urban Tree Canopy Cover Standard	*Major residential and commercial development is designed to meet these targets.* *New and existing trees are incorporated into new developments and new streets are tree lined (in line with NPPF requirements).*

2.3 The Environment Act 2021

17. The aim of The Environment Act 2021 (the '2021 Act'), is to improve "*environmental governance, waste and resource efficiency, air quality and environmental recall, water, nature and biodiversity, conservation covenants etc., providing provisions such as objective to achieve the goals set*".

18. Under Section 9 of the 2021 Act, Schedules 4 and 7 make provisions for improving the natural environmental by making a mandatory requirement for developers to adhere to the 25 Year Environmental Plan, which encourages the use of GI.

2.4 The 25 Year Environment Plan (2018)

19. Defra's 25 Year Environment Plan, secured by the 2021 Act, outlines that where there is *"opportunity for nature recovery through restoration*" and the possibility for new and existing GI, GI can provide an extension for "*wildlife corridors into town and cities"*, creating *"green towns*" (Defra, 2018).

20. Whilst the 25 Year Environmental Plan focuses on enhancing the natural environmental, it also states that through the implementation of GI, it can increase the "*attractiveness of places…and create strong community networks"* (Defra, 2018).

21. Therefore, promoting the need of GI investments, with the intention of increasing sustainable development, working directly with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to help investors/developers "*incorporate this into national planning guidance and policy*" (Defra, 2018).

2.5 Essex Green Infrastructure Strategy (2020)

22. The Essex GI Strategy sets out a vision for Essex, with the strategy aiming to enable better "social, economic and environmental outcomes", delivering GI through various techniques

23. The strategy provides key objectives:

- To protect, improve, create and connect places;

- Increase inclusivity and promote people's health and
- Provide assured funding to increase long-term sustainability.

The Essex GI Strategy outlines how ECC and developers should incorporate GI into new and existing developments to meet specific planning requirements including:

24. The Essex GI Strategy outlines how ECC and developers should incorporate GI into new and existing developments to meet specific planning requirements including:

- "*Development proposals need to consider how they can integrate and assist with the delivery of green infrastructure objectives and make contributions to delivery either on-site or off-site;*
- *Protect and enhance existing biodiversity assets;*
- *Seek opportunities to improve habitat connectivity within sites and with ecological networks beyond development sites;*
- *Development which facilitates safe access to watercourse, whilst improving water quality and opportunities for leisure and biodiversity; and*
- *"[the creation of a] Green Essex Network to develop, improve and promote" a more sustainable county by increasing the knowledge of local residents by raising awareness"* (ECC, 2020).

25. The strategy also sets out the anticipated environmental, economic and social benefits arising from GI within Essex, as summarised in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 Examples of environmental, economic and social benefits as a result of GI (ECC, 2020)

Environmental Benefits	Economic Benefits	Social Benefits
Maintains/restores habitat.	*Generates revenue*	*Improves public health*
Improves air quality	*Increases land and property value*	*Promotes equity and access*
Enhances biodiversity	*Lowers energy costs*	*Connects people with nature, heritage, culture and landscape*
Improve sustainable modes of transport and transport links.	*Promotes sustainable renewable energy*	*Improves levels of physical activity, health and mental health*
Heritage preservation	*Increased tourism*	*Boost educational opportunities*
Landscape	*Noise/visual screening*	*Climate change mitigation and adaptation- community resilience*
Increase populations of some protected species	*Sustainable travel opportunities*	*Increase life expectancy*

2.6 Essex Green Infrastructure Standards (2022)

26. ECC and Natural England (2022) developed the Essex GI Standard, which sets out the following nine Principles and Standards for the development of GI:

- Mainstreaming and integration;
- Evidence-led;
- Multi-functionality;
- Early engagement;
- Managing different expectations;
- Health, wellbeing and social equity;
- Connectivity;
- Strong policy wording and commitment and;
- Stewardship.

27. The Standards and Principles were created to guarantee the delivery of accessible, high-quality and *"multi-functional GI for placemaking and placekeeping*" (Natural England, 2022).

