HELIOS RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECT

PINS Document Number:
EN010140/APP/7.1

Pursuant to:
APFP Regulation 5(2)(q)

Planning Statement

June 2024

Helios Renewable Energy Project

Planning Statement

Planning Inspectorate Reference: EN010140

June 2024

Helios Renewable Energy Project

Planning Statement

Planning Inspectorate Reference: EN010140

Prepared on behalf of Enso Green Holdings D Limited

Project Ref:	33627/A5/PS	
Status:	Draft	Final
Issue/Rev:	01	02
Date:	June 2023	June 2024
Prepared by:	OH/JG	AB/JG
Checked by:	GW	GW

Stantec
7 Soho Square
London
W1D 3QB

Tel: 020 7446 6888

COPYRIGHT

The contents of this document must not be copied or reproduced in whole or in part without the written consent of Stantec

All Stantec stationery is produced using recycled or FSC paper and vegetable oil-based inks.

CONTENTS

1. Introduction

1.1. Overview of the Proposed Development

1.1.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Enso Green Holdings D Limited (the 'Applicant') in relation to an application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) for the Helios Renewable Energy Project (the 'Proposed Development'). The application for the DCO (the 'DCO Application') is submitted to the Planning Inspectorate, which will provide a recommendation on whether to grant a DCO. The Secretary of State (SoS) for Energy Security and Net Zero will make a final decision pursuant to the Planning Act 2008 (PA 2008).

1.1.2. The Proposed Development comprises the installation of ground mounted solar arrays, battery energy storage system (BESS) and associated development comprising grid connection infrastructure and other infrastructure integral to the construction, operation (including maintenance) and decommissioning of the development for the delivery of over 50 megawatts (MW) of electricity.

1.1.3. The DCO Application Order Limits comprise 475 hectares (ha) of land (the 'Site'), located wholly within the host authority area of North Yorkshire Council (NYC). The Proposed Development has a design life of 40 years.

1.1.4. The Order Limits for the Proposed Development are shown on **Location and Order Limits Plan [EN010140/APP/2.1].**

1.2. The Applicant

1.2.1. Enso Green Holdings D Limited (the 'Applicant') is a joint-venture partnership between Enso Energy and Cero Generation. Enso Energy is one of the UK's most experienced renewable energy developers, with an unparalleled focus on solar energy. Cero Generation is a leading solar energy company, working across Europe to support the transition to a net-zero future.

1.2.2. Further information on the Applicant is provided within a separate **Funding Statement [EN010140/APP/4.3]** that will be submitted as part of the DCO Application.

1.3. Legislative Context

1.3.1. Section 4 of this Planning Statement sets out the legislative context, including the relationship between the PA 2008, National Policy Statements (NPS), and the Proposed Development.

1.3.2. The Proposed Development is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) under Sections 14(1)(a) and 15(2) of the PA 2008, as the Proposed Development is for the construction of an onshore generating station in England with a capacity exceeding 50MW. As such, the Proposed Development requires development consent through a DCO to be able to proceed. The PA 2008 prescribes that the SoS is responsible for determining an application for development consent, with the power to appoint an Examining Authority (ExA) of appointed person(s) to manage and examine the application. The ExA will make the procedural decisions and examine the application, making a recommendation to the SoS, who will then decide whether to grant a DCO.

1.3.3. DCO applications are determined in accordance with either Section 104 or 105 of the PA 2008. Section 104 applies where a relevant National Policy Statement (NPS) has effect in relation to the development. Alternatively, Section 105 of the PA 2008 applies where no relevant NPS is in place.

1.3.4. Section 104 of the PA 2008 sets out what the SoS must have regard to when deciding the DCO application. This includes:

(a) any national policy statement which has effect in relation to development of the description to which the application relates (a 'relevant NPS');

(b) any local impact report (within the meaning given by section 60(3)) submitted to the Secretary of State before the deadline specified in a notice under section 60(2);

(c) any matters prescribed in relation to development of the description to which the application relates; and

(d) any other matters which the Secretary of State thinks are both important and relevant to the Secretary of State's decision.

1.3.5. Updated versions of the NPS for Energy (EN-1, EN-2, EN-3, EN-4 and EN-5) were designated and came into force on 17 January 2024. It is considered that the

following designated NPS have effect in relation to the Proposed Development, and are therefore relevant NPSs for the purposes of Section 104(2)(a) of the PA 2008:

- Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (NPS EN-1);
- National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (NPS EN-3); and
- National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (NPS EN-5).

1.3.6. As such, it is considered that the Proposed Development should be determined in accordance with Section 104 of the PA 2008.

1.3.7. Section 115 of the PA 2008 states that a DCO can include consents for 'associated development', which is development that is not an NSIP in its own right but is associated with the NSIP. The NSIP and associated development works are set out in Schedule 1 to the **draft DCO [EN010140/APP/3.1]** and explained in the **Explanatory Memorandum to the draft DCO [EN010140/APP/3.2]**.

1.3.8. A DCO may also include provisions which remove the requirement to obtain other prescribed consents. Details of the consents and authorisations included within the DCO Application are explained in the **Explanatory Memorandum to the draft DCO [EN010140/APP/3.2]**. A **Consents and Licences Position Statement [EN010140/APP/3.3]** explains the other statutory consents and licenses that are required in connection with the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Proposed Development and which will be sought separately from the DCO.

1.3.9. The Proposed Development is an 'EIA development' for the purposes of the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the 'EIA Regulations'). This means that an Environmental Impact Assessment must be undertaken in respect of the Proposed Development. The Applicant has prepared an **Environmental Statement (ES) [EN010140/APP/6.1]** which accompanies the DCO Application. The **ES** is based upon the **EIA Scoping Opinion [EN010140/APP/6.3.2.2]** adopted by the Planning Inspectorate on behalf of the SoS. A summary of the environmental matters considered in the **ES [EN010140/APP/6.1]** are discussed in the Planning Appraisal in Section 5 of this Planning Statement.

1.4. Pre-Application Consultation

1.4.1. This Applicant has undertaken extensive consultation throughout the design and development of the Proposed Development. This is described in the **Consultation**

Report [EN010140/APP/5.1], and includes details of the consultation undertaken during the following:

- Early engagement with local authorities and statutory consultees;
- Non-statutory public consultation;
- EIA scoping;
- Ongoing stakeholder engagement to inform the design developments;
- Statutory consultation with the public and statutory consultees, including publication and consultation on preliminary environmental information; and
- Discussion and agreement of the content of the Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC).

1.4.2. Ongoing consultation between the Applicant and North Yorkshire Council (NYC) (the host authority) has involved regular meetings with relevant specialist officers, at which environmental effects and mitigation have been discussed and updates on the Proposed Development, such as its design evolution, have been provided. Discussions with NYC have informed the design and development of the Proposed Development and the content of the DCO Application, including the **ES [EN010140/APP/6.1]**. The details of engagement with the host authority are set out in the **Consultation Report [EN010140/APP/5.1]**.

1.4.3. The Applicant has also undertaken regular engagement with the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) throughout the preparation of the DCO Application. Engagement with PINS has enabled the Applicant to discuss consultation responses received during preparation of the DCO Application and the statutory consultation generally. Engagement has also enabled PINS to ensure the team in place to address the DCO Application upon submission.

1.5. Purpose and Structure of this Planning Statement

1.5.1. The purpose of the Planning Statement is to provide an overview of the Proposed Development and the findings set out in the supporting material in an easily accessible format. It considers and assesses the Proposed Development against relevant planning policy and other matters the Applicant considers likely to be important and relevant to the SoS's decision.

1.5.2. The remainder of the Planning Statement is structured as follows:

- Section 2: The Order Limits and Surrounding Context describes the existing land uses and characteristics of the Site and its surroundings, including planning history;
- Section 3: The Proposed Development provides a summary of the Proposed Development;
- Section 4: Legislative and Policy Context outlines the decision-making framework; the planning policy context for the Proposed Development; and other legislation and policy considered by the Applicant to be important and relevant;
- Section 5: Statement of Need summarises the need for the Proposed Development;
- Section 6: Planning Appraisal explains the Proposed Development's compliance with the relevant NPS's and planning policy that the Applicant expects to be important and relevant to the decision; and
- Section 7: Conclusions and Planning Balance presents the overall planning balance and conclusions of this Planning Statement.

1.5.3. The following appendices are including with this Planning Statement:

- Appendix A: Glossary
- Appendix B: NPS Accordance Tables
- Appendix C: Local Policy Accordance Tables
- Appendix D: Alternative Site Assessment

1.6. Relationship of the Planning Statement to the DCO Application

1.6.1. In assessing the Proposed Development against relevant policy and demonstrating the overall planning case for the Proposed Development, this Planning Statement draws upon the conclusions of other documents accompanying the DCO Application and should be read alongside the following application documents in particular:

- Draft DCO **[EN010140/APP/3.1]**
- Consultation Report **[EN010140/APP/5.1]**
- Environmental Statement (ES), Figures, Appendices, and Non-Technical

Summary **[EN010140/APP/6.1, 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4 respectively)**

- Design and Access Statement **[EN010140/APP/7.2]**
- Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan **[EN010140/APP/6.3.5.1]**
- Outline Operational Environmental Management Plan **[EN010140/APP/6.3.5.4]**
- Outline Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan **[EN010140/APP/6.3.5.3]**
- Habitats Regulations Assessment Report **[EN010140/APP/6.3.8.9]**
- Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan **[EN010140/APP/6.3.7.9]**
- Outline Skills and Employment Plan **[EN010140/APP/6.3.13.1]**

1.6.2. The **Section 55 Checklist [EN010140/APP/1.2]** and the **Guide to the Application [EN010140/APP/1.4]** set out the structure of the DCO Application and how the DCO Application satisfies the relevant requirements of legislation and guidance concerning the preparation, assessment and submission of applications, including:

- The Infrastructure Planning Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure (APFP) Regulations;
- The Infrastructure Planning (Compulsory Acquisition) Regulations 2010;
- The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017;
- The Department for Communities and Local Government's Planning Act 2008: Application form guidance (2013); and
- The Planning Inspectorate's Advice Note Six: Preparation and submission of application documents (2012).

1.6.3. The **Electronic Application Index [EN010140/APP/1.5]** provides a full schedule of documents submitted with the DCO Application.

2. The Order Limits and Surrounding Context

2.1. Introduction

2.1.1. All land falling within the Site boundary and DCO application boundary is shown on the **Location and Order Limits Plan [EN010140/APP/2.1]** (the 'Order Limits'). The Order Limits cover an area of 475ha (approximately 1,173.75 acres), located entirely within the host authority area of NYC.

2.1.2. This section provides an overview of the Order Limits and surrounds, with a more detailed description provided in **Chapter 3: Site and Development Description [EN010140/APP/6.1.3] of the ES.**

2.1.3. As detailed on **ES Figure 3.2: Parameter Plan [EN010140/APP/6.2.3.2]**, land within the Order Limits comprises the following:

- 'Development Area' – 392.87ha (all land within the Order Limits, with the exception of the Underground Cable Connection Area and Underground Grid Connection Cable Area described below);
- 'Underground Cable Connection Area' – 79.82ha (shown in yellow); and
- 'Underground Grid Connection Cable Area' – 2.31ha (shown in pink).

2.2. The Site

2.2.1. The Development Area is the area within the Order Limits in which the solar PV arrays, onsite substation, BESS and associated infrastructure and accesses will be located. This area generally comprises agricultural land.

2.2.2. The Underground Cable Connection Area is an area within the Order Limits in which underground cable connections will be located. These are cables that transfer the electricity generated from the solar PV arrays to the onsite substation and electricity infrastructure. The Underground Cable Connection Area is located within the centre of the Site and comprises agricultural land.

2.2.3. The Underground Grid Connection Cable Area is an area within the Order Limits in which underground grid connection cables will be located. These cables transfer the electricity generated on Site to the National Grid Drax 132kV Substation located at Drax Power Station. The Underground Grid Connection Cable Area comprises the

A645 road corridor, land beside the A645 road corridor adjacent to the Drax railway, part of the access road to Drax Power Station identified as Station Road, part of New Road, as well as the National Grid Drax 132kV Substation itself. The cables will connect to the National Grid Drax 132kV Substation from New Road, with access to the substation taken from Station Road.

2.3. Site Surroundings

2.3.1. Selby is the principal settlement within the area in the vicinity of the Site. A number of smaller settlements are dispersed throughout the area, including Camblesforth, Hirst Courtney, Temple Hirst, Carlton, Drax, Barlow and Burn. The industrial complexes of Drax and (the partially demolished) Eggborough Power Stations form prominent features in the surrounding area. The Burn airfield (formerly RAF Burn, also referred to as Selby airfield) is located to the west of the Site.

2.3.2. The Site contains 44 fields, as shown on **ES Figure 3.1: Field Boundaries Plan [EN010140/APP/6.2.3.1]**. The main part of the Site sits within a wider area of land bounded to the north-east by the A1041, to the west by agricultural fields between the Site and the Selby Branch of the East Coast Mainline railway further west, and to the south by agricultural fields and agricultural development fronting Hirst Road. The surrounding landscape is characterised by large, irregular-shaped fields delineated by partially denuded hedgerows or drainage ditches. Occasional woodland blocks and tree belts are also present, but the landscape is primarily flat and open.

2.3.3. Transport routes are a notable feature in the vicinity of the Site. In addition to the Selby Branch of the East Coast Mainline railway to the west of the Site, the M62 motorway and A63 extend on east – west alignments beyond the southern and northern extents of the Site, respectively. Public Rights of Way ('PRoW') cross the Site and the wider landscape, often following farm tracks or rural lanes. The Trans Pennine Trail long distance walking and cycling route extends south from Selby and in close proximity to the western and southern parts of the Site boundary.

