



# The Sizewell C Project

## 6.10 Volume 9 Rail Chapter 1 Introduction

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 The construction of the Sizewell C Project will rely on the delivery of substantial amounts of construction materials including (but not limited to) aggregates, cement and reinforced steel and containerised goods. Delivery of this freight is proposed to be transported via rail where possible during construction of the Sizewell C Project.

1.1.2 This volume (**Volume 9**) of the **Environmental Statement (ES)** presents details of the rail proposals, referred to hereafter as the 'proposed development', and reports on the likely significant environmental effects during construction, operation and, where relevant, the removal of the development and reinstatement of the land.

1.1.3 The proposed green rail route in its entirety comprises a temporary rail extension of approximately 4.5km from the existing Saxmundham to Leiston branch line to a terminal within the main development site.

1.1.4 The proposals detailed in this volume are as follows:

- the part of the green rail route comprising a temporary rail extension of approximately 1.8 kilometres (km) from the existing Saxmundham to Leiston branch line to the proposed B1122 (Abbey Road) level crossing inclusive (henceforth referred to as the 'proposed rail extension route') as shown on **Figure 1.1**; and
- Saxmundham to Leiston branch line upgrades (including track replacement and level crossing upgrades) (henceforth referred to as the 'proposed rail improvement works') as shown as **Figure 1.3**.

1.1.5 Together these are referred to throughout this volume as 'the proposed development'.

1.1.6 The part of the green rail route of approximately 2.7 km in length, between the proposed B1122 (Abbey Road) level crossing and the terminal within the main development site, is detailed in **Volume 2, Chapters 1 to 5** of the **ES** and assessed in **Volume 2** of the **ES**.

1.1.7 The 1.8 km proposed rail extension route is temporary and would be *in situ* until it is no longer required for the construction of the Sizewell C Project (expected to last 9–12 years). The proposed rail extension route will then be removed and the land reinstated. However, the proposed rail improvement works to the Saxmundham to Leiston branch line would be permanent.

- 1.1.8 Detailed descriptions of the sites for both the proposed rail extension route and the proposed rail improvement works, the proposed development, and different construction, operation and, where relevant, the removal and reinstatement works are provided in this Chapter and **Chapter 2** of this volume. A glossary of terms and list of abbreviations used in this chapter is provided in **Appendix 1A** of **Volume 1** of the **ES**.
- 1.1.9 The proposed development would be used during the construction of the Sizewell C Project to transport construction materials to the main development site. It would support up to three freight trains per day (six movements) at peak construction (2028).
- 1.1.10 Further detail on the proposed development in the context of the wider construction transport strategy is provided in the project overview provided in **Volume 1** of the **ES**.
- 1.1.11 This chapter provides details on:
- the structure and scope of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the proposed development;
  - the planning policy relevant to the proposed development; and
  - an overview of the site and surrounding land uses for both the proposed rail extension route and proposed rail improvement works sites.

## 1.2 Environmental Impact Assessment and this Environmental Statement

### a) Requirement for Environmental Impact Assessment

- 1.2.1 Schedule 1 of the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (SI 2017/572) (as amended) (hereafter referred to as the 'EIA Regulations') (Ref. 1.1) lists development for which an EIA is mandatory. Nuclear power stations are listed as Schedule 1 development, and consequently an EIA is required for the Sizewell C Project including the proposed development. Further detail on the requirement for an EIA is provided in **Volume 1** of the **ES**.

### b) Environmental Impact Assessment scoping

- 1.2.2 In June 2014 SZC Co. obtained a scoping opinion from the Secretary of State, under Regulation 8 of the 2009 EIA Regulations (Ref. 1.2). In May 2019 SZC Co. submitted a further request to the Planning Inspectorate for a scoping opinion to include the scope of assessments for the revised

Sizewell C Project proposals which were not previously scoped for (provided in **Appendix 6A** of **Volume 1** of the **ES**). This also included the scopes of assessments for the additional environmental effects to be considered under the 2017 EIA Regulations (in particular, climate change, human health and risk of major accidents and disasters). A scoping opinion was issued by the Secretary of State in July 2019 (refer to **Appendix 6B** of **Volume 1** of the **ES**).

