



HELIOS RENEWABLE
ENERGY
PROJECT

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Draft Statement of Common Ground with Hirst Courtney and West Bank Parish Council

January 2025



Helios Renewable Energy Project

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Planning Inspectorate Reference: EN010140

January 2025

Prepared on behalf of Enso Green Holdings D Limited

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Reviewed by:	JB	

Stantec
7 Soho Square
London
W1D 3QB

Tel: 020 7446 6888



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1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

- 1.1.1. This Statement of Common Ground ('SoCG') has been prepared on behalf of Enso Green Holdings D Limited (the 'Applicant') in conjunction with Hirst Courtney and West Bank Parish Council in respect of the Helios Renewable Energy Project Development Consent Order (the 'Proposed Development').
- 1.1.2. The SoCG sets out the matters of agreement between the Applicant and Hirst Courtney and West Bank Parish Council and also explains those matters which, at the time of writing, remain in progress, or where agreement has not been achieved.
- 1.1.3. This SoCG is based on Hirst Courtney and West Bank Parish Council's Relevant Representation published on 10 October 2024 **[RR-142]**.
- 1.1.4. The SoCG will be amended as the examination progresses in order to enable a final version to be submitted to the Examining Authority.
- 1.1.5. This SoCG covers all the matters which are relevant to Hirst Courtney and West Bank Parish Council.

2. Record of Engagement

2.1. Summary of consultation and engagement

2.1.1. The Consultation Report [APP-181] sets out the consultation between the Applicant and interested parties/stakeholders prior to the submission of the Application, including the engagement undertaken with Hirst Courtney and West Bank Parish Council. Table 2.1 shows a summary of the engagement that has taken place between the Applicant (including consultants on its behalf) and Hirst Courtney and West Bank Parish Council in relation to the Proposed Development.

Table 2.1: Schedule of Meetings and Correspondence

Date	Form of Correspondence	Summary
11/10/23	Email	SoCC announcement, dates of Statutory Consultation.
18/10/23	Email	Parish Council requested a meeting following announcement of the SoCC and Statutory Consultation.
18/10/23	Email	Applicant send a holding response.
25/10/23	Email	Statutory Consultation announcement including formal notifications to host parishes.
02/11/23	Email	Parish Council followed up to reiterate request for a meeting.
15/11/23	Email	Update following consultation events – offer of hard copies of consultation documents which were then posted.
21/11/23	Email	Further opportunity to submit comments and questions.
21/11/23	Email	Parish Council asked for responses to a number of queries raised by the community.
27/11/23	Email	Applicant sent a detailed response to a number of queries raised by the Parish Councils. Details of the issues raised can be found in

Date	Form of Correspondence	Summary
		Chapter 14 of the Consultation Report [APP-181].
05/12/23	Email	Extension to the consultation – opportunity to address outstanding queries.
06/12/23	Email	Consultation summary including responses received and encourage formal response.
07/12/23	Email	Consultation response received from Hirst Courtney and West Bank Parish Council stating their strong objection to the Proposed Development and their reasons for this position.
14/12/23	Email	Acknowledgement of consultation response.
17/12/24	Email	Email from the Applicant to the Clerk of the Parish Council providing advanced notice that a draft SoCG would be shared in early 2025 and welcoming further engagement regarding the SoCG.
10/01/25	Email	Applicant sent draft SoCG to the Parish Council.
12/01/25	Email	Parish Council followed up on the SoCG and requested an extension to the end of March to respond.
10/01/25	Email	Applicant clarified that the SOCG is a draft intended to facilitate discussions. The Applicant is required to submit a first draft at Deadline 2 (13/01/25). The Applicant confirmed that it was content to receive feedback following the next Parish Council meeting.

3. Current Position

- 3.1.1. Table 3.1 provides a schedule that summarises the position on key matters between the Applicant and Hirst Courtney and West Bank Parish Council. Appendix A details the position between the Applicant and Hirst Courtney and West Bank Parish Council on each matter raised in their relevant representation.
- 3.1.2. Each matter is attributed a status as follows:

Agreed	The matter is agreed between the parties, or there are no significant disagreement such that the matter is considered closed.
Under discussion	This matter is neither 'agreed' or 'not agreed'. Technical work is being undertaken with the aim of achieving agreement, though the risk of disagreement remains.
Not agreed	The matter is not agreed between the parties and the outcome of the approach taken by the Applicant or Hirst Courtney and West Bank Parish Council is considered to result in a materially different impact to the assessment conclusions.