2.3.4. For information on the surrounding historic, landscape, and environmental statutory and non-statutory designated sites, please refer to **Chapter 6: Cultural Heritage [EN010140/APP/6.1.6]**, **Chapter 7: Landscape and Views [EN010140/APP/6.1.7],** and **Chapter 8: Biodiversity [EN010140/APP/6.1.8] of the ES.**

2.4. Relevant Planning History

2.4.1. The Site is largely agricultural, as such the relevant planning history of the land within the Order Limits is limited. There are no pending applications for planning permission or existing planning permissions across the Development Area and Underground Cable Connection Area that may affect the Proposed Development. However, the following Town and Country Planning Act (TCPA) applications have overlapping red line boundaries with the Underground Grid Connection Cable Area:

- Development of a ground-mounted solar farm including associated infrastructure [2021/0788/EIA] at land north and south of Camela Lane, Camblesforth, Selby. The application was submitted and validated in June 2021, and granted planning permission by the former Selby District Council on 8 July 2022 (a non-material amendment [ZG2024/0541/MAN2] is currently under consideration by council, received on 22 May 2024 and validated on 23 May 2024);
- Installation of a new compressor house [2022/1125/FULM] at Drax Power Station, Drax Power Station New Road, Drax, Selby, North Yorkshire, YO8 8PQ. The application was received on 28 September 2022, validated on 2 May 2023 and granted planning permission by NYC on 4 August 2023;
- Development of ground mounted solar farm including associated infrastructure [2023/0128/EIA] at land south of A645, Wade House Lane, Drax, Selby, North Yorkshire, YO8 8PN. The application was received 2 February 2023 and validated 23 February 2023. The application was granted planning permission on 9 January 2024.;
- Installation of portable relay room and associated works [ZG2023/0381/FUL] at Drax Power Station, Selby, North Yorkshire, YO8 8PH. The application was received and validated on the 4 April 2023 with planning permission granted on 22 June 2023 by NYC; and
- Development of 29 dwellings and associated infrastructure [ZG2023/0724/FULM] on land Off Junction Of A645 And A1041 Selby Road Camblesforth North Yorkshire. The red line boundary for this application, being it's site access, overlaps with the grid connection cable area. This application was submitted on 14 July 2023 and validated on 19 July 2023, with a decision pending.

2.4.2. The Order Limits associated with the Underground Grid Connection Cable Area also

overlap with the red line boundary of the Drax Bioenergy with Carbon Capture Storage Project DCO [EN010120], at Drax Power Station, Selby, North Yorkshire, YO8 8PH. The application was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate on 24 May 2022, accepted for examination on 20 June 2022 and granted development consent by the SoS on 16 January 2024.

2.4.3. Two of the approved TCPA applications, as well as the approved DCO application at Drax Power Station (2022/1125/FULM, ZG2023/0381/FUL, and EN010120), include the access road to the Drax Power Station and National Grid Drax 132kV Substation within their red line boundaries.

2.4.4. The red line boundary for the approved ground mounted solar farm application (2023/0128/EIA) south of the A645 overlaps with the Proposed Development Order Limits along the A645, where the application proposes to locate a substation control room and electricity distribution site. Similarly, the red line boundary for the ground mounted solar farm (2021/0788/EIA), which was approved in June 2022, includes a small portion of the A645, which also overlaps with the Proposed Development.

2.4.5. The Proposed Development is unlikely to interact with the application to install a new compressor house at Drax, due to works being located within the Drax Power Station themselves and not within the National Grid Drax 132kV Substation.

2.4.6. Where relevant, the cumulative assessments included within the **ES [EN010140/APP/6.1]** technical chapters assess the environmental implications of the above planning application in conjunction with the Proposed Development.

3. The Proposed Development

3.1. Introduction

3.1.1. This section describes the main components of the Proposed Development and the activities that would take place during the construction, operation (including maintenance) and decommissioning phases.

3.1.2. A full description of the Proposed Development is provided in **Chapter 3: Site and Development Description [EN010140/APP/6.1.3] of the ES**.

3.2. Components of the Proposed Development

3.2.1. The Proposed Development comprises the construction, operation (including maintenance) and decommissioning of ground mounted solar PV panel arrays, BESS and supporting infrastructure.

3.2.2. The Proposed Development will be located entirely within the Order Limits. All of the works that form part of the Proposed Development are listed in Schedule 1 of the draft DCO.

3.2.3. The key infrastructure for the Proposed Development is shown on **ES Figure 3.2: Parameter Plan [EN010140/APP/6.2.3.2]** and includes:

- Solar PV modules;
- Mounting structures;
- Field stations;
- On-Site Substation and BESS compound;
- Distribution cables;
- Grid connection cables;
- Fencing, security and ancillary infrastructure;
- Access;
- Landscape and ecological enhancements; and
- Archaeological mitigation.

3.2.4. A brief summary of each of these components is provided in further detail below, with further details on the proposed components in **Chapter 3: Site and Development Description [EN010140/APP/6.1.3] of the ES** and the **Design and Access Statement [EN010140/APP/7.2]**.

Solar PV Modules

3.2.5. The Proposed Development will consist of solar PV modules placed on mounting structures arranged in rows (known as 'solar PV tables'). The solar PV array is a distinct group of PV tables which are grouped together. A group of solar PV modules that are connected to one another are known as 'solar PV strings'.

The DCO application seeks flexibility for different configurations of solar PV modules. The final elevations of the solar PV modules will be influenced by various design factors such as local topography, selection of solar PV module type and configuration. **Mounting Structures**

3.2.6. The panels will utilise a Single Access Tracker ('SAT') system, oriented north-south and will tilt east-west. The panel framework, as shown on **ES Figure 3.4: Solar PV Panel Elevations [EN010140/APP/6.2.3.4]** in the ES. The SAT system allows for panels to be stowed horizontally during flood events.

3.2.7. The solar PV modules will be ground mounted to a piled metal frame of anodized aluminium alloy or galvanized steel with rough matte finish.

Field Stations

3.2.8. As a 'worst-case scenario', central inverters have been assumed instead of a string system for the Proposed Development, however for the purposes of this Planning Statement, this description discusses both central inverter stations and string inverters.

Inverter Stations

3.2.9. Central Inverter Stations are characterised by containerised units, dispersed throughout the solar PV modules. These stations house an inverter, transformer and switchgear, however it should be noted that these elements may also stand alone).

String Inverters

3.2.10. String inverters, as an alternative to Central Inverter Stations, are small enough to be fitted to the mounting structures beneath the solar PV modules. A string inverter is required for every solar PV string (that is, a group of solar panels wired together) and will be sited within the footprint of the solar PV table.

3.2.11. Where string inverters are used, specific string transformers are required. These would be distributed throughout the Solar modules within containers, alongside switchgears.

On-Site Substation and Energy Storage Compound

3.2.12. The on-Site 132 kilovolt ('kV') Substation and the BESS will be housed together in a compound.

3.2.13. The Substation will comprise an earthing transformer, surge arresters, earth switch, circuit breaker, 33kV intake switch room and generator transformers. The component of the greatest height within the substation is the generator transformer, standing approximately 6.5m high, as shown on **ES Figure 3.6: 132 kV Substation [EN010140/APP/6.2.3.6]** in the ES.

3.2.14. The BESS will include battery containers, a control room, an inverter transformer and switchroom.

3.2.15. Due to flood risk, the substation and energy storage compound will be surrounded by a flood defence earth bund. This bund will be designed to be raised at least 600mm above the combined fluvial and tidal flood level, to protect the equipment from inundation. The bund also acts as a visual barrier, screening the substation and BESS from any visual receptors. Flood risk and the earth bund are discussed further in Section 6 of this Planning Statement and **Chapter 9: Water Environment [EN010140/APP/6.1.9]** of the ES.

3.2.16. There is minimal concern from a health and safety perspective. BESS are considered inherently safe and have a very low risk of fire. In-built fire suppression systems ensure any risk of fire will be contained. The Applicant has commissioned a specialise fire safety consultant and consulted with the relevant fire safety consultees and health and safety experts on this matter. Further details are included in **ES Appendix 3.1: Outline BESS Safety Management Plan [EN010140/APP/6.3.3.1]** and the **Site Specific Risk Engagement Document (SSRED) [EN010140/APP/7.4]**.

Distribution Cables

3.2.17. Low voltage distribution cabling between solar PV modules and the inverters will typically be located above ground level, fixed to the mounting structure, and then trenched underground between the solar PV tables and the field stations. The dimensions of trenching will vary subject to the number of underground cables and the number of ducts they contain but will typically be up to 1.5m wide with a minimum depth of 0.9m, dependent on the method of installation and ground conditions.

3.2.18. Higher rated voltage cables (33kV) are required between field stations and the on-Site substation. The 33kV cables will be buried underground in a trench typically up to 1.5m wide with a minimum depth of 0.9m. The flexibility to locate electrical and other cables within the Solar Farm Zone (as shown on Figure 3.2 Parameter Plan) is required to ensure that the Proposed Development can be implemented as efficiently as possible.

3.2.19. The existing above-ground and below-ground utilities across the Site are not proposed to be altered by the Proposed Development. Information on the easements relating to these assets has been obtained and incorporated into the design of the Proposed Development as part of the design process. These are shown in **ES Figure 2.1: Utilities Plan [EN010140/APP/6.2.2.1]**.

Grid Connection Cables

3.2.20. The Site will connect to the National Grid Drax 132kV Substation at the Drax Power Station via underground cabling, as shown on **ES Figure 3.2: Parameter Plan [EN010140/APP/6.2.3.2]**, in the ES.

3.2.21. The voltage for the underground grid connection cable will be up to 132kV. The grid connection route comprises the A645 road corridor, the access road to Drax Power Station and the National Grid Drax 132kV Substation and the Proposed Development substation itself.

Fencing, Security and Ancillary Infrastructure

Fencing

3.2.22. As shown in **ES Figure 3.11: Fence and Gate Elevations [EN010140/APP/6.2.3.11]**, the Proposed Development will be surrounded by plain wire deer fencing to a maximum height of 2.1m to the top of the gate post. Badger/fox/small mammal gates will be fitted at appropriate points to enable free access if required.

3.2.23. The BESS will be surrounded by a welded steel wire mesh fence, at a maximum height of 2.4m, as shown in **ES Figure 3.12: BESS Battery Fence and Gate [EN010140/APP/6.2.3.12]**.

Construction Compounds

3.2.24. During the construction and decommissioning phases, up to six temporary compound(s) will be required, as well as temporary access tracks, to allow access to all land within the Site.

CCTV

3.2.25. Pole mounted internal facing closed circuit television ('CCTV') will stand at a minimum of 2.5m to a maximum of 3m as shown in **ES Figure 3.13: CCTV Elevations [EN010140/APP/6.2.3.13]**.

Lighting

3.2.26. During construction and decommissioning, most activities can be undertaken during daylight hours. However, at certain times of the year, some works lighting may be required. In these instances, temporary lighting will be deployed, however this will be avoided as far as practical with this lighting generally limited to compounds only. The lighting of the on-site Substation would be in accordance with Health and Safety requirements, particularly around any emergency exits.

Access

3.2.27. As shown on **ES Figure 3.14: Construction Vehicle Route [EN010140/APP/6.2.3.14]**, vehicular access to the Site during the construction and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development will be taken from two points

on the A1041 at the eastern boundary of the Site, as shown on **ES Figure 3.2: Parameter Plan [EN010140/APP/6.2.3.2]**. Although not yet determined, access to the grid connection cable corridor is anticipated from the A645.

3.2.28. During the operational phase, vehicular access will be limited to maintenance visits and is anticipated to remain from the M62/A645/A1041 via the access/egress points identified previously. **ES Figure 3.15: Internal Access Road Detail [EN010140/APP/6.2.3.15]** shows the track cross section.

3.2.29. Internal access tracks will cover a width of up to 6m and be constructed of permeable aggregate to enable drainage. Passing places will be provided to enable HGVs to pass, the location of these will be confirmed along the tracks.

3.2.30. Access to existing PRoW will be maintained through all phases of the Proposed Development. Should temporary diversion be required to ensure the safety of PRoW users, these will be for a short period during construction and decommissioning.

Landscape and Ecological Enhancements

3.2.31. The existing hedgerows, woodland, ditches and ponds within the Site will be retained, with the exception of small breaks for new access tracks, security fencing and cable routing. Any hedgerow or watercourse crossings will be kept to a minimum width. Where a cable route crosses a hedgerow, the hedgerow will be reinstated after construction.

3.2.32. The proposed landscape plan is shown on **ES Figure 3.16: Landscape Strategy Plan [EN010140/APP/3.2.3.16]**, with further details on landscaping provided in **Chapter 7 Landscape and Views [EN010140/APP/6.1.7]** and **Chapter 8 Biodiversity [EN010140/APP/6.1.8]** of the ES.

Archaeological Mitigation

3.2.33. The Proposed Development areas has evolved alongside the assessment of Cultural Heritage in order to ensure the potential effect to heritage assets is reduced. The mitigation proposed is as set out in **Chapter 6: Cultural Heritage [EN010140/APP/6.1.6]** of the ES and **ES Appendix 6.2: Archaeological Mitigation Strategy [EN010140/APP/6.3.6.2]**.

3.3. Construction Period Activities

3.3.1. The construction of the Proposed Development is anticipated to commence in 2027/2028 and span a period of approximately 12 months. On this basis, the Proposed Development would become operational in 2029.

3.3.2. The activities to be completed on-site during construction are:

- Site establishment and enabling works for construction, including;
    - Ground clearance, where necessary;
    - Delivery of construction materials, plant and equipment;
    - Establishment of site fencing;
    - Establishment of construction compounds;
    - Construction of internal access roads;
    - Setting out the positions for the infrastructure and equipment;
    - Trenching for cable routes; and
- Construction of solar PV array, including;
    - Installation of foundations and piling;
    - Construction of on-site electrical infrastructure to facilitate the generation of electricity such as solar PV framing and panels and substation;
    - Laying of cables including Point of Connection cable groundworks and string cabling between the PV array;
    - Point of Connection electrical works;
    - Installation of security lighting and CCTV; and
    - Installation of additional fencing and gates.
- Testing and commissioning;
- Site Clearance and compound removal; and
- Landscape planting and ecological enhancements.