### c) Structure of the Environmental Statement

1.2.3 This volume should be read in conjunction with **Volume 1** of the **ES** which presents an introduction to SZC Co. and the Sizewell C Project; the application for development consent; the EIA process and methodology; the legislative and policy context; the strategic alternatives considered; a description of the other permits and licences required; and a glossary of terms and list of abbreviations.

1.2.4 There are a number of project-wide technical environmental assessments, within which the impacts of the proposed development are considered. These include: socio-economics, transport, radiological, conventional waste management, climate change, health and well-being, and major accidents and disasters, and are presented in **Volume 2** of the **ES**.

1.2.5 This volume for the proposed development is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 1:** Introduction (this chapter);
- **Chapter 2:** Description of the rail proposals;
- **Chapter 3:** Alternatives and design evolution;
- **Chapter 4:** Noise and vibration;
- **Chapter 5:** Air quality;
- **Chapter 6:** Landscape and visual;
- **Chapter 7:** Terrestrial ecology and ornithology;
- **Chapter 8:** Amenity and recreation;
- **Chapter 9:** Terrestrial historic environment;
- **Chapter 10:** Soils and agriculture;

- **Chapter 11:** Geology and land quality; and
- **Chapter 12:** Groundwater and Surface Water.

1.2.6 This volume should be read in conjunction with the **Transport Assessment** (Doc Ref. 8.5) which provides further information on the rationale for and the design of the proposed development. In addition, the **Consultation Report** (Doc Ref. 5.1) summarises the responses received from the public and statutory stakeholders to SZC Co.’s consultations and explains how the proposed development has evolved in response to the consultations.

1.2.7 In line with the requirements of regulation 14(4) of the EIA Regulations, this **ES** has been prepared by competent experts. A statement of competence outlining the relevant expertise and qualifications of the technical specialists, along with their role in undertaking the EIA has been provided within **Appendix 1B** of **Volume 1** of the **ES**.

1.2.8 A number of topics have been scoped out from the assessment of the proposed development, as confirmed in the scoping opinion issued by the Secretary of State in July 2019 (refer to **Appendix 6B** of **Volume 1** of the **ES**). These are identified in **Table 1.1** together with an explanation for why an assessment is not required.

**Table 1.1: Topics scoped out of requiring assessment for the proposed development.**

Topic	Reasoning why Assessment was not Required.
Marine historic environment.	The proposed development does not include any marine infrastructure; there are no pathways which would lead to any likely significant effects on the marine environment.
Coastal geomorphology and hydrodynamics.	
Marine water quality and sediments.	
Marine ecology.	
Marine navigation.	

d) **Structure of the environmental topic chapters**

1.2.9 The environmental topic chapters (**Chapters 4 to 12**) contained in this volume have been prepared to a standard format broadly following the below structure:

- Introduction;
- Legislation, policy and guidance;

- Methodology;
- Baseline environment;
- Environmental design and mitigation;
- Assessment;
- Mitigation and monitoring; and
- Residual effects.

1.2.10 Appendices are provided for each chapter as required, and contain for example, detailed baseline information, assessments and other technical reports.

1.2.11 Cumulative effects arising from the proposed development in combination with other third party (i.e. non-Sizewell C Project) developments, plans and/or programmes are detailed in **Volume 10** of the **ES** as well as an assessment of cumulative effects with other parts of the Sizewell C Project (where applicable).

1.2.12 A **Non-Technical Summary** of the **ES** has been prepared and is presented separately from this volume.

### 1.3 Policy context

1.3.1 The overarching planning context for the Sizewell C Project, including an overview of legislation and national planning, energy and nuclear policies which are material to the proposed development, is presented in, **Chapter 3** of **Volume 1** of the **ES**. This chapter provides an overview of regional and local policies which are relevant to the project.

1.3.2 A separate **Planning Statement** (Doc Ref. 8.4) has been prepared and includes consideration of how the Sizewell C Project complies with relevant policies.

1.3.3 Where topic specific policy differs from the generic policy outlined in **Chapter 3** of **Volume 1** of the **ES**, this is presented within the topic chapters that follow within this volume. This is limited to legislation, policy and guidance which could influence the sensitivity of receptors and/or could influence the scope and/or methodology of the assessment.

a) International policy

1.3.4 No international legislation or policy over and above that described in **Chapter 4 of Volume 1** of the **ES** is deemed relevant to the assessment for this site.

b) National and local policy

1.3.5 Nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIPs) are determined in accordance with the decision-making framework in the Planning Act 2008 (Ref 1.3), 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 (NPPF) (Ref 1.4) or local policy.