2.7 Tendring Open Spaces Strategy (2008)

28. Tendring Open Spaces Strategy sets out a vision of creating "*a dynamic network at the heart of the community that is safe and well-maintained, accessible to all, good for wildlife and fun for all ages, whilst conserving peace and quiet wherever possible*". (Tendring District Council, 2008). The strategy includes a list of key recommendations for improving the value of open spaces in the district, including the following recommendations related to green corridors:

- "*Seek additional provision in the west of Clacton and Jaywick, in Brightlingsea and Mistley/Manningtree e.g. through prospective residential development, to mitigate for existing and prospective quantitative deficiencies.*
- *Prioritise delivery of sub-regional green link opportunities identified in the Haven Gateway Green Infrastructure Study when seeking to mitigate existing district deficiencies.*
- *Review quality of interpretation within all existing Green Corridors sites and identify priorities for enhancement.*
- *Review role and identify enhancement needs with local user groups for Ladbroke Road Open Space which has been identified as Very Poor overall quality.*
- *Seek improvements to PRoW network and bridleways in rural areas and the urban fringe to mitigate deficiencies of Green Corridors in these areas.*
- *Review role of seafront as a key element of the greenspace network to seek extension of its use outside the summer season."*

3 Approach to incorporating Green Infrastructure into the Project

3.1 Prior to consent

29. This GIP has been drafted to outline how North Falls adhere to the relevant local and national policy requirements in relation to GI, and how it will maximise opportunities to improve the '*public realm… and create a sense of place, improve the connectivity of people, provide high quality infrastructure, promote health and well being and to work with partners to build secure funding, effective governance and stewardship for new and existing GI to ensure their long-term sustainability*" (ECC, 2020). In particular, the Project has focussed on how adherence to the Essex GI Strategy will be achieved.

30. North Falls seeks to deliver environmental mitigation and enhancement to land within its onshore project area that may be impacted during the construction, development and operational phases of the Project. In addition to exploring opportunities to deliver biodiversity net gain (BNG) for North Falls, as part of the DCO application.

31. This will include the reinstatement, restoration and enhancement of habitats that are lost during construction, as well as proposals for habitat creation at the North Falls onshore substation. Specific measures are detailed in ES Chapter 23 Onshore Ecology (Document Reference: 3.1.25).

32. In order to demonstrate how the project is seeking to adhere to the Essex GI Strategy, the Project has undertaken an audit of the mitigation, enhancement and compensation measures proposed to check them against the 'recommendations for developers' within the Essex GI Strategy. Where gaps have then been identified, proposals have then been made for how the 'recommendations for developers' in the Essex GI Strategy can be met. The outcomes of this audit is set out in section 5.

3.2 Post-consent

33. Once the Project is granted consent, an updated GI Plan will be provided with the Project's Written Landscaping Scheme, secured by DCO Requirement, detailing how the Project will meet the recommendations for developers set out within the Essex GI Strategy. This will draw on detailed measures for landscaping and ecological management set out in the Written Landscaping Scheme and the Project's Ecological Management Plan (also secured by DCO Requirement). This can therefore demonstrate a detailed understanding of the GI provisions provided by the Project.

34. Plate 3.1 below illustrates a timeline of the approach to incorporating GI into North Falls prior to consent, and post-consent.