3.3.3. The plant and equipment anticipated to be used for the activities outlined above are as follows:

- Digger;

- Tractor with trailer;
- Tractor with hedge cutter;
- Compactor;
- Piling rig;
- Mobile crane;
- Cement mixer; and
- 4 x 4 with trailer.

3.3.4. In line with NYC's suggestions, works at the Site throughout the various phases will generally take place between the following hours:

- Monday to Friday: 08:00-18:00
- Saturday: 08:00-13:00
- Sunday and bank holidays: No work.

3.3.5. It should be noted on some occasions there may be a need for works outside of these hours, however this will be avoided where possible, with environmental control measures in place to mitigate any impacts.

Controls to Protect the Environment

3.3.6. A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be submitted to and approved by the relevant planning authority, and this will be secured by the Requirements in the DCO. The CEMP for each phase will be in accordance with the **ES Appendix 5.1: outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (oCEMP) [EN010140/APP/6.3.5.1]** submitted as part of the DCO Application. This will detail the environmental controls and best practice to minimise any adverse effects.

3.3.7. A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) will be submitted to and approved by the relevant planning authority and secured by the Requirements in the DCO. The CTMP, which will also include provisions concerning the management of PRoW, will be in accordance with the details provided in the **outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (oCTMP) [EN010140/APP/6.3.5.2]**, submitted as part of the DCO application. This will regulate the delivery of materials and movement of construction

personnel to the Site during the construction phase. Further detail is provided in **Chapter 10: Transport and Access [EN010140/APP/6.1.10]** of the ES**.**

3.4. Operational Phase

3.4.1. Once operational, the activities on Site are expected to consist of maintenance activities such as servicing of plant and equipment and vegetation management. Movement within the Site is likely to be minimal and undertaken by quad bike or small farm utility vehicles as outlined within **ES Appendix 7.9: Outline Landscape Ecology Management Plan (oLEMP) [EN010140/APP/6.3.7.9]**.

3.4.2. Throughout the operational phase, the Site will continue to be used for grazing purposes. Considerations to support this have been embedded into the design of the Proposed Development. This is discussed further in **ES Appendix 14.3: outline Soil Management Plan [EN010140/APP/6.3.14.3]**.

3.5. Decommissioning Phase

3.5.1. Following cessation of energy generation and exportation at the Site, all PV modules, mounting structure, cabling, inverters and transformers will be removed and recycled, or disposed of in accordance with good practice and market conditions at that time.

3.5.2. Similar to construction, decommissioning of the Site is anticipated to take approximately 12 months. During the decommissioning phase all site infrastructure, including compounds and access tracks, will be removed and action taken to remediate the Site, in accordance with any requirements included in the DCO.

3.5.3. The mitigation measures for the Proposed Development's decommissioning phase will be set out in ES Appendix 5.3: outline Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (oDEMP) [EN010140/APP/ 6.3.5.3], which will be secured through DCO requirement and will be agreed with NYC in advance of the commencement of decommissioning.

4. Legislation, Policy and Need

4.1. Introduction

4.1.1. This section demonstrates compliance with the legislative and policy framework for the Proposed Development. It includes a review of the need for project, as set out in the adopted policy.

4.2. Legislative Context

4.3. Planning Act 2008 ('PA 2008')

4.3.1. The PA 2008 sets out the statutory process and thresholds for determining whether projects are considered a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) and hence require a DCO.

4.3.2. As defined by Section 14(1)(a), 15(1) and 15(2)(c) of the PA 2008, the Proposed Development is classified as an NSIP as it is a generating station that has a capacity of over 50MW. In accordance with Section 31 of the PA 2008, the Proposed Development, as defined as an NSIP, requires a DCO.

4.3.3. Section 103 of the PA 2008 states that the SoS has the function of deciding to grant a DCO. Section 104 of the Act provides the framework for deciding a DCO application where a relevant National Policy Statement (NPS) applies.

4.3.4. Section 104 states that if a relevant NPS applies, the SoS must have regard to:

a) Any national policy statement which has effect in relation to development of the description to which the application relates;

b) Any local impact report;

c) Any matters prescribed in relation to development of the description to which the application relates; and

d) Any other matters which the SoS thinks are important and relevant to the SoS decision.

4.3.5. The SoS must decide an application in accordance with any relevant NPS, unless:

a) That deciding the application in accordance with any relevant NPS would lead to

the UK being in breach of any of its international obligations;

b) That deciding the application in accordance with any relevant NPS would lead to the SoS being in breach of any duty imposed on the Secretary of State by or under any enactment;

c) That deciding the application in accordance with any relevant NPS would be unlawful by virtue of any enactment;

d) That the adverse impact of the proposed development would outweigh its benefits; or

e) e) That any condition prescribed for deciding an application otherwise than in accordance with a national policy statement is met.

4.3.6. The Government undertook a review and update of the energy NPSs, to ensure they accurately reflected the strategic policies and strategy published in the Energy White Paper (December 2020) and to help ensure the UK is best equipped to achieve its decarbonisation and energy security targets. The new energy NPSs were designated and came into force in January 2024.

4.3.7. Section 104 of the PA 2008 is considered to apply to the Proposed Development, as NPS EN-1, EN-3 and EN-5 all contain provisions which apply to the Proposed Development. While EN-1 is applicable as the overarching energy policy statement, EN-3 includes a specific section on solar PV generation with EN-5 applying given the presence of electricity network infrastructure and underground cables as associated development. The Applicant considers that the following designated NPSs fall under the PA 2008 Section 104(a) and will be of importance and relevance to the SoS decision:

- Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (NPS EN-1 (2024));
- National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy (NPS EN-3 (2024)); and
- National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (NPS EN-5 (2024)).

4.4. National Policy Statements

Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (NPS EN-1)

4.4.1. NPS EN-1 outlines the overall national energy policy for the implementation of

significant energy infrastructure projects. Paragraph 1.2.1 states that NPS EN-1, combined with any technology specific energy NPS, provides the primary policy for decisions on nationally significant energy infrastructure.

4.4.2. NPS EN-1 reflects the government's commitment to reducing carbon emissions, ensuring energy security and promoting affordability. Recognising the heavy reliance on fossil fuels for households and transportation, NPS EN-1 emphasises the need to decrease dependency on high-carbon fossil fuels and transition to a low-carbon energy mix.

4.4.3. Part 2 of the NPS EN-1 outlines the policy framework established by Central Government for major energy infrastructure. This framework encompasses various objectives, including meeting legally binding targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, transitioning to a net zero carbon economy, as set out in the Net Zero Strategy (October 2021), decarbonising the power sector, ensuring energy security, reforming the electricity market, and meeting the goals of sustainable development.

4.4.4. Part 3 of NPS EN-1 emphasises the importance of considering the need for energy developments when evaluating applications. Paragraph 3.1.1 states that the Government believes that achieving its energy objectives is dependent on the presence of significant amounts of large-scale energy infrastructure. However, it acknowledges in Paragraph 3.1.2 that developing such infrastructure may result in significant residual adverse impacts. Nevertheless, the policy stresses the urgency of the need for such infrastructure. Therefore, considerations of need should be given significant weight by the SoS in their decision-making.

4.4.5. NPS EN-1 recognises that meeting energy objectives necessitates the development of large-scale renewable energy infrastructure. Paragraph 3.2.1 outlines that this type of development is required to *"ensure our supply of energy always remains secure, reliable, affordable, and consistent with net zero emissions in 2050".*

4.4.6. Paragraph 3.3.14 of NPS EN-1 sets out the role of the government in facilitating the private sector in renewable energy development. It states that the government will *'work to ensure that there are market frameworks which promote effective competition and deliver an affordable, secure and reliable energy system'.*

4.4.7. In terms of the proposed on-site energy storage within the Proposed Development, paragraph 3.3.4 of NPS EN-1 acknowledges the need for different types of electricity

infrastructure, including electricity storage, which are needed to deliver our energy objectives. Paragraph 3.3.6 outlines the need for these different types of electricity infrastructure, *"Storage and interconnection can provide flexibility, meaning that less of the output of plant is wasted as it can either be stored or exported when there is excess production. They can also supply electricity when domestic demand is higher than generation, supporting security of supply. This means that the total amount of generating plant capacity required to meet peak demand is reduced, bringing significant system savings alongside demand side response (up to £12bn per year by 2050). Storage can also reduce the need for new network infrastructure."* However, Paragraph 3.3.6 continues to acknowledge that these technologies are insufficient to meet the anticipated increase in total demand alone and therefore cannot fully replace the need for new generating capacity.

4.4.8. Paragraph 3.3.20 sets out the expectation that a secure, reliable, affordable, net zero consistent system in 2050 is likely to be composed primarily of wind and solar. As well as additional generating plants, new storage and interconnectors are required to provide increased flexibility.

4.4.9. Paragraph 3.3.57 states that based on the Net Zero Strategy and the government's commitment to a 78% reduction in GHG emissions by 2035, all of our electricity needs to come from low carbon sources by 2035, while meeting a 40-60% increase in demand. Paragraph 3.3.58 therefore recognises that *"there is an urgent need for new (and particularly low carbon) electricity NSIPs to be brought forward as soon as possible".* The government has concluded that there is a critical national priority for the provision of nationally significant low carbon infrastructure, as set out in paragraph 3.3.62.

4.4.10. Part 4 of NPS EN-1 provides guidance on the general policies for the submission and assessment of applications relating to energy infrastructure. Overall, Part 4 of NPS EN-1 acknowledges the urgent need for renewable energy infrastructure and indicates a presumption in favour of granting consent unless any more specific and relevant policies set out in the relevant NPSs clearly indicate that consent should be refused.

4.4.11. Paragraph 4.1.6 sets out that *"the Secretary of State should take into account environmental, social and economic benefits and adverse impacts, at national, regional and local levels".* Part 4 continues to set out the contents required within an

Environmental Statement to inform the Secretary of State of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the project. Paragraph 4.3.2 states that the EIA Regulations *'specifically refer to effects on population, human health, biodiversity, land, soil, water, air, climate, the landscape, material assets and cultural heritage, and the interaction between them'.* The applicant must set out information on the likely significant environment, social and economic effects of the development, and how any likely significant negative effects would be avoided, reduced, mitigated or compensated for, following the mitigation hierarchy.

4.4.12. NPS EN-1 includes information on SoS decision making process. Paragraph 4.3.24 states that *'The Secretary of State should not refuse an application for development on one site simply because fewer adverse impacts would result from developing similar infrastructure on another suitable site, and should have regard as appropriate to the possibility that all suitable sites for energy infrastructure of the type proposed may be needed for future proposals'.* This demonstrates that the siting and location of the Proposed Development should be weighed against the urgent need for renewable energy infrastructure as well as placing importance on the presence of appropriate mitigation measures.

4.4.13. NPS EN-1 also provides new guidance on the potential impacts to health and well-being in Section 4.4. This primarily relates to the release of pollutants and environmental impact. Section 4.6 relates to Environmental and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). This section states that the Proposed Development should consider opportunities for enhancements and that projects should seek to incorporate improvements in natural capital, ecosystem services and the benefits they deliver when planning how to deliver BNG.

4.4.14. Paragraph 4.6.15 states that applications should be accompanied by a statement demonstrating how opportunities for delivering wider environmental net gains have been considered.

4.4.15. BNG for NSIP's is not a legal requirement until relevant provisions of the Environment Act 2021 are brought into force. However, policy expectation is that Applicants will consider opportunities to provide BNG as part of the Proposed Development.

4.4.16. Section 4.7 underscores the importance of good design in energy projects and how factors such as functionality and siting significantly influence their effectiveness.

NPS EN-1 highlights the importance of energy projects harmonising with their surroundings and acknowledges that large-scale energy projects may have landscape and visual impacts. Paragraph 5.10.5 acknowledges that '*virtually all nationally significant infrastructure projects will have adverse effects on the landscape, but there may also be beneficial landscape character impacts arising from mitigation'.* Paragraph 5.10.6 sets out the expectation for projects to be *'designed carefully, taking account of potential impacts on the landscape'.* Whilst locally designated landscapes should be paid attention, Paragraph 5.10.12 states that *'locally valued landscapes should not be used in themselves to refuse consent, as this may unduly restrict acceptable development'.* At Paragraph 5.10.36, NPS EN-1 advises that it is relevant to consider whether any adverse impact on the landscape is temporary and capable of being reversed.

4.4.17. Part 5 provides guidance to the SoS on assessing the general impacts of energy developments, stating that impacts and mitigation measures should be considered when they are relevant and significant to the decision-making process. These impacts cover areas such as air quality and emissions, greenhouse gas emissions, biodiversity and geological conservation, aviation, coastal change, dust, pollution control, flood risk, historic environment, landscape and visual aspects, land use, noise and vibration, socio-economics, traffic and transport, waste, and water quality and resources. Part 5 of NPS EN-1 sets out recommendations for the bodies which applicants should seek advice from for each technical consideration. The SoS should be provided with the necessary information to determine if an Appropriate Assessment is required. The environmental impacts discussed in these later sections of NPS EN-1 are thoroughly examined when evaluating the Development in accordance with the provisions of NPS EN-1.

National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (NPS EN-3)

4.4.18. NPS EN-3 (January 2024) provides national planning policy in respect of renewable energy infrastructure.

4.4.19. Paragraph 1.1.2 summarises the central role that renewables play in meeting our energy objectives, *'Electricity generation from renewable sources is an essential element of the transition to net zero and meeting our statutory targets for the sixth carbon budget (CB6). Our analysis suggests that demand for electricity is likely to increase significantly over the coming years and could more than double by 2050.*

This could require a fourfold increase in low carbon electricity generation, with most of this likely to come from renewables'. NPS EN-3 provides assessment and technology-specific information on renewable energy technologies including solar photovoltaic generation.