1.3.6 The NPPF and local planning policy do not contain specific policies for NSIPs, however, the decision maker may determine that one, or both, are important and relevant to the proposed development, and may be a material consideration in making decisions on planning applications.

i. National Policy Statements

1.3.7 The primary policy basis for determining any application for development consent for a nuclear power station is the policy framework set out in the Overarching National Policy Statement (NPS) for Energy (NPS EN-1) (Ref 1.5) and NPS for Nuclear Power Generation (NPS EN-6) (Ref 1.6).

1.3.8 In December 2017, the Government began the process of consulting on the preparation of a new NPS for nuclear power stations. In due course, the sites listed in NPS EN-6 (including Sizewell) will be covered by the policy in the new NPS. In the meantime, the Government's consultation on the new NPS for nuclear power stations makes clear that the Government will continue to consider those sites to be appropriate, and that they will retain strong Government support pending the designation of the new NPS.

1.3.9 Paragraph 5.13.6 of NPS EN-1 states that a new energy NSIP may give rise to substantial impacts on the surrounding transport infrastructure and the decision maker should therefore ensure that the applicant has sought to mitigate these impacts, including during the construction of the development. Where the proposed mitigation measures are insufficient to reduce the impact on the transport infrastructure to acceptable levels, the decision maker should consider requirements to mitigate adverse impacts on transport networks arising from the development.

1.3.10 Paragraph 5.13.7 of NPS EN-1 states that:

*“Provided that the applicant is willing to enter into planning obligations or requirements can be imposed to mitigate transport impacts identified in*

*the NATA/WebTAG transport assessment, with attribution of costs calculated in accordance with the Department for Transport’s guidance, then development consent should not be withheld, and appropriately limited weight should be applied to residual effects on the surrounding transport infrastructure.” (Ref 1.5)*

1.3.11 Paragraph 5.13.8 of NPS EN-1 requires that demand management measures must be considered before considering new inland transport infrastructure to deal with remaining transport impacts. Paragraph 5.13.9 goes on to say that the decision maker should have regard to the cost-effectiveness of demand management measures compared to new transport infrastructure, as well as the aim to secure more sustainable patterns of transport development when considering mitigation measures.

1.3.12 Paragraph 5.13.11 of NPS EN-1 states that the decision maker may attach requirements to a consent where there is likely to be substantial HGV traffic to “*control numbers of HGV movements to and from the site in a specified period during its construction and possibly on the routing of such movements*” (Ref 1.5).

#### ii. National Planning Policy Framework

1.3.13 The NPPF sets out the Government’s planning policy at the national level. As set out in paragraph 5 of the NPPF, it does not contain specific policies for NSIPs.

1.3.14 Paragraph 102 of the NPPF states that transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of development proposals so that, amongst other things, the potential impact of development on transport networks can be addressed and the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure can be identified, assessed and taken into account. The proposed development, together with the other associated development sites, demonstrates that the potential impact of the Sizewell C Project on transport networks can be addressed. **Chapter 10 of Volume 2** of the **ES** provides an assessment of potential transport impacts associated with the Sizewell C Project.

#### iii. Local Policy

1.3.15 The local development plan recognises that the transport effects of a new nuclear power station at Sizewell would be assessed in line with policies set out in the NPS EN-1 and NPS EN-6 (paragraph 3.116, Core Strategy and Development Management Policies, 2013 (Ref 1.7)). The proposed development forms one of the associated development proposals, which will contribute to mitigating the transport effects of the Sizewell C Project. **Chapter 10 of Volume 2** of the **ES** provides an assessment of potential transport impacts associated with the Sizewell C Project.