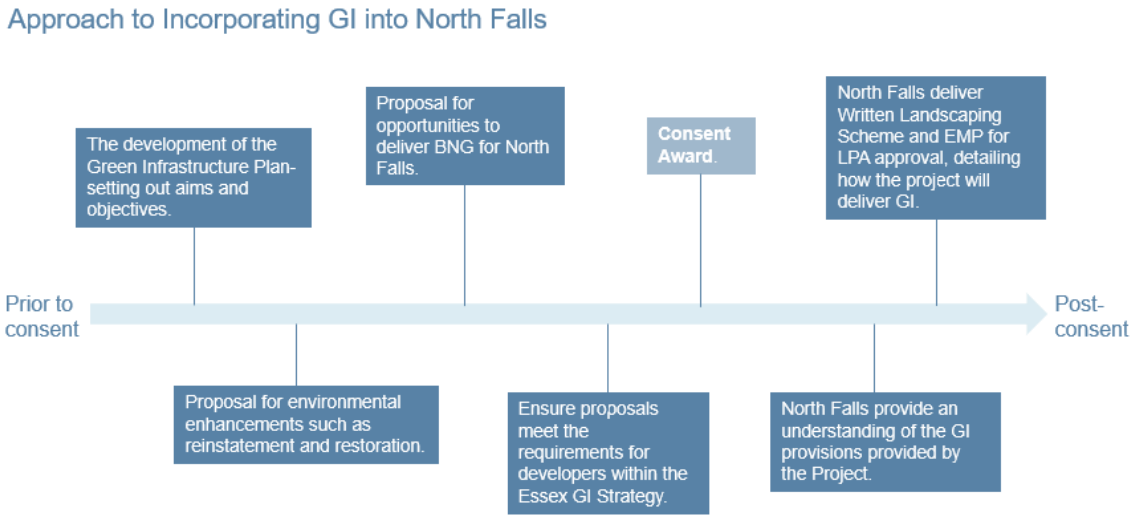

Plate 3.1 Approach to Incorporating GI into North Falls

4 Existing Green Infrastructure

35. To provide context to the GI proposed to be developed as part of the Project, a summary of existing GI provision within Essex and Tendring is provided below.

36. The Essex GI Strategy states that there is currently 782km^2 of GI in Essex, covering 21% of the county (ECC, 2020). A breakdown of the existing GI provision within Tendring district is provided in Plate 4.1 below.

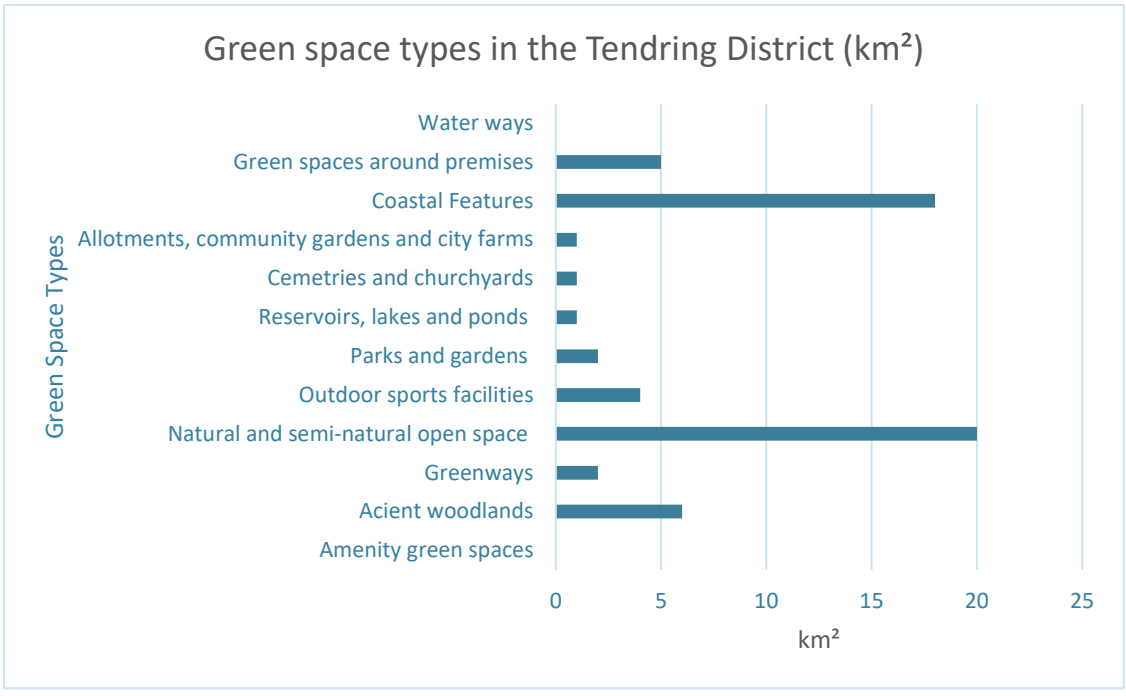

Plate 4.1 Green spaces within the Tendring District (ECC, 2020)

37. Whilst there is evidence of existing GI within the Tendring District, it is clear from the statistics above that there is a need for growth and new GI in all aspects of the 'green assets' described in the Essex GI Strategy (ECC, 2020).