4.4.20. As stated within the Net Zero Strategy (October 2021), by 2035, all our electricity should come from low carbon sources, subject to security of supply, whilst meeting a 40-60% increase in demand. This must be achieved while ensuring a secure energy supply at the lowest possible cost for both industrial and domestic consumers. Given that solar power is regarded as one of the cleanest and most cost-effective energy sources, it is imperative to provide support for the development of utility-scale solar PV projects to meet the targets of decarbonisation.

4.4.21. Section 2.10 explores the need for solar PV generation in greater detail and specific policies. Paragraph 2.10.9 states that '*solar is a key part of the government's strategy for low-cost decarbonisation of the energy sector'* and '*the Government expects a five-fold increase in solar deployment by 2035 (up to 75GW)'.* Paragraph 2.10.10 states that *'Solar also has an important role in delivering the government's goals for greater energy independence. The British Energy Security Strategy states that government expects a five-fold increase in combined ground and rooftop solar deployment by 2035 (up to 70GW)'.* The Powering Up Britain: Energy Security Plan further emphasises the need for large scale ground-mount solar deployment across the UK, as set out in Paragraph 2.10.11.

4.4.22. Paragraph 2.4.11 states that solar PV generating sites may be proposed in low lying exposed sites and should assess the application's resilience to increased risk of flooding and the impact of higher temperatures.

4.4.23. Paragraph 2.10.17 acknowledges that the scale of solar farms means that they will '*inevitably have impacts, particularly if sited in rural areas*'.

4.4.24. NPS EN-3 provides policy on site selection in Paragraphs 2.10.18 to 2.10.48. Paragraphs 2.10.18 to 2.10.27 state that site selection needs to consider irradiance, site topography, network connection, and proximity to dwellings. Paragraph 2.10.24 acknowledges that the financial feasibility of ground mounted solar developments is often dependent on the distance from the transmission network, connection voltage and available network capacity. Paragraph 2.10.25 states that '*to maximise existing*

grid infrastructure, minimise disruption to existing local community infrastructure or biodiversity and reduce overall costs applicants may choose a site based on nearby available grid export capacity'.

4.4.25. Paragraphs 2.10.28 to 2.10.35 provide policy on site selection with regards to agricultural land. 2.10.29 states '*where the proposed use of any agricultural land has been shown to be necessary, poorer quality land should be preferred to higher quality land avoiding the use of "Best and Most Versatile" agricultural land where possible'.* Paragraph 2.10.30 continues and states that *'whilst development of ground mounted solar arrays is not prohibited on Best and Most Versatile agricultural land … the impacts of such are expected to be considered'*. Paragraph 2.10.31 recognises that *'at this scale, it is likely that applicants' developments will use some agricultural land. Applicants should explain their choice of site, noting the preference for development to be on suitable brownfield, industrial and low and medium grade agricultural land'.* Paragraph 2.10.32 states that '*where sited on agricultural land, consideration may be given as to whether the proposal allows for continued agricultural use and/or can be co-located with other functions'.*

4.4.26. Paragraphs 2.10.35 to 2.10.39 and 2.10.40 to 2.10.45 discuss the need and potential difficulty for accessing ground mounted solar sites due to their rural location, and provides policy on PRoW respectively.

4.4.27. NPS-EN3 provides general policies on environmental impacts and mitigation in Paragraphs 2.10.73 to 2.10.144. These policies expand on the information contained within NPS-EN1 and focus them to have regard for ground mounted solar PV Proposed Developments.

4.4.28. Paragraphs 2.10.145 to 2.10.162 discusses the SoS decision making process. Paragraph 2.10.145 states the SoS should take into account economic and other benefits of BMV land, and that appropriate measures to minimise impacts on soils or soil resources have been taken.

National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (NPS EN-5)

4.4.29. NPS EN-5 (January 2024) provides national planning policy in respect of electricity networks infrastructure. NPS EN-5 covers above ground electricity lines whose nominal voltage is expected to be 132kV or above and whose length is greater than 2km. It can also apply to lower voltage overhead lines, if they constitute associated

development for which consent is sought along with an NSIP, or if the SoS gives a direction that they should be treated as an NSIP. Paragraph 1.6.4 states that EN-5 also applies to underground cables at any voltage, and associated infrastructure such as substations and converter stations. As electricity networks infrastructure is proposed as associated development, the NPS has effect in relation to the Proposed Development.

4.4.30. Paragraphs 2.2.8 and 2.2.9 acknowledge that there will usually be some flexibility around the location of the associated substation to account for local landscape and topography.

4.4.31. Section 2 of the NPS discusses assessment and technology-specific information. Within Section 2.9 Applicant assessment, the Noise and Vibration paragraphs (2.9.26 to 2.9.43) state that Applicants should have consideration of the noise electricity network infrastructure, including substation, in their assessment.

4.5. National Planning Policy Framework

4.5.1. This Planning Statement assesses the alignment of the Proposed Development with a national policy basis which includes the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to the extent that it is deemed important and relevant to the SoS decision on the application.

4.5.2. The NPPF, revised in December 2023, outlines the planning policies of the UK Government for England. It serves as guidance for the development of local planning policy documents and is a material consideration in determining planning applications under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (TCPA 1990). The policies within the NPPF were primarily formulated with the intention of addressing development projects that have local or regional significance.

4.5.3. Paragraph 5 states that *'The Framework does not contain specific policies for nationally significant infrastructure projects. These are determined in accordance with the decision-making framework in the Planning Act 2008 (as amended) and relevant national policy statements for major infrastructure, as well as any other matters that are relevant (which may include the National Planning Policy Framework)'..* Here, the NPPF is acknowledged as an important and relevant factor where its policies are applicable to the Proposed Development although it carried less weight compared to the relevant policies outlined in the adopted Energy NPSs ,

outlined in previous sections, in the decision-making process of the Secretary of State.

4.5.4. The National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) supports the NPPF and provides guidance on the implementation of NPPF polices. The NPPG includes a range of topics including climate change, EIA, and renewable and low carbon energy guidance, which includes guidance on large scale ground mounted solar PV farms and BESS. The information contained within the NPPG aligns with the policies within the NPS.

4.6. Local Planning Policy Context

4.6.1. The PA 2008 Section 104 and 105 both include Local Impact Reports (LIR) as a document the SoS must have regard to in their decision-making process. The LIRs are informed by the relevant local planning policy. Furthermore, paragraph 4.1.12 of NPS EN-1 acknowledges that the policies outlined in Development Plan documents and other Local Development Framework documents may hold significance and relevance in the decision-making process of planning. However, in cases where conflicts arise, this paragraph stipulates that the National Policy Statement (NPS) takes precedence for the purpose of the Secretary of State's planning decision-making.

4.6.2. As such, local planning policy is therefore likely to be of consideration in the SoS decision. The local planning policy is formed of the following:

- Selby District Core Strategy Local Plan (2013);
- Selby District Local Plan (2005); and
- North Yorkshire Minerals and Waste Joint Plan 2015-2030 (2022).

4.6.3. Paragraphs 4.1.12 to 4.1.14 set out that the SoS may also consider draft documents in the Local Development Framework as important and relevant to their decision-making. The weight given to these draft documents should be determined by the stage which the document has reached. North Yorkshire Council has begun preparation of a new local plan for the now amalgamated council area. This is however in its infancy, with a call for sites in Spring 2024. North Yorkshire Council is also in the process of preparing a new local plan for the area characterised as the former Selby District. A Full Council meeting voted to continue the preparation of the

Selby plan in February 2023, due to the advanced stage it had already reached in its preparation. Continuing with the preparation of the Selby Local Plan is seen as an opportunity to provide local residents and businesses certainty about future new development until the Selby Local Plan is replaced by the North Yorkshire Local Plan. Consultation took place on the revised Publication Local Plan in summer 2022, with formal consultation on the Regulation 19 draft undertaken in March – April 2024, prior to anticipated submission in late-2024. The following draft document is therefore likely to also be considered relevant in the SoS decision:

- Draft Selby Local Plan – Pre-submission revised publication local plan (2024)

4.6.4. The Local Plan Accordance Table in Appendix 4 of this Planning Statement sets out the relevant adopted and draft local planning policies in full and sets out the accordance of the Proposed Development against the policies.

4.7. Other Policy and Legislation

4.7.1. The following documents, which have informed the NPS, provide clear support and emphasise the critical importance for renewable energy generation and are highlighted here for context.

Climate Change Act 2008

4.7.2. The Climate Change Act 2008 set up a framework for the UK to achieve long term objectives of reducing GHG emissions and to ensure steps are taken to adapt to climate change. The Act committed the UK to cut GHG emissions (against the 1990 baseline) by 80% by 2050.

UN Framework Convention on Climate Change: The Paris Agreement (2015)

4.7.3. The central aim of the Paris Agreement is to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping global temperature rise below 2 degrees, and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature rise to a more restrictive 1.5 degrees. Additionally, it aims to strengthen the ability of countries to deal with the impacts of climate change.

Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019

4.7.4. The Climate Change Act 2008 was amended by the Climate Change Act 2008 (2050

Target Amendment) Order 2019, which set a new target to cut GHG emissions by 100% (against the 1990 baseline) and achieve net zero by 2050.

Net Zero – The UK's Contribution to stopping global warming (May 2019)

4.7.5. The Committee for Climate Change (CCC), established under the Climate Change Act (2008), is responsible for setting interim binding targets over five-year periods.

4.7.6. Chapter 6 of CCC's report 'Net Zero – The UK's Contribution to stopping global warming' (May 2019) sets out actions to deliver net zero, including the transition to a net zero economy and what is needed to underpin net zero delivery. 'Part B' sets out key near term actions to put the UK on track and recommends that more rapid electrification must be accompanied by greater build rates of low carbon generation capacity, along with measures to enhance the flexibility of the electricity system.

4.7.7. In the report, the CCC recommend a new emissions target for the UK: a 100% reduction ('net zero') of emissions by 2050. This change in legislation mandating a 100% reduction in CO2 emissions by 2050 was approved by the House of Commons on 24th June 2019 and the House of Lords on 26th June 2019 and is now the Government's statutory carbon reduction obligation, as per the 2019 Order.

Energy White Paper: Powering our Net Zero future (2020)

4.7.8. The Energy White Paper outlines the Government's plan to support the UK in becoming a net zero GHG emitting country by 2050. The White Paper states that demand for energy is expected to double by 2050 due to the electrification of transport and heating. To achieve net zero while demand for energy increases, the White Paper states on page 42 that "*a four-fold increase in clean electricity* generation' would be required and page 43 states that "*a low cost net zero consistent system is likely to be composed predominantly of wind and solar"*.

4.7.9. Although not prescriptive on what the future UK's energy mix should be, the White Paper supports renewable energy developments and acknowledges they will be required in order for the UK to achieve the net zero by 2050 objective.

National Infrastructure Strategy – Fairer, Faster and Greener (2020)

4.7.10. The National Infrastructure Strategy (NIS) sets out the Government's plans to deliver on its ambition, being *"deliver an infrastructure revolution: a radical improvement in*

the quality of the UK's infrastructure to help level up the country… and put the UK on the path to net zero emissions by 2050."

4.7.11. The NIS recognises the significance changes required to UK infrastructure in order to meet the UK's commitment to achieving net zero emissions by 2050. The NIS identifies that to deliver net zero, the share of generation from renewables needs to dramatically increase, and notes that greater generation capacity will need to come from onshore wind and solar. The NIS aims to provide investors with clarity over the Government's plans so they can look at the UK with confidence and help deliver the upgrades and projects needed across the country.

Net Zero: Opportunities for the Power Sector (2020)

4.7.12. The National Infrastructure Commission (NIC), official advisor to the Government on infrastructure, published 'Net Zero: Opportunities for the Power Sector' to set out the infrastructure required to meet the 2050 net-zero target, as set out in the 2019 amendment to the Climate Act 2008. The NIC recommends the energy generation mix is up to 90% renewables to meet the 2050 target. Within the report, it is recommended that 129 - 237 GW of renewable capacity is in operation by 2050, including:

- 56 – 121 GW of solar;
- 18 – 27 GW of onshore wind; and
- 54 – 86 GW of offshore wind.

Environment Act (2021)

4.7.13. The Environment Act is a framework for environmental protection, seeking to improve the natural environment in England. The Environment Act introduces legal requirements for developments to provide BNG, however these are not yet in force for NSIPs. It is however considered good practice for Applicant's of NSIP scale projects to use the biodiversity metric and present the outcome, with this approach encouraged in the NPS.

Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener (2021)

4.7.14. The Net Zero Strategy, published by the Government in October 2021, builds on commitments made in the Energy White Paper (2020) and sets out policies and

proposals which ensure the UK is in accordance with upcoming carbon budgets and Nationally Determined Contributions ('NDC'). NDCs provide a mechanism for countries to voluntarily impose national emission limits under the Paris Agreement. The strategy seeks to realise a decarbonised economy by 2050. Key policies in the Strategy related to renewable power generation include:

"By 2035 the UK will be powered entirely by clean electricity, subject to security of supply; […] 40 GW of offshore wind by 2030, with more onshore, solar and other renewables – with a new approach to onshore and offshore electricity networks to incorporate new low carbon generation and demand in the most efficient manner that takes account of the needs of local communities […]"

British Energy Security Strategy (2022)

4.7.15. The British Energy Security Strategy sets out how the UK intends to secure clean and affordable energy for the 'long-term'. Realising the strategy requires 70GW of solar generation capacity by 2035. This is a significant increase from the 13.7GW of solar as of February 2022.

Over the last five-year period, the UK increased its solar capacity by only an estimated 1.8GW, highlighting the extraordinary need for a significant increase in the deployment of decentralised solar energy schemes of the Proposed Development's scale if targets are to be met. The British Energy Security Strategy offers clear support for solar development that is co-located with other functions to maximise the efficiency of land use – this includes dual solar and agricultural land use.