Table 3.1: Key Matters

Matter	Status	Date
Landscape and Visual		Jan 2025
Agricultural Land		Jan 2025
Health and Safety		Jan 2025
Cumulative Impact		Jan 2025
Socio-economic Impact		Jan 2025
Traffic Generation		Jan 2025
Biodiversity and Ecology		Jan 2025
Alternatives		Jan 2025

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4. Signatures

4.1.1. This Statement of Common Ground is agreed upon:

On behalf of Hirst Courtney and West Bank Parish Council:

Name:

Signature:

Date:

On behalf of the Applicant:

Name:

Signature:

Date:

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Appendix A: Detailed Matters

Ref.	Description of Matter	Hirst Courtney and West Bank Parish Council – Current Position (Relevant Representation)	Applicant – Current Position	Status
HCWB-01	Landscape and Visual	<p><i>We strongly object to the proposed Helios Solar Farm and Battery Storage facility for a number of reasons. It will ruin the landscape for the whole area. The very reason people bought houses and moved here was for the beautiful country side, and not an industrial estate!</i></p> <p><i>Detrimental change to the character of open fields and farmland.</i></p>	<p>The visual impact of the Proposed Development has been assessed in ES Chapter 7 Landscape and Views [APP-027]. A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment [APP-134] has been carried out as part of the application. The scale of change attributable to the Proposed Development will remain small/negligible, perceived over a medium extent, resulting in a slight effect magnitude. In combination with the low sensitivity of receptors, this will result in a minor/negligible and not significant effect, particularly in the context of the baseline large scale industrial built form at Drax Power Station.</p> <p>With regard to landscape, the Proposed Development will have a major to moderate, significant impact on the Site's landscape character, particularly in the early years of operation, due to the introduction of solar PV panels and associated infrastructure. While the landform will largely remain unaltered, except for minor modifications in the Substation and Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) Compound, the addition of these structures will change the Site's appearance and how it is perceived. Although a comprehensive landscape strategy has been designed to mitigate visual and landscape effects, the newly implemented planting will have limited immediate impact. By year 15, however, the planting is expected to be well-established, helping to restore fragmented hedgerows</p>	Under discussion

			<p>and enhance the Site's landscape character, biodiversity, and habitat connectivity. Despite the built elements remaining visible, this strategy is projected to reduce the impact to a moderate adverse level, which is not considered significant, especially given the reversible nature of the Proposed Development after its 40-year operational phase. A Landscape Strategy Plan [APP-054] has been submitted as part of the application.</p>	
HCWB-02	Agricultural Land	<i>Loss of good quality agricultural land.</i>	<p>National planning policy does not explicitly rule out development on agricultural land. The NPPF states that “Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality.” This is supported within NPS EN-3, paragraph 2.10.30 which states “Whilst the 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 and are discussed under 2.10.73 - 92 and 2.10.107 - 2.10.126 which identifies a non-exhaustive list of specific impacts”.</p> <p>As detailed in Planning Statement Appendix 2: Alternative Site Assessment [APP-227], paragraph 2.6.29, a search was conducted for suitable non-agricultural brownfield land within a 5km distance from the point of connection at Drax Power Station. Paragraph 2.6.21 to 2.6.25 of the Alternative Site Assessment (ASA) [APP-227] set out the justification for the use of provisional Grade 2 agricultural land. As shown in Figure 2.7 of the ASA, the majority of the land within a 5km radius of the point of connection is either Grade 1 or Grade 2. The Grade 3 land within the 5km radius is not available for development due to existing uses and planning applications in these areas.</p>	Under discussion

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HCWB-03	Health and Safety	<i>Health & Safety risks posed by the battery storage and long term as a result of noise and visual impact.</i>	<p>A BESS Safety Management Plan [APP-119] has been produced to define the proposed safety strategy, requirements, and processes necessary to meet agreed safety objectives and to set a level of safety performance that the BESS is to be measured against. It also provides the basis for the safety management processes and procedures required to satisfy the identified safety requirements for the BESS. Consultation and communication has also been undertaken with North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service (NYFRS) which has informed the outline BESS safety management plan.</p> <p>ES Chapter 11 Noise and Vibration [APP-031] concludes that construction noise, road traffic and vibration will all have negligible residual effect.</p>	
HCWB-04	Cumulative Impact	<i>Cumulative impact alongside the 2 other solar farms proposed.</i>	<p>Both NPS EN-1 and EN-3 confirm there is an urgent need for Critical National Priority Infrastructure which is key for the Government to achieve their energy objectives and Net Zero and EN-3 (3.3.20) notes that the government analysis shows that a “secure, reliable affordable, net zero consistent system in 2020 is likely to be composed predominantly of wind and solar”. NPS EN-1 at paragraphs 3.2.3 -3.2.4 states that it is not the role of planning to deliver specific amounts or limit any form of infrastructure covered by the NPS such as solar projects. The government wants industry to propose viable projects in line with government’s strategic framework. It goes on to say that it is not the government’s intention through the NPSs to “<i>propose limits on any new infrastructure that can be consented in accordance with the energy NPSs</i>” and that such consented projects “<i>can help deliver an affordable electricity system, by driving competition and reducing costs within and amongst different</i></p>	Under discussion