- 1.3.16 Within the adopted Suffolk Coastal Local Plan (Ref. 1.7) and the emerging Suffolk Coastal Local Plan (Final draft, 2019 (Ref. 1.8)), which would be adopted by East Suffolk Council, both the proposed rail extension route site and the Saxmundham to Leiston branch line are located within the countryside. Neither site is allocated for a specific use within the adopted Local Plan or proposed to be within the emerging Local Plan. However, the emerging Suffolk Coastal Local Plan states at paragraph 3.15 that the Council will take a positive approach to land allocations which are required to meet the demands of the Sizewell C Project. The emerging Local Plan recognises that these land requirements may be in excess of that outlined in the Employment Land Needs Assessment, and notes that any additional allocations will need to be justified by specific evidence relating to the demand.
- 1.3.17 Policy SCLP3.5 of the emerging Suffolk Coastal Plan states that developers must consider the infrastructure requirements needed to support and service Major Energy Infrastructure Projects.
- 1.3.18 Table 3.6 of the emerging Suffolk Coastal Local Plan (Final Draft, 2019) outlines the themes relevant to proposals for Major Energy Infrastructure Projects and highlights the utilisation of existing rail networks as a consideration. Policy SCLP3.4 adds that such proposals will require that *“the development and associated infrastructure proposals are to deliver positive outcomes for the local community and surrounding environment”* (Ref. 1.8).
- 1.4 **The site and surroundings**
- a) **Proposed rail extension route**
- 1.4.1 The green rail route in its entirety would comprise a temporary rail extension of approximately 4.5 km, extending in a north eastern direction from the existing Saxmundham to Leiston branch line to a terminal within the main development site. This volume concerns the part of the green rail route approximately 1.8 km in length from a junction with the existing Saxmundham to Leiston branch line, at a point approximately 1.5 km west of Leiston, to the proposed B1122 (Abbey Road) level crossing inclusive, as shown on **Figure 2.1** of **Chapter 2** of this volume. The total area of the proposed rail extension route site is approximately 23 hectares (ha).
- 1.4.2 The proposed rail extension route site is currently in agricultural use and comprises several adjoining fields. The land use in the surrounding area is also predominantly arable farmland, with well-defined hedgerow field boundaries and interspersed with scattered woodlands and copses.

- 1.4.3 In addition to the settlement of Leiston, there are a number of small pockets of dwellings, individual properties and isolated farmsteads to the south of the proposed rail extension route. These are chiefly concentrated along B1122 (Abbey Road), a two-lane single carriageway.
- 1.4.4 Leiston Abbey, which includes Leiston Abbey Scheduled Monument (SM 1014520) and associated Grade I and Grade II listed buildings, lies to the north of the proposed rail extension route. The non-ruinous standing buildings are presently in a variety of uses related to residential accommodation, practice and performance space for the Pro Corda (musical) charity.
- 1.4.5 The topography of the proposed rail extension route site slopes steadily from west to east but with undulating land just to the west of the B1122 (Abbey Road).
- 1.4.6 Heritage and landscape designations that affect the proposed rail extension route site's context, as set out in the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment 2008 (revised 2011) (Ref. 1.9), are as follows:
- The route falls within two landscape character areas, the 'Ancient Estate Claylands' and the 'Estate Sandlands'. The former is characterised by features such as an organic pattern of field enclosures, straight boundaries where influence of privately-owned estates is strongest and blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland. The latter character area is described as a flat, or very gently rolling, plateau of free-draining sandy soils with extensive areas of heathland or acid grassland, strongly geometric structure of fields enclosed in the 18th and 19th centuries, and large continuous blocks of commercial woodland.
  - Buckle's Wood, an Ancient Woodland, stands adjacent to the proposed rail extension route site boundary, to the south of Buckleswood Road and approximately 110m north-west of where the proposed rail extension route track would be laid. The fields on either side of Buckleswood Road are described as pre-18th century enclosures. Two cropmark features, of possible prehistoric date, have been identified from aerial photographs in the fields to the north-east of Buckleswood Road, on either side of the rail route corridor. Various archaeological artefacts have been discovered around the rail route corridor, including Bronze Age, Romano-British, Medieval and undated pieces.
- 1.4.7 The route is within Flood Zone 1 (land assessed as having a less than 1 in 1,000 annual probability of river or sea flooding (<0.1%)). The nearest watercourse is Leiston Beck, which would be crossed to the west of the

B1122 (Abbey Road) and is essentially a small agricultural ditch. The route corridor is mainly underlain by the Lowestoft Diamicton (boulder clay, Unproductive Strata) along the western and central sections and by the Lowestoft Sand and Gravels (Secondary A Aquifer) in the east. These superficial deposits overlie the Crag Group, comprising sands, gravels, silts and clays (Principal Aquifer). The westernmost section of the route, crosses Source Protection Zones 2 and 3 (Outer Protection) of a groundwater abstraction.