Energy Act (2023)

4.7.16. The Energy Act was passed in October 2023, and sets out new laws to help ensure energy is affordable for households and businesses and make the UK more energy independent in the long-term. The Act establishes the need to accelerate the growth of low carbon technologies.

Written Ministerial Statement (2024)

4.7.17. In May 2024, the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, made a Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) regarding solar energy and the protection of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) land and food security. The WMS notes that solar power plays

a crucial role in achieving energy security, net zero emissions and clean growth, referencing NPS EN-3, which emphasises solar's importance in delivering energy independence. The WMS states that there is a concern that large solar developments may use BMV land instead of food production, with the government aiming to strike a balance between energy security and ongoing food production. As such, solar developers are encouraged to use previously developed or lower-quality land for solar projects, avoiding BMV land where possible, with solar projects to be carefully considered in light of both energy and food priorities.

4.8. Need for the Proposed Development

4.8.1. This section sets out the evidence of the need for the Proposed Development in the designated NPSs and demonstrates how the Proposed Development meets this need.

4.8.2. NPS EN-1 sets out the overarching national policy for energy infrastructure, while NPS EN-3 and EN-5 set out the overarching national policy for renewable energy infrastructure and electricity networks, respectively. NPS EN-3 sets out the importance of solar development for meeting the UK's targets.

4.8.3. Based on the policies set out in NPS EN-1 and EN-3, this Planning Statement demonstrates that there is an urgent need for large scale ground mounted solar to be developed due to their relative quick development timescales, affordability and contribution to the UK's energy security.

4.8.4. Table 4.1 details the relevant sections of EN1 and EN3 pertaining to the need for the Proposed Development. A full accordance table for relevant NPS sections is provided in Appendix 3.

Table 4.1: National Policy Statement need references

Transitioning to a Low Carbon Economy		
Sections 2.2 and 2.3 – Net Zero	Section 2.2 outlines the UK's net zero targets and legislative context. In the Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment Order 2019), the UK legislated for a 2050 net zero Greenhouse Gases (GHG) emissions target. The sixth carbon budget, legislated in April 2021, requires the UK to reduce GHG emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels. Paragraph 2.3.6 sets out the need for renewables to meet the net zero target: *"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 (low carbon hydrogen), and, where we still emit carbon, developing the industry and infrastructure to capture, transport and store it."*	The Proposed Development will support the UK's net zero target by generating large-scale (190MW) low carbon electricity which could be operational by 2029.
Section 2.5 – Security of Energy Supplies	Section 2.5 sets out the importance of domestic energy production in the context of rising global energy costs, to ensure a secure, reliable and affordable energy supply. Paragraph 2.5.6 outlines the accelerated deployment of renewables as a key strategy for energy security: *"The British Energy Security Strategy emphasises the importance of addressing our underlying vulnerability to*	The Proposed Development will contribute to providing a secure, reliable and affordable energy supply for the UK. • **Security –** The Proposed Development will reduce the UK's vulnerability to international energy prices by increasing domestic energy production. • **Reliable –** Given the capacity of 190MW and the incorporation of a BESS, the Proposed Development will provide a reliable energy output.

	international energy prices by reducing our dependence on imported oil and gas, improving energy efficiency, remaining open minded about our onshore reserves including shale gas, and accelerating deployment of renewables, nuclear, hydrogen, CCUS, and related network infrastructure, so as to ensure a domestic supply of clean, affordable, and secure power as we transition to net zero."	• **Affordable –** Solar is a low-cost type of energy generation.
Section 2.6 – Sustainable Development	Section 2.6 outlines how energy infrastructure contributes to sustainable development goals. The deployment of energy infrastructure can contribute to well-being of the environment, society and the economy for current and future generations, as well as addressing climate change.	The Proposed Development will contribute to sustainable development. The nature of the Proposed Development as renewable energy infrastructure will contribute to addressing climate change. The Proposed Development will also be sensitively deployed to ensure it is sustainable in terms of the wider environment, society and the economy.
Secretary of State Decision Making		
Section 3.2 – Secretary of State Decision Making	Section 3.2 outlines the need for a range of different types of energy infrastructure to meet the government's objectives of a secure, reliable, affordable energy supply which is consistent with net zero emissions in 2050. Paragraphs 3.2.6 – 3.2.8 state that *"The Secretary of State should assess all applications for development consent for the types of infrastructure covered by this NPS on the basis that the government has demonstrated that there is a need for those types of infrastructure which is urgent, as described for each of them in this Part. In addition, the Secretary of State has determined that substantial weight*	As outlined above, the Proposed Development will help to deliver the government's objectives of a secure, reliable, affordable, net zero energy supply. As a type of infrastructure covered by the NPSs, there is a proven urgent weight which should be given substantial weight.

	should be given to this need when considering applications for development consent under the Planning Act 2008. The Secretary of State is not required to consider separately the specific contribution of any individual project to satisfying the need established in this NPS."	
The need for new nationally significant electricity infrastructure		
Section 3.3 – The need for different types of electricity infrastructure	Paragraphs 3.3.4 to 3.3.12 set out the need for different types of electricity infrastructure (additional generating plants, electricity storage, interconnectors and electricity networks) to deliver our energy objectives, highlighting that each type has a role and cannot meet the objectives in isolation. "*New generating plants can deliver a low carbon and reliable system"* (Paragraph 3.3.5], and *"storage and interconnection can provide flexibility"* (Paragraph 3.3.6]. Alternatives to new electricity infrastructure are considered including reducing total demand through efficiency, greater use of low carbon hydrogen, demand side response, or through increasing the contribution of decentralised and smaller-scale electricity infrastructure. It is determined that these alternatives cannot fully replace the need for new generating capacity to deliver the UK's energy objectives.	By providing both new generating infrastructure and new storage infrastructure, the Proposed Development is a low carbon and reliable system which will provide flexibility to the system.
Section 3.3 – Delivering affordable decarbonisation	Paragraphs 3.3.13 to 3.3.19 outline the need for a diverse mix of electricity infrastructure required to deliver the objectives for the energy system for a wide rage of demand, decarbonisation and technology scenarios which would impact the needs on the electricity system during the transition to net zero in 2050. As set out in the Net Zero	The Proposed Development will contribute to the diverse mix of electricity infrastructure required to meet net zero by 2050. Solar is a low-cost type of energy generation, so it will contribute to the provision of affordable energy.

	Strategy, the cost of the transition to net zero should be fair and affordable.	
Section 3.3 – The role of wind and solar	Paragraph 3.3.20 to 3.3.24 outline the need for wind and solar. The Energy White Paper highlights the requirement for sustained growth in the capacity of onshore wind and solar in the next decade. Paragraph 3.3.20 states that *"Wind and solar are the lowest cost ways of generating electricity, helping reduce* *costs and providing a clean and secure source of electricity supply (as they are not reliant on fuel for generation). Our analysis shows that a secure, reliable, affordable, net zero consistent system in 2050 is likely to be composed predominantly of wind and solar."*	The Proposed Development, a large-scale solar PV project with an associated BESS, aligns with the objective of reducing carbon emissions while delivering secure and affordable energy to consumers. Given its size and capacity, the project has significant potential to diversify the UK's energy generation and reduce reliance on fossil fuels, consistent with the government's strategy and recommendations from the National Grid.
Section 3.3 – The role of electricity storage	Paragraph 3.3.25 states that *"Storage has a key role to play in achieving net zero and providing flexibility to the energy system, so that high volumes of low carbon power, heat and transport can be integrated."* Paragraphs 3.3.26 to 3.3.31 further outline the critical importance of storage facilities for reducing costs, increasing reliability and providing balancing services.	The Proposed Development will contribute to the UK's energy objectives by providing flexible, resilient and high-efficiency renewable energy. The provision of a BESS will help balance electricity supply and demand, thus increasing the security of power.
Assessment Principles		
Section 4.1 – General policies	Section 4.1 highlights that given the level and urgency of need for infrastructure, the Secretary of State will start with a *"presumption in favour of granting consent to applications for energy NSIPs"* (Paragraph 4.1.3].	The need for energy infrastructure projects such as the Proposed Development is of a level and urgency that the Secretary of State will start with a presumption in favour of granting consent. As outlined above, the Proposed Development will contribute to

	Paragraph 4.1.2 states that *"The Energy White Paper and British Energy Security Strategy emphasises the importance of the government's net zero commitment and efforts to fight climate change, as well as the need to maintain a secure and reliable energy system. The Levelling Up White Paper calls on the Government to ensure investment in the transition to Net Zero benefits less well-performing parts of the UK, reducing emissions, facilitating economic development and the creation of jobs."*	delivering the government's net zero commitment and the need for a secure and reliable energy system. The Levelling Up White Paper aims to focus investment on areas outside of the Greater South East of England. The location of the Proposed Development in North Yorkshire would contribute to this aim. **Chapter 13: Socio-Economics [EN010140/APP/6.1.13] of the ES** assesses the socio-economic conditions of the location of the Proposed Development. It demonstrates that whilst the unemployment rate in the Wider Study Area is marginally lower than the national average, the Wider Study Area has a lower average Gross Value Added GVA) per worker than the national average. This indicates that the area has a lower economic contribution than the national average. The Proposed Development is therefore appropriately located to contribute towards the aims of the Levelling Up White Paper.
Section 4.2 - The critical national priority for low carbon infrastructure	Section 4.2 states that in order to realise its goal of Net Zero by 2050, *"there is a critical national priority (CNP) for the provision of nationally significant low carbon infrastructure".*	

NPS EN-3 **Relevant Paragraph**	**NPS EN-3 Detail**	**NPS EN-3** **Proposed Development compliance**
Solar Photovoltaic Generation		

Section 2.10 – Solar Photovoltaic Generation	Section 2.10 outlines the need for solar photovoltaic generation. Paragraph 2.10.9 states 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".* It continues to state that "*Solar has an important role in delivering Government's goals for greater energy dependence"*, can be "*built quickly"* and is "*the cheapest for of electricity generation"* in the UK.	The Proposed Development is a renewable low energy generation development and will therefore contribute to the Government's carbon emissions and climate change targets. The Proposed Development would also increase the country's energy security through diversifying the grid and improving energy affordability due to being the cheapest form of electricity generation.

5. Planning Appraisal

5.1. Introduction

5.1.1. As set out in Section 4, the need for solar energy generation is established in NPS EN-1 and NPS EN-3. This section presents an appraisal of the Proposed Development's compliance with the relevant policy requirements of these documents.

5.1.2. The Applicant considers that significant weight should be given to the Proposed Development's compliance with the policies of the Energy NPSs, given their status in the s104 decision making framework. Further, the Applicant considers that less weight should be given to the NPPF and local planning policy, owing to their focus on guiding development at regional and local levels. As such, this appraisal focuses on compliance with the provisions of NPS, which are discussed throughout this Planning Statement, with an assessment of the Proposed Development against the provisions of the NPS provided in Appendix 3. Accordance with the relevant Local Plan is set out in Appendix 4.

5.1.3. This section is structured under the following headings:

- General Principles of Assessment
- Cultural Heritage;
- Landscape and Visual Impact;
- Biodiversity;
- Water;
- Transport and Access;
- Noise and Vibration;
- Climate Change;
- Socioeconomics; and
- Soils and Agricultural Land.

5.1.4. Sections 5.2 to 5.10 take account of potential effects from the construction, operation (including maintenance) and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development. They also take account of the fact that the Proposed Development will

be decommissioned at the end of its operational life.

5.1.5. This section should be read alongside **Chapter 4: Alternatives and Design Evolution [EN010140/APP/6.1.4] of the ES** and Section 4 (Legislation, Policy and Need) of this Planning Statement.

5.1.6. A complete assessment of the Proposed Development's accordance with the draft local (Selby) planning policies is provided in Appendix 1 this Planning Statement.

5.2. General Principles of Assessment

5.2.1. Paragraph 3.3.62 states that there is a critical national priority (CNP) for the provision of nationally significant low carbon infrastructure. Paragraph 3.3.63 underpins this urgency, stating that *"subject to any legal requirements, the urgent need for CNP Infrastructure to achieving our energy objectives, together with the national security, economic, commercial, and net zero benefits, will in general outweigh any other residual impacts not capable of being addressed by application of the mitigation hierarchy. Government strongly supports the delivery of CNP Infrastructure and it should be progressed as quickly as possible".*

5.2.2. Solar projects are included under the definition of CNP, in paragraph 4.2.5, as onshore electricity generation, that does not involve fossil fuel combustion.

5.2.3. Paragraph 4.2.7 goes on to state that *"CNP policy applies following the normal consideration of the need case, the impacts of the project, and the application of the mitigation hierarchy".* As such, it should be given consideration by the ExA when making recommendation to the SoS (and SoS decision making itself) specifically in reference to any residual impacts that have been identified.

5.2.4. Paragraph 4.1.3 of NPS EN-1 states that given the level of urgency of need for energy infrastructure projects included in the energy NPSs, the SoS will start with a presumption in favour of granting consent to applications for energy NSIPs and that presumption applies unless any more specific and relevant policies set out in the relevant NPSs clearly indicate that consent should be refused.

5.2.5. In considering applications for energy NSIPs, in particular when weighing their adverse impacts against their benefits, paragraph 4.1.5 of NPS EN-1 states that the SoS should take into account both the potential benefits, including the contribution to meeting the need for renewable energy as well as potential adverse impacts. The

SoS should also consider any measures to avoid, reduce, mitigate or compensation any adverse impacts. Within this context, paragraph 4.1.6 of NPS EN-1 directs the SoS to take into account environmental, social and economic benefits and adverse impacts national, regionally and locally.

5.2.6. Paragraphs 4.1.12 to 4.1.14 of NPS EN-1 acknowledge that the SoS may consider documents in the Local Development Framework such as Development Plan documents as both important and relevant to their decision-making. The weight given to these other matters should be determined by the stage which the document has reached, if the document has not yet been adopted. Paragraph 4.1.15 states that *"in the event of a conflict between these documents and an NPS, the NPS prevails for the purpose of Secretary of State decision making given the national significance of the infrastructure".*

5.2.7. This assessment is based on the findings presented in the relevant documents that have informed this statement. Considering the overview of the assessment above, it is determined that the Proposed Development complies with the general principles of assessment, as set out in NPS EN-1.