38. There is existing GI such as reservoirs, lakes, ponds and a network of waterways such as the Holland and Tendring Brooks within the catchments within which North Falls is located. The Project will cross the Holland and Tendring Brooks, however will use trenchless techniques to do so, removing direct effects upon these watercourses. No ponds or reservoirs are directly affected by the Project.

39. There are isolated amenity green spaces close to and within the onshore project area, such as within the Frinton Golf Course and the settlements along the onshore cable route. Trenchless techniques will be used to go beneath Frinton Golf Course ensuring that this space is retained, and the other amenity greenspaces are avoided along the onshore cable route.

40. Likewise, the Project has no direct interaction with parcels of ancient woodland and no loss of ancient woodland will occur during the Project's development. Further information has been provided on this subject within ES Chapter 23 Onshore Ecology (Document Reference: 3.1.25), and notes that there are isolated areas within the wider Tendring District.

41. In terms of the other 'green space types', North Falls will not interact with existing GI due to the onshore cable route and onshore substation being located mainly in arable and agricultural parts of the district.

42. ECC notes that there is the continuous need for more GI within the Tendring District and Essex county as a whole and states that there are areas for improvement when incorporating GI provisions. The areas for improvement include supporting "*the development of new visitor centers and facilities…improve public realm infrastructure to reduce pollution, improve character and sense of place… and encourage better management of GI to benefit locally native species, focusing on recognized nature conservation priorities*" (ECC, 2020).

5 Incorporation of Green Infrastructure within North Falls

43. The following section describes how GI has been incorporated into the Project's design.

44. Table 5.1 below, set out the mitigation and enhancement measures proposed for North Falls as described through the technical chapters of the Project's ES, and sets out how these align with the "*recommendations for developers*" within the Essex GI Strategy (2020).

Table 5.1 Incorporation of GI within North Falls in relation to the "recommendations for developers" (ECC, 2020)

Recommendations for developers	Incorporation of GI within North falls
Development proposals need to consider how they can integrate and assist with the delivery of GI objectives and make contributions to delivery either on-site or off-site.	Prior to the construction of North Falls, this document, the GIP, presents a timeline of how the Project will integrate GI into the design process. North Falls has developed a number of plans to ensure that GI is included in the design process:
Specifying the GI requirements into the standard engineering specifications to ensure it gets considered. Making the information as clear and detailed as possible makes for accurate costings, reducing the likelihood of elements such as GI being value out.	A 'Design Vision' (Document Reference: 2.3) has been developed, which sets out the principles which will guide 'good design' during the project's design process. This includes details of how GI will be incorporated into design. The Design vision has been subject to a Design Council review, to which ECC have been a party, to ensure it embodies the principles of good design. A BNG Strategy has been developed, which includes details of how the Project will explore opportunity to deliver 10% net gain (Document Reference: 7.2). This includes details of how on and offsite BNG will be developed. An Outline Ecological Management Strategy (OLEMS) (Document Reference: 7.14) sets out the details proposal for ecological management during construction, operation and decommissioning. This includes details of habitat creation to increase habitat connectivity, and the enhancement of existing habitats.
An assessment of the capacity of nearby sites to absorb additional recreational use without causing detriment to the environment should be completed for new development sites. Access into these areas and buffering of the nearby sites should be incorporated into the design of new developments.	As an energy generation project, the Project will not give rise to new recreational activities during its operation. During construction, the Project will give rise to temporary diversion of public rights of way (PRoW) during onshore cable route construction, which will be reinstated following the completion of construction. Consideration of the effects of recreational users of these PRoW during construction is detailed in ES Chapter 32 Tourism and Recreation (Document Reference: 3.1.34).
Assess sites for their context, identity and connection: *Context* *Location and surroundings* *Natural features* *Views* *Topography*	North Falls has carried out various assessments of the onshore project area, including assessment of water resources, landscape, ecology and tourism and recreation. Details of the baseline recorded in these assessments can be found in the following ES chapters: ES Chapter 21 Water Resources and Flood Risk (Document Reference: 3.1.23) ES Chapter 23 Onshore Ecology (Document Reference: 3.1.25). ES Chapter 30 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Document Reference: 3.1.32). ES Chapter 21 Water Resources and Flood Risk (Document Reference: 3.1.23).

