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10th December 2019

[By email]

**Re: Submission to the *Draft Plan Strategy for the Mid and East Antrim Borough Council Local Development Plan 2030***

Dear Sir/Madam,

SONI welcomes the opportunity to comment and requests this submission is taken into consideration in the preparation of the Plan.

SONI is responsible for a safe, secure and reliable supply of electricity – now and in the future. SONI develops, manages and operates the electricity transmission grid. This brings power from where it is generated to where it is needed throughout Northern Ireland. The grid also supplies power to industry and businesses that use large amounts of electricity and powers the distribution network. The distribution network in turn supplies electricity to homes, businesses, schools, hospitals, and farms.

The electricity transmission grid's importance in supporting our society and economy should not be understated in the Local Area Plan. SONI values the inclusion of policies and objectives in the future Plan to protect strategically important utilities infrastructure, such as the electricity transmission grid and to improve connectivity, in terms of electricity, within the Council Area and to adjoining jurisdictions. All inclusions in Local Development Plans which support the safe, secure and reliable supply of electricity are supported by SONI as this facilitates SONI's objective of successfully implementing its strategy for grid development, which is imperative to meeting targets for electricity generation, climate change, and security of energy supplies.

In relation to *Policy TOCS 1 Telecommunications Development and Overhead Cables*, SONI would question whether this draft Plan Strategy policy satisfies the test of soundness on the grounds of its flexibility to enable it to deal with changing circumstances. A flexible approach should be adopted to essential electricity infrastructure projects which are required to support economic and social development.

SONI understands the principle underlying the policy and will always seek to comply. SONI carefully plans its routes and sites for new transmission grid infrastructure based on a careful consideration of a wide range of issues. The final route for any line is a carefully considered balance of technical, planning, environmental considerations. Where it is not

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possible to follow natural features of the environment because, for example, of the need to avoid areas of significant population, natural and built heritage or existing electricity infrastructure SONI will always explain this as part of its substantive reasons for the route design.

SONI would welcome the opportunity to meet with the planning team at Mid and East Antrim Borough Council to explore the matters raised in this submission and formulate provisions in the Plan that reflect the requirements of the electricity transmission network.

Should you have any comments in regard of this submission please contact the undersigned. SONI once again welcomes the opportunity to participate in the making of the new plan and look forward to making further submissions in due course.

Yours faithfully,

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**Senior Planner**  
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