5.3. Cultural Heritage and Archaeology

5.3.1. Cultural heritage and archaeology is discussed in Section 5.9 of NPS EN-1. It acknowledges the potential for construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning activities to result in adverse impacts on the historic environment. Where a development site includes (or has the potential to include) heritage assets, or where the development has the potential to affect the setting of a heritage asset, appropriate assessments should be carried out to demonstrate the significance of the impacts on those assets.

5.3.2. Paragraph 2.10.160 of NPS EN-3 discusses the importance of the time-limited nature of a proposed scheme when considering the impacts of any indirect effect of solar schemes on the historic environment. Paragraphs 2.10.107 to 2.10.119 of NPS EN-1 contains specific considerations for solar projects, their lifespan and potential impact on heritage assets and settings.

5.3.3. The methodology used to undertake the cultural heritage investigations for the Proposed Development are consistent with those set out in **ES Appendix 2.1: EIA Scoping Report [EN010140/APP/6.3.2.1]** and PINs adopted scoping opinion,

provided in **ES Appendix 2.2: EIA Scoping Opinion [EN010140/APP/6.3.2.2]**. Desk-based research and data collection has been supplemented by site walkovers to visit identified heritage assets. To assist in the assessment of change to the setting of heritage assets, relevant guidance has been utilised.

5.3.4. There are a limited number of records identified from the North Yorkshire Historic Environment Record (NYHER) within the Site and several areas of cropmarks that have been identified from aerial photographic analysis. In addition to this, a geophysical survey has been carried out within the Site which has identified several areas of discrete archaeological anomalies, some of which correspond with previously recorded cropmarks.

5.3.5. The footprint of the Proposed Development has evolved throughout the assessment process, to reduce potential effects upon listed heritage assets by moving solar PV panels further away from sensitive heritage receptors and creating more substantial buffer zones. Landscaping proposals also represent embedded mitigation, as these will provide screening and will reinstate several historic field boundaries.

5.3.6. Beyond the footprint of the Proposed Development, mitigation measures have also been embedded into the Proposed Development to reduce impacts on any potential heritage assets. This mitigation includes ground mounted 'no dig' footings (which have a maximum depth of up to 0.15m), with the cables raised up and clipped beneath the solar PV panels, to remove the need for ground disturbance in areas in of archaeological potential. This and other forms of archaeological mitigation are set out in **ES Appendix 6.2: Archaeological Mitigation Strategy [EN010140/APP/6.3.6.2]** which has been established through consultation with Historic England. The scope of this AMS has been agreed with the Principal Archaeologist and will be submitted as part of the DCO application.

5.3.7. Following the application of embedded mitigation measures and due to the absence of any designated heritage assets within the Site boundary, the construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development are not anticipated to result in any significant effects on the historic environment.

5.3.8. Full details regarding cultural heritage and archaeology, and how the Proposed Development is consistent relevant policy, is provided in **Chapter 6: Cultural Heritage [EN010140/APP/6.1.6] of the ES**.

5.4. Landscape and Visual Impact

5.4.1. Landscape and Visual is discussed in Section 5.10 of NPS EN-1. Paragraph 5.10.5 clearly states that virtually all nationally significant energy infrastructure projects will result in adverse landscape effects, but that there can also be beneficial landscape character impacts, arising from mitigation. This is echoed in 5.10.13, stating that all proposed energy infrastructure is likely to have a visual impact on many receptors around proposed sites. It is for these reasons that in paragraph 5.10.16 of EN-1 a landscape and visual impact assessment should be undertaken.

5.4.2. NPS EN-3 provides guidance on a number of landscape factors. Paragraphs 2.10.43 and 2.10.44 both concern public rights of way, in terms of minimising views of development as well as enhancing existing and creating new public rights of way Other landscape factors are discussed in Paragraph 2.10.89, which discusses how solar PV developments have the potential to increase the biodiversity of a site.

5.4.3. In relation to the zone of visual influence of solar farms, paragraph 2.10.95 notes that despite the vast size of some solar PV developments, ground-mounted solar, the area of a zone of visual influence could be appropriately minimised with effective screening and appropriate land topography. This is echoed in paragraph 2.10.131 how impacts should be mitigated through screening with native hedges, trees and woodlands.

5.4.4. The landscape and visual assessment has been undertaken in accordance with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3). In accordance with GLVIA3, this assessment addresses landscape and visual effects as separate issues. Landscape effects relate to both the effect on the physical features of the Site, and on the landscape character of the Site and surrounding area. Visual effects relate to the experience of views of the Proposed Development by visual receptors from publicly accessible vantage points in the study area. Where appropriate, the effects of the Proposed Development on residential receptors have also been assessed.

5.4.5. The Site is not designated in landscape terms, and there are no national designations for landscape and scenic beauty within the study area. Local landscape designations are present within the wider area, and there are a number of heritage assets dispersed throughout the study area.

5.4.6. Review and analysis of national, county and borough level published landscape character assessments has been carried out. They describe a low-lying, flat drained landscape with a geometric field pattern that is dominated by major energy and transport infrastructure. Land use is predominantly arable, with some commercial greenhouses.

5.4.7. The Site comprises an extensive area of arable farmland delineated by fragmented hedgerow and ditches with occasional trees and woodland and sub-divided by country lanes. It has a simple, open and strongly agricultural character with a strong visual influence of industrial built form. Notwithstanding the visual intrusion of the above, and other built forms and land uses noted above, there is some sense of tranquility and an overriding rural character.

5.4.8. In visual terms, as an extensive area of open farmland, with a fragmented and denuded vegetation pattern, the Site is inevitably visible in close range views from the network of PRoW and rural lanes that extend across and adjacent to it. However, with increased distance, the combination of a flat landscape and screening provided by successive fragmented field boundaries, occasional woodland blocks and agricultural buildings results in the Site interior being strongly filtered or screened in longer distance views.

5.4.9. A comprehensive series of mitigation measures has been embedded in the design of the Proposed Development from the outset, with the aim of reducing adverse effects resulting from its introduction. The design of the Proposed Development has evolved as part of an iterative process and has been informed by the findings of initial landscape and visual appraisals. The mitigation strategy includes the re-establishment of a strong pattern of hedgerows and tree belts, as well as extensive areas of native wildflower grassland planting and wetland habitats. These measures have been drawn from published landscape character assessment guidance.

5.4.10. An assessment of the likely landscape and visual effects of the Project has been undertaken during the construction phase and at Years 1 and 15 of operation. The effects relating to the decommissioning of the Proposed Development have also been assessed.

5.4.11. No landscape or visual receptors are anticipated to experience significant negative effects as a result of the construction or decommissioning of the Proposed Development. Significant landscape and visual effects are however anticipated for

some receptors during operation.

5.4.12. Two landscape receptors have been identified as likely to experience major/moderate (significant) effects at Year 1. These are the 'Site and its Character' and Landscape Character Area (LCA) 15: Camblesforth Farmland.

5.4.13. Visual receptors identified as likely to experience major/moderate (significant) effects during operation Year 1, are users of PRoWs, walkers and cyclists, and residents of Rose Hill Farm, Primrose Hill and Camblesforth.

5.4.14. The remainder of all landscape and visual receptors are not anticipated to experience any significant effects. Further, taking into account the growth and establishment of proposed plating, there would be no significant landscape or visual effects, as a result of the Proposed Development, during operation at Year 15 of the Proposed Development.

5.4.15. Following the application of embedded mitigation measures and the implementation of best practice measures in accordance with **ES Appendix 5.1: outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (oCEMP) [EN010140/APP/6.3.5.1]** and **ES Appendix 5.3: outline Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (oDEMP) [EN010140/APP/6.3.5.3]**, and planting proposals in accordance with the LEMP, the construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development are not anticipated to result in any residual significant effects on the landscape and visual receptors.

5.4.16. Full details regarding landscape and visual impact, and how the Proposed Development is consistent relevant policy, is provided in **Chapter 7: Landscape and Views [EN010140/APP/6.1.7] of the ES**.

5.5. Biodiversity

5.5.1. Paragraph 5.4.17 of NPS EN-1 states that where a development is subject to EIA, the applicant is required to clearly demonstrate the effects of the Proposed Development on any designated site (international, national or local), protected species or habitat of ecological conservation importance. Section 5.4 requires development to avoid these interests through mitigation and consideration of reasonable alternatives and where this cannot be avoided, to seek appropriate

compensation measures.

5.5.2. In addition to the biodiversity requirements set out in EN-1, paragraph 2.10.128 of EN-3 requires developments to aim to achieve environmental and BNG, in line with statutory targets set under the Environment Act or elsewhere (BNG requirements do not apply to NSIP development until brought into force under the Environment Act 2021).

5.5.3. The Proposed Development comprises an area of predominantly agricultural land adjacent to the built-up area of Camblesforth. Existing habitats within the Site are dominated by arable farmland, associated with species-poor hedgerow systems and dry and wet ditches, pond and occasional blocks of semi-natural broad-leaved woodland. Much of the Site comprises open fields of limited biodiversity value, subject to farm management.

5.5.4. Beyond the Site, the natural environment is also generally characterised by expansive areas of arable farmland, with the Drax Power Station located directly adjacent to the proposed grid connection point.

5.5.5. The Site is not located within, or linked to, any statutory designated site for nature conservation. Comprehensive ecological surveys have been undertaken over several years to inform this assessment, providing information regarding the location of habitats and protected species, such as otters, badgers, water voles and breeding and non- breeding birds. These surveys were used to inform the iterative design of the Proposed Development, ensuring avoidance of ecological features of value (such as hedgerows, woodland and ditches) and has been a core design principal, helping maintain effective natural connectivity networks within the wider environment.

5.5.6. With further regard to the wider environment, the Proposed Development will not lead to any adverse impacts on surrounding non-statutory designated sites for nature conservation. Protection measures include adding habitat buffer zones and adopting good practice working measures. Extensive field surveys have found no evidence of regular use of significant numbers of over-wintering or passage birds.

5.5.7. Subsequently the Proposed Development will not negatively affect any such designation. Measures are set out to avoid or mitigate against potentially adverse effects during the construction, operation (including maintenance) and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development. These measures will be

detailed within **ES Appendix 5.1: outline Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) [EN010140/APP/6.3.5.1]**, **ES Appendix 5.3: outline Decommissioning Environment Management Plan (oDEMP) [EN010140/APP/6.3.5.3] and ES Appendix 7.7: outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (oLEMP) [EN010140/APP/6.3.7.7]**.

5.5.8. With regards to BNG, the Proposed Development includes significant habitat enhancement provisions, delivering a significant BNG. These will be managed for the benefit of wildlife over a minimum period of 30 years, providing biodiversity gains for a wide variety of species. The proposed creation of diverse grasslands, tree planting and hedgerow planting will create new habitat opportunities for breeding, foraging and overwintering as well as refuge, by a range of species including birds, bats, amphibians, reptiles and invertebrates. These BNG interventions will have the additional benefit of improving biological connectivity throughout the Site. The Applicant has committed to a BNG target above mandatory or policy requirements, adopting this as a fundamental design principle, ensuring that the Proposed Development will deliver a substantial ecological benefit.

5.5.9. In order to assess the biodiversity impacts associated with the Proposed Development, Defra's Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool was utilised. Based on the information provided within the **Figures 7.19-7.23 'Landscape Strategy' [EN010140/APP/6.2.7.19-23]** of the **ES**, the calculation results show that the Proposed Development will result in a biodiversity net gain of 55.70% in Habitat Units , 61.11% in Hedgerow Units and 9.05% in watercourse units as shown in the headline results extracted from the full Metric spreadsheet. More information regarding BNG can be found in **Chapter 8: Biodiversity [EN010140/APP/6.1.8]** of the ES and the supporting **Appendix 8.11: Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool [EN010140/APP/6.3.8.11]**.

5.5.10. The cessation of the use of agricultural chemicals across the Site will provide further benefit, in particular for invertebrate populations.

5.5.11. In summary, with embedded design measures and mitigation in place as described, the Proposed Development will not result in any significant adverse effects on any habitats or species, or on statutory and non-statutory designated sites. Major beneficial effects are anticipated as a result of habitat creation and diversification accompanied by long-term habitat management for the benefit of biodiversity.

5.5.12. Full details regarding biodiversity are provided in **Chapter 8: Biodiversity [EN010140/APP/6.1.8] of the ES**.

5.5.13. Paragraph 4.6.13 of NPS EN-1 states that *"In addition to delivering biodiversity net gain, developments may also deliver wider environmental gains and benefits to communities relevant to the local area, and to national policy priorities… Applicants should look for a holistic approach to delivering wider environmental gains and benefits through the use of nature-based solutions and Green Infrastructure".* The following list outlines the wider environmental gains delivered by the Proposed Development.

- Reduction in GHG emissions and Climate Adaptation – Once operational, the Proposed Development will deliver a reduction in GHG emissions compared to the without-project baseline through the provision of renewable energy to the grid. This will result in a major (significant) beneficial effect with respect to climate change mitigation at the local level, and a minor beneficial effect with respect to climate change mitigation at the national level. Full details regarding GHG emissions are provided in **Chapter 12: Climate Change [EN010140/APP/6.1.12] of the ES**.
- Reduce flood risk – The Drainage Strategy included within the **Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) [EN010140/APP/ 7.5]** provides detail of the SuDS which are proposed for the management of drainage from the Site. This includes proposed interception swales, which would lead to an overall reduction in surface water flow rates from the Site and mitigate any increase in run-off. The FRA concludes that through the implementation of measures such as these, the Proposed Development would not increase flood risk elsewhere and would reduce flood risk overall.
- Improvements to water quality – As set out in **Chapter 8: Biodiversity [EN010140/APP/6.1.8] of the ES**, by removing land from arable production, the Proposed Development will result in a reduction (or complete removal) of agricultural chemical overspray and drift where this currently occurs on the Site. Water quality and soil health will likely improve as a result of less intensive farming practices. The **FRA [EN010140/APP/7.5]** confirms that no new pathways would be created for pollutants to groundwater during the operation, construction or decommissioning of the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development would therefore not pose a significant risk to groundwater resources and

groundwater quality. The **FRA [EN010140/APP/7.5]** also sets out how SuDS will be used to manage the disposal of surface water runoff from the BESS compound, including features such as sediment forebays in attenuation basins to enhance water quality.