Recommendations for developers	Incorporation of GI within North falls
Hydrology *Microclimate (wind, heat etc)* *Wider green network* *Identity* *Landscape character* *Green and blue corridors* *Green spaces* *Biodiversity* *Habitats* *Connection* *Pedestrian movement (greenways)* *Vehicular movement, existing roads and transport connections* *Habitat allowing species migration.* *Water flow.*	ES Chapter 32 Tourism and Recreation (Document Reference: 3.1.34).
Protect and enhance existing biodiversity assets.	NFOW has set out mitigations strategies to protect and minimise the loss of existing habitats, biodiversity assets and improvements to existing GI. These are detailed in the OLEMS (Document Reference: 7.14). Example mitigation measures include the Project reducing the onshore cable route working width to 30m at hedgerow crossings where open cut trenching is proposed, to decrease the number of hedgerows removed and where not possible, replant them following the construction and operational phases. In addition, where practicable the Project shall use trenchless techniques, to protect all key sensitive linear features and existing GI in the surrounding areas, such as hedgerows, watercourses, veteran trees, woodland and ponds, those suitable for supporting key species. North Falls has set out proposals for habitat creation at the onshore substation to provide new woodland, grassland and aquatic habitats. These are detailed in the OLEMS (Document Reference: 7.14).
Incorporate either improvements to existing GI or the restoration, enhancement or creation of additional provision/areas, delivering multiple functions and benefits	
Incorporate either improvements to existing trees, woodland, landscape features and hedges or the restoration, enhancement or creation of additional provision/areas.	
Seek opportunities to improve habitat connectivity within sites and with ecological networks beyond development sites	Where habitats, such as hedgerows and trees are removed, as a consequence of the Project in the short term, they shall be reinstated and replaced with an enhanced hedgerow habitats

Recommendations for developers	Incorporation of GI within North falls
	using locally important and native species. This shall be upon with Essex Wildlife Trust and will overall improve the degree of connectivity of ecological networks across the site. The OLEMS (Document Reference: 7.14) includes details of how the landscape measures proposed at the onshore substation could be connected to wider habitat networks outside of the onshore project area.
Integrate biodiversity opportunities within new development	As part of BNG, OLEMS and landscaping plan, the Project will ensure habitat creation is implemented throughout the project to off-set losses in biodiversity within the onshore project area. This shall provide opportunities to integrate biodiversity within the Project and enhance the surrounding environment.
Make decisions informed by the best available ecological information and data.	Extensive bespoke ecological baseline surveys have been undertaken for the Project, and are provided in ES Appendices 23.1 - 23.9 (Document Reference: 3.3.30 – 3.3.38) and ES Appendices 24.1 – 24.8 (Document References: 3.3.40 – 3.3.47). This extensive habitat and species dataset has allowed for informed decision to be made about ecological enhancement and net gain proposals. Further details are provided in ES Chapter 23 Onshore Ecology (Document Reference: 3.1.25).
Ensure that the appropriate and relevant level of expertise, tailored to each project, is involved at the appropriate time (usually as early as possible).	
Secure the long-term management of existing and new habitats so that communities are engaged in the management and to enable further investment to be secured	Long-term management is discussed within the OLEMS (Document Reference: 7.14) and BNG Strategy (Document Reference: 7.22). The Project has committed to 30 year management and monitoring of any habitats created for the purposes of BNG, and 10 year aftercare to any landscaping proposals.
Development should facilitate evaporative cooling and shading in order to increase amenity and reduce heat load.	The Project's onshore substation landscaping proposals include provision of SuDS ponds, plus areas of 'copse' woodland which will improve the evaporative cooling and shading of the onshore substation works area respectively. Details are provided within the within the OLEMS (Document Reference: 7.14).
Development which facilitates safe access to watercourse, whilst improving water quality and opportunities for leisure and biodiversity	NFOW shall provide minimise the risk to water quality during construction by seeking to use trenchless crossings techniques for watercourse crossings where practicable. Where trenched techniques are used, "best practice measures" will be established to minimise disturbance of beds, banks and downstream habitats. In addition to providing safe access to watercourses where there are temporary dams used. This shall be carried out by keeping the time frame of temporary dams to a minimum and ensure flows are maintained to a reasonable standard through flumes or pumps.