1.4.8 Further detail can be found in the **Flood Risk Assessment** (Doc Ref. 5.9) for the proposed development.

1.4.9 The proposed rail extension route would cross Buckleswood Road and the B1122 (Abbey Road), travelling from west to east. To facilitate the proposed temporary level crossing at the B1122 (Abbey Road), Lover's Lane will be permanently realigned, with its junction with the B1122 (Abbey Road) relocated approximately 100 metres (m) to the south of its current position.

1.4.10 Both the realignment of Lover's Lane and a new non-motorised user route (Bridleway 19 diversion), which would cross the B1122 (Abbey Road) level crossing, would fall within the Sizewell C main development site which is detailed further in **Volume 2** of the **ES**.

1.4.11 The proposed rail extension route would also cross a number of footpaths and recreational routes which, from west to east, include:

- Sustrans Regional Cycle Route 42 along Abbey Lane until a point south of the second Leiston Abbey site;
- a footpath between Saxmundham Road and Abbey Lane (E-363/003/0);
- a footpath between Westward Ho (road) and Abbey Lane (E-363/006/0);
- a footpath between the B1122 (Abbey Road) and Abbey Lane (E-363/010/0); and
- Bridleway 19 between the B1122 (Abbey Road) and Sizewell Gap.

1.4.12 Specific detail of these routes can be found in **Chapter 8** of this volume.

1.4.13 An environmental context plan for the proposed rail extension route can be found at **Figure 1.2**.

1.4.14 Further detailed description of the proposed rail extension route site and surrounding area from the perspective of each environmental topic is provided in the respective chapters of this volume (**Chapters 4 to 12**).

b) **Proposed rail improvement works**

1.4.15 The proposed development includes a replacement of the track on the Saxmundham to Leiston branch line and improvements to up to eight existing level crossings.

i. **Saxmundham to Leiston branch line**

1.4.16 Network Rail has assessed the condition of the track on the Saxmundham to Leiston branch line and found that its overall condition was inadequate to accommodate the freight trains required for the Sizewell C Project (provided in **Appendix 1A** of this volume).

1.4.17 The Saxmundham to Leiston branch line is a single-track line approximately 7.5 km long running from Saxmundham, where it branches off the East Suffolk line, to Leiston, terminating at Sizewell Halt. The proposed rail improvement works concern the 7.2km of the line from the Saxmundham junction to the Sizewell level crossing at King George's Avenue.

1.4.18 There are no regular freight services on the Saxmundham to Leiston branch line which is currently only used by occasional maintenance trains.

1.4.19 The proposed rail improvement works comprise the replacement of the track along the Saxmundham to Leiston branch line between the Saxmundham junction and the Sizewell level crossing in Leiston.

ii. **Level crossing upgrades**

1.4.20 SZC Co. and Network Rail have identified eight level crossings which may require upgrades on the Saxmundham to Leiston branch line.

1.4.21 The location of these level crossings and the indicative type of crossings proposed are detailed in **Chapter 2** of this volume.

1.4.22 None of the level crossings are proposed to be closed and none of the associated Public Rights of Way (PRoWs) which cross the track would need to be diverted as a result of the upgrades. The PRoWs would need to be closed for short-term temporary periods whilst the work is taking place at the relevant level crossing.

## References

- 1.1 Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (SI 2017/572) (as amended) HMSO.
- 1.2 Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2009 (SI2009/2263) HMSO.
- 1.3 HM Government. Planning Act 2008. London: HMSO, 2008.
- 1.4 Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2018) National Planning Policy Framework.
- 1.5 Department of Energy and Climate Change. Overarching national policy statement for energy (EN-1). London: HMSO, 2011.
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- 1.7 Suffolk Coastal District Council. Suffolk Coastal Core Strategy and Development Management Policies. 2013.
- 1.8 Suffolk Coastal District Council. Suffolk Coastal Local Plan. Final Draft. 2019.
- 1.9 Suffolk County Council. Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment 2008, revised 2011.