- Increased access to natural greenspace – The existing Site is within arable use and therefore is not a publicly accessible, beyond the available PRoWs that cross the Site. The Landscaping Strategy, as described in **Chapter 7: Landscape and Views [EN010140/APP/6.1.7] of the ES** and shown on **ES Figure 3.16: Landscape Strategy Plan [EN010140/APP/3.2.3.16]** will enhance the PRoW network on-Site, to encourage public use, through the provision of screening planting or by offsetting the proposed PV arrays by 15m from the PRoW, with a buffer of grassland grown to a substantial sward to integrate the Proposed Development within the landscape. The Proposed Development will also provide permissive footpaths, encouraging use of the Site by pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians.
- Enhancement, expansion or provision of trees and woodlands – Tree planting has been proposed as part of the habitat enhancement delivered as part of the Proposed Development. **ES Appendix 7.9: outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (oLEMP) [EN010140/APP/6.3.7.9]** outlines that proposed native woodland planting is composed of a mix of locally characteristic trees and shrubs from a broad palette, with species selection informed by tree survey information and specialist ecologist input. As stated in **Chapter 12: Climate Change [EN010140/APP/6.1.12] of the ES**, the diversity of species will provide better capacity to adapt to changing climatic conditions, amongst other benefits.
- Habitat enhancement and creation – The Proposed Development will provide a variety of artificial nesting features for breeding birds (generally boxes but using a variety of designs attractive to different species) within existing habitats, such as on mature trees, within the hedgerow network and across woodland areas. The Proposed Development will also deliver habitat retention and extensive enhancement and provision of new habitats for bats, amphibians and reptiles. Full detail regarding habitat enhancement and creation is provided in **Chapter 8 Biodiversity [EN010140/APP/6.1.8] of the ES** and **ES Appendix 7.9: outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (oLEMP) [EN010140/APP/6.3.7.9].**

5.6. Water

5.6.1. Flood risk is discussed in Section 5.8 of NPS EN-1. This section sets out the generic impacts, considerations and requirements associated with flood risk, requiring all energy project proposals located in Flood Zones 2 and 3 to be accompanied by a FRA, with development in Flood Zone 3 required to satisfy the Sequential and Exception Test. Appendix D: Alternative Site Assessment of this Planning Statement details the sequential test, of locating the Proposed Development in its proposed location, with the exception test detailed in the accompanying FRA.

5.6.2. An FRA is required to make appropriate arrangements to manage surface water, including appropriate use of Sustainable Drainage Systems ('SuDS'), ensuring there is no increase in flood risk elsewhere and account for the predicted impacts of climate change throughout the lifetime of the development. There should be no net loss of floodplain storage and any deflection or constriction of flood flow routes should be safely managed within the Site. Mitigation measures should make as much use as possible of natural flood management techniques.

5.6.3. Section 4.10 of EN-1 provides further guidance on flood mitigation, relevant to climate change, noting in paragraph 4.10.11 that applicants should demonstrate a high level of climate resilience built-in from the outset, demonstrating how proposals can be adapted over time to remain resilient to a credible maximum climate change scenario.

5.6.4. NPS EN-3 for Renewable Energy Infrastructure provides specific guidance relevant to solar PV farms, noting in Paragraph 2.10.84 that as panels drain to the existing ground, the impact will generally not be significant. NPS EN-3 goes on further to say that given the temporary nature of solar PV farms, sites should be configured or selected to avoid the need to impact on existing drainage systems and watercourses. With regards to water management and sites previously subject to intensive agricultural practice, paragraph 2.10.154 of NPS EN-3 states that solar sites can deliver significant ecosystem benefits in the form of drainage, flood attenuation, natural wetland habitat and water quality management.

5.6.5. The Site falls within the catchment of the River Aire and River Ouse and numerous drainage ditches cross the Site which drain ultimately into these watercourses.

5.6.6. The underlying ground conditions appear to have variable permeability. The

underlying geological deposits are classified as superficial and principal aquifers and the Site falls within a Groundwater source protection zone (SPZ).

5.6.7. The majority of the Site falls within Flood Zone 3a, meaning it has a high risk of flooding. Flood defences along the River Aire are overtopped once the effect of climate change on peak river flows and tidal levels are taken into account. Floodwaters spread out over the floodplain and flood depths and extent vary across the Site.

5.6.8. With respect to other pre-development sources of flood risk, overwhelmed sewers and artificial sources are considered to be 'low' to 'very low' flood risk, though there are areas of elevated flood risk ('high' – 'medium') associated with low points, where surface waters could collect and where the presence of shallow groundwaters in underlying superficial and bedrock deposits is likely.

5.6.9. The environmental quality of onsite watercourses is not assessed by the Environment Agency through the River Basin Management Plan. The River Aire and River Ouse are assessed as having moderate ecological quality.

5.6.10. **Chapter 9: Water Environment [EN010140/APP/6.1.9] of the ES** includes an assessment of the likely significant effects that the Proposed Development would have on the water environment including flood risk, surface water drainage and the water quality of nearby watercourses and groundwater bodies. This assessment is supported by a detailed **FRA [EN010140/APP/7.7]**.

5.6.11. The assessment within **Chapter 9: Water Environment [EN010140/APP/6.1.9] of the ES** and the **FRA [EN010140/APP/7.5]** draw on a variety of information sources, including desktop information, best practice guidance and the results of the site-specific and Environment Agency strategic flood models. This information has collectively informed the design and layout of the Proposed Development, namely mitigation.

5.6.12. The Proposed Development benefits from embedded mitigation in the form of design mitigation and management control measures. The Proposed Development will be designed to be appropriately safe in the fluvial 'design flood' without increasing flood risk elsewhere. These design mitigation measures include the appropriate sequential design of the Site to avoid (as best possible) areas of elevated flood risk and incorporation of flood resilience and resistance measures so that the equipment can

remain operational during times of elevated flood risk. Adaptation measures in the form of a 'level for level' floodplain compensation scheme to mitigate the effect of the earth flood defence bund serving the BESS Compound and 132kv Substation could be implemented if necessary if the fluvial 'credible maximum climate change scenario' is realised over the operational lifespan of the Proposed Development. Pollution prevention measures, surface water management measures, appropriate design of watercourse crossings are also proposed. Management control mitigation includes site evacuation procedures and construction site management measures.

5.6.13. Taking into account the embedded mitigation measures the remaining effects of the construction, operational and decommissioning phases on surface water drainage, flood risk and quality of onsite watercourses would not be significant. Although the risk of an accidental pollution incident can never be completely removed, the risk is minimised to an acceptable level and the risks identified are not significant.

5.6.14. Additional mitigation measures are proposed in the form of a CEMP containing an enhanced monitoring schedule and pollution control measures to minimise the risk to the quality of groundwater bodies. The design of the equipment and floodplain compensation will be finalised following the results of the site-specific flood modelling. A Hydrogeological Risk Assessment will be undertaken to inform the design and implementation of the trenchless method utility crossing of the railway. A Piling Risk Assessment will be undertaken to inform the design and implementation of the trenching and piles associated with installation of solar panel framework. The detailed design of the equipment and floodplain compensation will be informed by the results of the EA approved site-specific flood modelling.

5.6.15. Taking into account the embedded and additional mitigation measures the residual significance of the effect of the construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning of the Proposed Development on surface water drainage and flood risk is not considered significant. The risks of an accidental pollution incident affecting water quality of surface water and groundwater bodies are minimised to an acceptable level.

5.6.16. Full details regarding water are provided in **Chapter 9: Water Environment [EN010140/APP/6.1.9] of the ES**.

5.7. Transport and Access

5.7.1. Transport and Access are discussed in Section 5.14 of NPS EN-1. Paragraph 5.14.1 of NPS EN-1 acknowledges that the transport of materials, goods and personnel to and from a project site during all project phases can have a variety of impacts on surrounding transport infrastructure, such as increased congestion. It goes on to state that the Secretary of State should only consider preventing or refusing development on highways grounds, if there is an unacceptable impact on highway safety or a severe residual cumulative impact on the road network.

5.7.2. NPS EN-3 provides guidance on the construction and operation of solar schemes. NPS EN-3 acknowledges that traffic volumes associated with a solar farm are likely to be highest during construction. As solar farms are well suited to sites in areas served by a minor road network and their general modular construction, they are likely to result in smaller vehicles than typical onshore energy infrastructure but may be more voluminous. NPS EN-3 paragraph 2.10.123 goes further in stating an application should assess various potential routes to the site for delivery of materials and components, in order to select the most appropriate route, taking into consideration the quality and capacity of existing road infrastructure.

5.7.3. Impacts on transport and access were assessed in accordance with guidance prepared by the Department for Transport, the IEMA Guidelines for Road Traffic and the DMRB by National Highways.

5.7.4. The surrounding road network that will be utilised as part of the construction route to the Proposed Development has been fully considered, including the A614, A645, A1041 Bawtry Road, Hardenshaw Lane and Jowland Winn Lane. The assessment was assisted via a sourced information including Automatic Traffic Counts (ATC) surveys, highway boundary information and topographical surveys.

5.7.5. Effects assessed were accidents and safety, severance, driver delay, pedestrian delay (which included cyclists and equestrians), pedestrian amenity (also included cyclists and equestrians), and hazardous loads.

5.7.6. A peak of 210 two-way construction movements (including 52 HGVs) were predicted per day during the construction phase of the Site. Using 2027 as the baseline construction year, the growth in traffic for each of the roads within the study area only exceeded the IEMA guideline thresholds on two roads, Jowland Winn Lane and

Hardenshaw Lane. These both exceeded the 30% increase in traffic threshold, although from a very low baseline. As a robust assessment all roads were included within the assessment.

5.7.7. It is anticipated that access to the existing PRoWs will be maintained throughout all phases of the Proposed Development. Should temporary diversion be required to ensure the safety of PRoW users, these will be for a short period during construction and decommissioning.

5.7.8. During construction and decommissioning, the majority of effects will be negligible, short-term and temporary. Pedestrian amenity, which included cyclists and equestrians, resulted in a minor adverse, short-term and temporary effect. No effects will be significant. During the operational phase all effects will be negligible.

5.7.9. Several mitigation measures are proposed. These include preparation of a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP), which includes management measures for PRoW and a Travel Plan. These will be implemented and enforced throughout the construction and decommissioning phases.

5.7.10. Cumulative schemes that may be under construction or operational during the construction of the Proposed Development are noted and these were assessed for the future baseline year 2027. In total, eight cumulative schemes would have an effect on the Study Area affecting the A614, A645 and the A1041. All roads are considered A-roads and as a number of the schemes had relatively low daily movement numbers it was predicted that the cumulative schemes would result in the same residual effects for the construction of the Proposed Development. As such, depending on the effect, these were either negligible or minor adverse and all not significant. This was the same for the operational and decommissioning phases.

5.7.11. The Proposed Development is not likely to result in any significant transport and access impacts during its construction, operation (including maintenance) and decommissioning phases.

5.7.12. Full details are provided in **Chapter 10: Transport and Access [EN010140/APP/6.1.10] of the ES.**

5.8. Noise and Vibration

5.8.1. Noise and vibration are discussed in Section 5.12 of NPS EN-1, where it provides guidance on the methodological approach to assessing noise impacts which may arise from a Proposed Development. This requirement is echoed in NPS EN-3 paragraph 5.12.4.

5.8.2. NPS EN-3, paragraph 2.4.2 further states that proposals for renewable energy infrastructure should demonstrate good design, particularly in a manner which mitigates impacts such as noise. This is further reiterated in paragraph 5.12.4 which requires any assessment of noise impacts to consider mitigation in reducing its impact.

5.8.3. In order to determine the likely effect of noise during construction and decommissioning of the Proposed Development, noise predictions have been carried out in accordance with the procedures presented in British Standard 5228-1:2009+A1:2014 'Code of Practice for Noise and Vibration Control on Construction and Open Sites – Noise' (BS5228-1), taking full account of 'Best Practical Means' (BPM) to control the impact of noise, where significant impacts are likely to occur.

5.8.4. The assessment of the likely significant noise and vibration effects resulting from the construction and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development, arising from construction and decommissioning activities, concluded that effects will be short-term and temporary, and no greater than negligible at the closest Noise Sensitive Receptor (NSR) to any construction and decommissioning activities.

5.8.5. No mitigation measures beyond the implementation of construction best practice measures will be required, to ensure that all construction noise and vibration effects are not significant.

5.8.6. For the Proposed Development's operation, the assessment has considered a set of worst-case, candidate input parameters and on this basis, it has been predicted to give rise to no worse than a negligible effect at the assessed NSRs.

5.8.7. Full details are provided in **Chapter 11: Noise and Vibration [EN010140/APP/6.1.11] of the ES**.

5.9. Socio-Economics

5.9.1. Section 13 of NPS EN-1 recognises that the construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning of energy infrastructure may have socio-economic impacts at local and regional levels. Paragraph 5.13.4 states the construction of energy infrastructure projects has the potential to change local population dynamics, shifting demand for services and facilities in settlements nearest construction work and could also have an effect on social cohesion.

5.9.2. The socio-economic assessment has considered the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development on job creation, economic contribution (measured through the creation of GVA), workforce expenditure and local amenity (residential properties, local businesses, tourism and recreation uses).