Recommendations for developers	Incorporation of GI within North falls
	Furthermore, GI shall be incorporated into the Project in terms of habitat creation where possible, to help enhance the environment further. This shall include measures such as: Ecological improvements to watercourses; Drainage features and water management requirements; Pond creation; and Increased habitat connectivity. These measures will improve the quality of the water and increase biodiversity within these watercourses. Further details are provided within the within the OLEMS (Document Reference: 7.14).
To strike an appropriate balance between the need to minimise land, energy and transport requirements in new developments and integrating sufficient green spaces and other GI elements.	By ensuring that GI is incorporated into the Project's Design Vision (Document Reference: 2.3), there are safeguards in place during the design process to ensure that a balance between these factors is struck. As an energy infrastructure project which is unmanned during operation, development of new active travel routes are not required. However, measures are proposed to promote active travel during construction, including through the project Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (OCTMP) (Document Reference: 7.16), for site workers. A temporary footway/cycleway is also proposed down Bentley Road to ensure that active travel routes down the road can be maintained during construction. During construction, the Project will give rise to temporary diversion of PRoW during onshore cable route construction, which will be reinstated following the completion of construction. Consideration of the effects of recreational users of these PRoW during construction is detailed in ES Chapter 32 Tourism and Recreation (Document Reference: 3.1.34).
The establishment of green active travel routes (walking and cycling) which minimise the need for motor vehicle movements, ensuring new developments are located where they can be linked to services and facilities.	
Dissection of the linear network of cycleways, PRoW, bridleways and ecological corridors such as ancient woodlands, hedgerows, ditches and water environments are prevented. Developments should protect and enhance existing cycling and walking route.	
GI to be discussed in the pre-application consultations with the community, local planning authority and key agencies to help shape the masterplan at an early stage.	The provision of GI has been discussed as part of the North Falls Evidence Plan Process, which has led to the development of this GIP. Further details on the consultation process can be found in ES Chapter 7 Technical Consultation (Document Reference: 3.1.9) North Falls commit to incorporating a range of new GI within the project, through habitat creation OLEMS (Document Reference: 7.14), such as:
Create new GI either through on-site provision or financial contributions. Where on-site provision is not possible financial contributions will be required and be negotiated on a site by site basis;	

Recommendations for developers	Incorporation of GI within North falls
Maintain and, where appropriate, contribute to the network of GI i.e. public and private playing fields, recreational open spaces, parklands, allotments and water environments.	Increase habitat connectivity; Woodland creation and maintenance; Drainage features; Hibernacula for reptiles; Pond creation; Wildflower meadows; Installation of bird and bat boxes; Ecological improvements to watercourses. The habitat enhancements and creation shall create a range of benefits to local ecological networks.
The long-term management and sustainability of GI should be considered when incorporating these features into a development. Where the long-term management of the business park or industrial development would typically be undertaken by a management company, it would normally be possible to integrate GI maintenance with standard arrangements, however where management and maintenance are more fragmented this would need to be considered.	
Contribute to improving the health and well-being of the local and wider community;	
Developing strong & mutually beneficial relationships/ partnerships with local partners such as The Wildlife Trusts can assist in design, delivery and speedy approvals through planning" (ECC,2020).	The Project has engaged with Essex Wildlife Trust, Natural England and the Environment Agency as well as ECC and Tendring District Council as part of the North Falls Evidence Plan Process, which has led to the development of this GIP. Further details on the consultation process can be found in Chapter 7 Technical Consultation (Document Reference: 3.1.9).

6 Summary

45. This GIP has provided the national and local policy and legislative context for the development of this GIP. It has also then set out summary details of the editing GI provision within Essex and Tendring, and then provided details of how the project meets the recommendations for developers set out in Essex's GI Strategy (2020).

46. Evidence of existing GI in Essex has been identified and demonstrates the need for more GI and improvements to the existing provisions within the Tendring District. Overall, with the intention of optimising positive outcomes, such as "*environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity*" (Natural England, 2024).

47. North Falls has taken steps to ensure that it meets the recommendation for developers set out in Essex's GI Strategy (2020). Full details of this are set out in Table 3.

48. Following consent award, once detailed design has been undertaken North Falls proposes to provide updated information regarding GI provision within the Project's Written Landscaping Scheme, which is secured by DCO Requirement and which will be submitted to the LPA for approval prior to construction.

7 References

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