			<p><i>technology and infrastructure types. Consenting new projects also enables projects utilising more advanced technology and greater efficiency to come forward". It is therefore clear that the government, through planning policy, is not looking limit certain projects by location and there is no planning policy which applies in respect of a region having "done its bit". The cumulative impacts of the Proposed Development are relevant and have been assessed accordingly in the environmental statement.</i></p> <p>Each technical chapter within the ES includes a summary of cumulative effects, which are subsequently summarised in Chapter 15 Cumulative Effects [APP-035] which addresses both inter- and intra-project effects. The only significant cumulative effects are identified in relation to landscape (adverse), biodiversity (beneficial) and socio-economics (beneficial).</p>	
HCWB-05	Socio-economic Impact	<p><i>Risk of encouraging further crime in the area, potential negative effect on house prices, alongside various projects locally expected around the same time.</i></p>	<p>The Applicant is not aware of any empirical evidence to suggest that the presence of solar farms affects nearby property values. In any event, property value is not a material planning consideration.</p> <p>Crime is discussed within the Population and Human Health Technical Note [APP-118] Landscaping will be used to create a pleasant space, and the use of fencing and CCTV, will ensure the creation of a space in which crime and anti-social behaviour is discouraged. Effects to community safety are therefore not considered to be significant. The Landscape Strategy uses screening planting to minimise the visual impact of the Proposed Development on visual receptors including the users of PRoW, within the Site and those with visual links to the Site. In some instances,</p>	Under discussion

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			screening planting has not been provided alongside PRow to maintain a degree of openness within and/ or across the Site.	
HCWB-06	Traffic Generation	<i>There will be a huge impact in terms of traffic.</i>	As set out in the oCTMP [AS-006] , there are expected to be 18 HGV deliveries on average per day throughout the 260 working days of the construction period, which equates to 36 total movements (arrivals and departures). The assessment in ES Chapter 10 Transport and Access [APP-030] concludes that the construction phase vehicle movements would have a negligible residual effect on road user and pedestrian safety, severance, road drive vehicle delay, non-motorised user delay and in terms of the effects of hazardous/large loads. The construction phase is assessed to have a minor adverse (not significant) residual effect on non-motorised user amenity (including fear and intimidation).	Under discussion
HCWB-07	Biodiversity and Ecology	<i>Negative impact on natural biodiversity and habitats.</i>	The impact of the Proposed Development on biodiversity is assessed in ES Chapter 8 Biodiversity [APP-028] . It is concluded that there will no significant adverse effects on biodiversity as a result of the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development includes significant habitat enhancement provisions; these will be managed for the benefit of wildlife over the long term and will provide biodiversity gains for a wide variety of species. Additionally, the proposed creation of diverse grasslands, tree planting and hedgerow planting will deliver a quantifiable biodiversity benefit. Measures to protect and enhance biodiversity throughout the lifetime are set out in the oCEMP [APP-121] , oOEMP [APP-124] , oLEMP	Under discussion

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			[APP-143] and oDEMP [APP-123], which will be secured via DCO Requirements as set out in the dDCO [AS-007].	
HCWB-08	Alternatives	<i>Better alternatives in terms of location and more efficient energy production.</i>	<p>The ASA [APP-227] outlines the site selection process undertaken by the Applicant. An assessment of the environmental and operational constraints of the Site and alternative sites was conducted. Regional considerations were taken into account when seeking to develop a solar PV project. In comparison to some other parts of the UK, specific areas within North Yorkshire have a combination of good levels of irradiation and large flat open areas of land. The specific area where the Proposed Development Site eventuated has a significant amount of pre-existing transmission infrastructure, namely the national electricity transmission system (NETS) at National Grid’s Drax Substation. Given the proximity to the National Grid Drax 132kV Substation, this region had the additional benefit of reducing the need for additional overhead infrastructure (with associated commercial costs and landscape and visual impacts), or other supporting infrastructure to connect the generator to the national grid.</p> <p>As set out in the Planning Statement [APP-228], the Proposed Development will provide 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.</p>	Under discussion