5.9.3. The existing agricultural use of the Site will temporarily cease for the 40-year modelled operational lifespan of the Proposed Development. However, the Site only represents 15% of the total land held by the existing farmers that farm the land within the Site and therefore the 19 labourers currently working on the Site will be retained by the farmers to work on the wider land holding. No existing employment will therefore be lost as a result of the Proposed Development.

5.9.4. Additional employment opportunities will be created by the Proposed Development. During construction, 200 FTE jobs will be supported directly through construction, related to land preparation, installation and grid connection, therefore providing employment for a wide range of occupation and skill levels. Contractors will seek the use of local labour where possible, as baseline conditions identify a local labour supply, within the Wider Study Area, with a range of skills, occupations and industries capable of meeting this demand. To support the use of local employment, the Applicant has prepared **ES Appendix 13.1: Employment and Skills Plan [EN010140/APP/6.3.13.1]**. However, a 'worst-case' scenario for construction employment has been undertaken on the assumption that all of the construction workforce would be sourced from outside of the Wider Study Area, and therefore a 100% leakage factor has been applied within this assessment.

5.9.5. In addition to direct jobs, it is expected that there will be a further 80 indirect jobs supported by the Proposed Development during construction, as a result of multiplier effects in the supply chain. Whilst the solar PV panels themselves are not expected to be sourced locally, indirect employment will be supported once the panels arrive,

such as the use of local transport for the delivery of materials to Site.

5.9.6. It is therefore considered that the net employment effect to the Wider Study Area from the Proposed Development during the construction phase is 80 FTE jobs.

5.9.7. The sensitivity of construction employment in the Wider Study Area is considered to be moderate, noting that there are 117,000 construction jobs in the Wider Study Area currently, representing 5% of all employment, of which 2,250 are within Selby District and 535 within the Local Study Area. The magnitude of change is considered to be very low in the context of the net employment effect to the Wider Study Area of 80 FTE jobs, representing less than 0.1% of all employment in the Wider Study Area currently. In light of this, the Proposed Development is considered to have a temporary negligible effect on employment in the Wider Study Area during the construction phase, which is not considered significant.

5.9.8. The 80 FTE indirect jobs created by the Proposed Development will generate economic output in the form of GVA. As these jobs are supported through the supply chain, they could be in any industry and therefore GVA creation in the Wider Study Area is estimated to be £3.6m per annum.

5.9.9. The sensitivity of economic output during the construction phase is considered to be moderate in the Wider Study Area, noting that the construction industry contributes 6.4% of the Wider Study Area's total GVA. The magnitude of change is considered to be very low in the context of the Proposed Development's creation of GVA of £3.6m per annum, increasing annual GVA in the Wider Study Area by less than 0.1%. On this basis, the Proposed Development is considered to have a negligible effect on economic output in the Wider Study Area during the construction phase, which is not considered significant.

5.9.10. The construction workforce is estimated to generate expenditure of £71,960 per annum through spending on food, fuel and potentially leisure activities. Such spending will also support local services to the Site, including shops and eating establishments. The Proposed Development will therefore have a minor beneficial effect on workforce expenditure during the construction phase.

5.9.11. Effects on local amenity during the construction phase from noise, traffic and visual activities will be negligible to minor adverse in light of the technical assessments presented in **Chapter 7: Landscape and Views [EN010140/APP/6.1.7], Chapter**

10: Transport and Access [EN010140/APP/6.1.10] and Chapter 11: Noise and Vibration [EN010140/APP/6.1.11] of the ES.

5.9.12. Once operational, the Proposed Development will have a moderate beneficial effect on renewable energy generation in the Wider Study Area increasing the solar PV capacity in the Wider Study Area by 30% and increasing all types of renewable energy generation in the Wider Study Area by 3%.

5.9.13. The sensitivity of renewable energy in the Wider Study Area is considered to be high, given the UK government's commitment towards renewable energy generation. The magnitude of change is considered to be medium in the context of the Proposed Development increasing renewable electricity generation (across all forms of generation) in the Wider Study Area by 3%. On this basis, it is considered that the Proposed Development will have a moderate beneficial effect on renewable energy generation in the Wider Study Area during the operational phase, which is considered significant.

5.9.14. Similar to during construction, effects on local amenity during operation from noise, traffic and visual activities will be negligible, in light of the technical assessments presented in **Chapter 7: Landscape and Views [EN010140/APP/6.1.7], Chapter 10: Transport and Access [EN010140/APP/6.1.10] and Chapter 11: Noise and Vibration [EN010140/APP/6.1.11] of the ES**.

5.9.15. Decommissioning of the Proposed Development will generate similar socio-economic effects to those during the construction phase.

5.9.16. Full details regarding socioeconomics are provided in **Chapter 13: Socio-Economics [EN010140/APP/6.1.13] of the ES**.

5.10. Soil and Agricultural Land

5.10.1. Paragraph 5.11.12 of NPS EN-1 advises that applicants should seek to minimise impacts on best and most versatile ('BMV') agricultural land (that is land in Grades 1, 2 and 3a of the agricultural land classification ('ALC')) and preferably use land in areas of poorer agricultural quality (land in Grades 3b, 4 and 5) or brownfield land. Applicants should seek to minimise impacts on soil quality, taking account of any mitigation measures proposed. This position is echoed in NPS EN-3, however with specific regards to solar, paragraph 2.10.20 advises that the development of ground

mounted solar arrays is not prohibited on land of ALC Grades 1, 2 or 3a, but the impacts must be considered and the applicant has put forward appropriate mitigation measures to minimise the impacts on soils or soil resources. The above sentiment is repeated in the WMS (2024), which emphasises the need to balance the use of land for solar development and food production.

5.10.2. There are anticipated to be some effects on agricultural practices, on not only BMV, but also soils, farm businesses and food production.

5.10.3. The area of BMV agricultural land affected temporarily by the installation of fixed equipment (including access tracks, field stations and on-site substation and BESS) amounts to 10ha as follows:

- Grade 1: 0.1ha
- Grade 2: 7ha
- Grade 3a: 2.9
- Total: 10ha

5.10.4. Over the duration of the Proposed Development (as a 'worst-case' assessment scenario), these areas are considered to be taken out of productive food use for a temporary duration for the 40-year operational lifespan of the Proposed Development.

5.10.5. The temporary loss of 7ha of Grade 1 and 2 BMV land is a major adverse effect, with the temporary loss of 2.9ha of Grade 3a land considered a moderate adverse impact. Combined, however, this impact is seen as major adverse for the 40 year duration of the operational lifespan of the Proposed Development, which is a significant impact.

5.10.6. It is important however to note that this BMV land will not be lost permanently, as it will be reinstated to a comparable grade upon decommissioning of the Proposed Development. The restoration of BMV land will be guided by a Soils Management Plan (SMP), implemented prior to construction, to ensure appropriate measures are in place to protect BMV from the beginning of construction to ensure areas of disturbed BMV can be appropriately reinstated upon decommissioning.

5.10.7. This temporary loss of BMV land should be seen in context, particularly compared to the estimated 1.85 million ha of Grade 1 and 2 land, with a further 1.85m ha of Grade 3a in England.

5.10.8. Beyond the 10ha of BMV land temporarily lost as a result of the Proposed Development, the bulk of the Site however will remain available for sheep grazing, ensuring some agricultural practices remain.

5.10.9. With regards to effects on soils, the Proposed Development is anticipated to have a moderately beneficial impact. This arises from the cessation of farming practices, such as the use of pesticides on land occupied by the Proposed Development. Essentially, the Proposed Development provides the soil an opportunity to regenerate naturally over time.

5.10.10. With regards to farm businesses, there will be a moderate or minor adverse effect on farm businesses. However, none of the five farms will be affected to the extent that a continued viable farm business cannot continue, notwithstanding the economic benefit of receiving rental income from the Proposed Development.

5.10.11. With regards to effects on food production, there is no requirement to use land for food production (or to use it for any particular intensity of use for that matter). It follows that a landowner can do what they wish with their land, within the definition of agriculture. For example, the landowner could rewild and graze it at a low intensity, graze it with horses, plant short-rotation coppice, plant ancillary woodland or fallow it. Food production is not an obligation. Currently there is no concern from Government about food security, and no requirements or incentives to manage land for food production. The land use change from agriculture (only some of which is for food) to a mix of energy production and agriculture will not result in any significant adverse environmental or economic effects. As such the effects of the Proposed Development on food production are assessed as being negligible.

5.10.12. Full details regarding soil and agricultural land are provided in **Chapter 14: Soils and Agricultural Land [EN010140/APP/6.1.14] of the ES.**

6. Conclusions and Planning Balance

6.1.1. The Proposed Development will be determined pursuant to section 104 of the PA 2008, as set out at Section 1.3. Applications determined under this section require the SoS to have regard to:

(a) any national policy statement which has effect in relation to development of the description to which the application relates (a "relevant national policy statement"),

(b) any local impact report (within the meaning given by section 60(3)) submitted to the Secretary of State before the deadline specified in a notice under section 60(2),

(c) any matters prescribed in relation to development of the description to which the application relates, and

(d) any other matters which the Secretary of State thinks are both important and relevant to the Secretary of State's decision.

6.1.2. This Planning Statement provides evidence of the Proposed Development's compliance with the relevant prescribed matters and relevant planning policy and other matters the Applicant considers are likely to be important and relevant, to inform the SoS's decision as to whether to grant a DCO for the Proposed Development.

6.1.3. Applications for solar NSIPs are required to be determined in accordance with NPS EN-1, EN-3 and EN-5, as designated in January 2024. Given the Proposed Development's status as an NSIP, the Applicant considers that significant weight should be given to compliance with the designated NPS energy policies, over the NPPF and local planning policy, due to the NPS's place in the s104 framework.

6.1.4. The designated Energy NPSs and other national energy policy set out the Government's aims to provide secure and affordable energy supplies whilst decarbonising the energy system. This is in order to enable the UK to achieve its legally binding commitment to reduce carbon emissions and achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050, as well as provide a resilient and low-cost energy network for the future. The Government recognises that the need to deliver these aims and commitments is immediate and therefore renewable energy NSIPs, including large scale solar projects, need to be delivered urgently.

6.1.5. The Proposed Development will deliver these policy aims, providing a significant amount of low carbon electricity over its lifetime, helping provide increased energy resilience, security and affordability. It will therefore be a critical part of the national portfolio of renewable energy generation that is required to decarbonise the country's energy supply quickly whilst providing security and affordability of national energy supply. It is clear that there is a compelling case for the need for the Proposed Development, strongly supported by its status as a CNP, and that it will deliver national economic and social benefits in line with the Government's wider objectives of delivering sustainable development.

6.1.6. The Proposed Development will also deliver other more localised economic, social and environmental benefits.

6.1.7. NPS EN-1 paragraph 4.1.3 sets a presumption in favour of granting permission for energy NSIP projects. Paragraph 3.1.2 of NPS EN-1 acknowledges that it will not be possible to develop the necessary amounts of such infrastructure without some significant residual adverse impacts on the environment.

6.1.8. This sentiment is echoed in paragraph 3.3.63 of EN-1, which states that in general the urgent need for CNP infrastructure to achieve the UK's energy objectives will outweigh any other residual impacts, not capable of being addressed by application of the mitigation hierarchy.

6.1.9. The analysis of planning policy compliance demonstrates that the need for the Proposed Development is supported by planning policy and other national energy and environmental policy and that the Proposed Development addresses relevant national and local planning policies through its design, avoiding and minimising adverse impacts where possible.

6.1.10. With the proposed mitigation, the ES demonstrates that the Scheme will not have any significant adverse effects in relation to cultural heritage, flooding and transport and access.

6.1.11. Major beneficial effects are anticipated in relation to biodiversity, as a result of habitat creation and diversification. Similarly, there will also be minor beneficial socioeconomic outcomes arising from GVA associated with construction.

6.1.12. It is, however, acknowledged that due to the Scheme, there is potential for significant

landscape and visual effects on some receptors during operation. This includes landscape receptors during operational Year 1 (being the 'Site and its Character' and LCA 15: Camblesforth Farmland). Further, some visual receptors identified are likely to experience significant effects during operation Year 1 also, being users of PRoWs, walkers and cyclists as well as residents of Rose Hill Farm, Primrose Hill and Camblesforth.

6.1.13. The Proposed Development has sought to reduce landscape impacts on receptors, through changes to the RLB as well as introducing new and reenforcing existing screen planting and areas of woodland.

6.1.14. There are also anticipated to be temporary major adverse impacts on BMV land, due to the temporary loss of 10ha of BMV land for aspects of the Proposed Development such as access roads and substation and BESS. There is also expected to be a moderate or minor adverse effect on farm businesses, notwithstanding the expected financial benefits of receiving rent on farmland from the Proposed Development. While there is not expected to be any impacts on food production, a moderate beneficial effect is anticipated on soil health.

6.1.15. All of these effects will only occur while the Proposed Development is under construction, operating or being decommissioned and are therefore limited to its temporary lifetime, with BMV and farm businesses able to be reinstated and resume, respectively, as prior to the Proposed Development.

6.1.16. As discussed in Section 4, the use of BMV land has been unavoidable, due to several factors, not least the natural environment and existing surrounding development, which includes significant energy production facilities. This DCO application has provided a robust justification for the use of BMV agricultural land within the Site on the basis of proximity to the grid connection point and maximising the amount of low carbon electricity generated by the Proposed Development. The impacts on BMV land have been minimised through careful site selection, iterative design evolution and appropriate mitigation measures including the management of soil resource during the life of the Proposed Development, which will enable BMV land to be reinstated post-decommissioning.

6.1.17. When considered against the NPS, the Proposed Development accords with relevant policies and with regard to specific policy tests, the national and local benefits of the Scheme are considered on balance to outweigh its adverse impacts. Therefore, it is

considered that the Proposed Development is compliant with relevant policies and should be granted.