

# PLANNING STATEMENT

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## TEMPORARY OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

West Burton Power Station, Nottinghamshire

On behalf of the United Kingdom Atomic  
Energy Authority

October 2023

**Carter Jonas**



**Date: October 2023**

**Client: United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority**

**Client or Job Number: J0008767**

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## 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority for a planning application for a new temporary office building at West Burton power station. The site is located in the southeast area of West Burton power station's campus.
- 1.2 The development will provide project staff accommodation for clerical and desk-based activities, associated with the Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production ('STEP') programme. The Government-backed STEP programme seeks to deliver a prototype fusion energy plant.
- 1.3 The proposed temporary office building application is applying for consent for 5 years. This includes the operation of the building for 4 years and a period of 1 year to allow for construction and decommissioning.
- 1.4 The site currently comprises an area of hardstanding; there are no trees or vegetation in the vicinity. After a period of 5 years, the site will be returned to its current state as hard-standing, and the building will be removed.
- 1.5 The development complies with relevant national and local planning policies, and the principle of development is considered acceptable.

## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 This planning statement ('the Statement') has been prepared on behalf of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority ('UKAEA') to accompany and support a planning application for the construction of a temporary office building ('the Application') at West Burton Power Station ('the Site').
- 2.2 The Applicant is UKAEA. The landowner is EDF Energy (Thermal Generation) Limited ('EDF'), and they have been appropriately notified.
- 2.3 The description of development is: '*the erection of a temporary office building for a period of 5 years*'
- 2.4 The site is identified on the Detailed Location Plan at Figure 1.1 below:

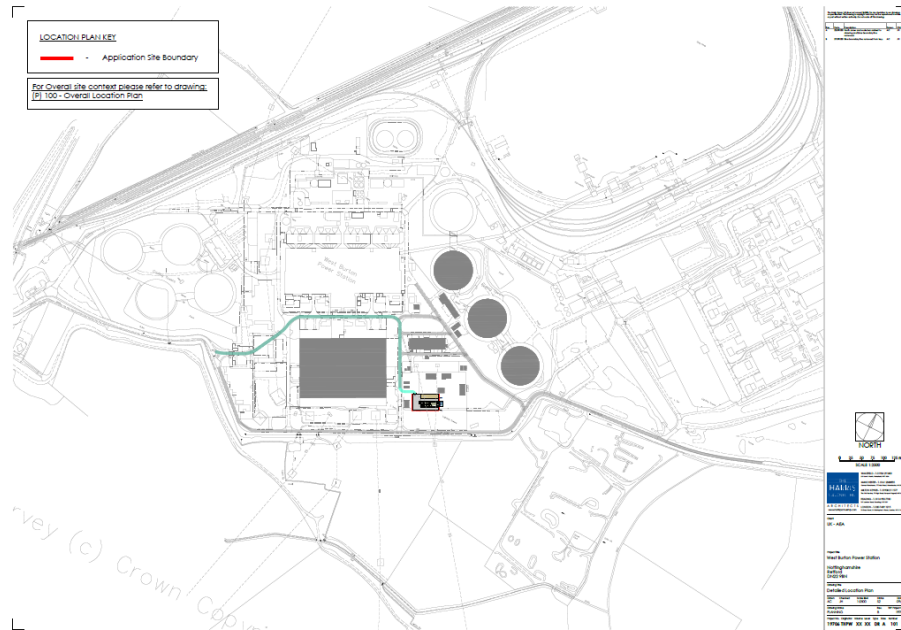


Figure 1.1: Detailed Location Plan Extract – Harris Partnership (not to scale)

- 2.5 The purpose of this Statement and supporting documents is to demonstrate that the proposed development accords with the relevant national and local planning policies and is acceptable in planning terms.
- 2.6 In addition to this Statement, the submission documentation comprises the following, which has been submitted via the Planning Portal (PP-12507392).

Table 1: Supporting Document and Plans List

Document	Drawing / Document Number	Ownership
Overall location Plan	100B	Harris Partnership
Detailed Location Plan	101B	Harris Partnership
Existing Detailed Site Plan	102A	Harris Partnership
Proposed Detailed Site Plan	103A	Harris Partnership
Site Plan in context	104A	Harris Partnership
Proposed GA Plan & Elevations	105A	Harris Partnership

Document	Drawing / Document Number	Ownership
Proposed Roof Plan	106A	Harris Partnership
Drainage Layout	107A	Harris Partnership
Block Plan	108A	Harris Partnership
Technical Note: Ecological Constraints	25 <sup>th</sup> September 2023	WSP

### 3.0 SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

#### West Burton Power Station

- 3.1 West Burton power station ('West Burton'<sup>1</sup>) is a pair of power station on the River Trent, in Retford. West Burton A power station ceased generation in March 2023 after 57 years of electricity generation.
- 3.2 This followed the UK Government announcement in October 2022 which confirmed that the West Burton power station site will be home to the ground-breaking STEP prototype fusion energy plant.
- 3.3 West Burton B is a combined cycle gas turbine power station commissioned in 2013.
- 3.4 On 21st October 2020, the application for the proposed West Burton C power station was granted development consent by the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.
- 3.5 West Burton power station is located approximately 4km south of Gainsborough and 8km north of Retford. It is within Bassetlaw District Council's remit for the determination of planning applications and Nottingham County Council's determination of County matters.

#### The Application Site ('the Site')

- 3.6 The Site is shown in red on the supporting plans submitted with the planning application. The area extends to some 2163.88m<sup>2</sup>. The proposed building comprises a GIA of 312.06 m<sup>2</sup>.
- 3.7 The site is located at the southern edge of West Burton. The site forms an existing area of hardstanding associated with the wider West Burton site and is within the secure perimeter. The proposal is located within the "Contractor's Village", which currently has a number of container units in it, including a learning centre, contractor offices and storage and welfare facilities.
- 3.8 The existing plans submitted with this application show no buildings on the Site currently. UKAEA has taken control of the land as 'vacant' from EDF. However, immediately prior to taking control of the land, the land comprised several existing buildings that were used as office and welfare accommodations for employees on site. It is understood that the area was occupied by 7 modular units plus some free-standing containers and that each unit had an occupancy of approximately 8 people per unit plus storage and lab/testing/small workshops in each of the units. Therefore, it is understood that approximately 56 employees were located in that development area.
- 3.9 The development area is adjacent to a large car park, located outside of the secure perimeter.

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<sup>1</sup> Where 'West Burton' is referred to, it is referring to the wider site and not only the Application Site.

## Relevant Site History

- 3.10 The planning history at West Burton is extensive and dates back to the 1950s. However, this planning application history is not repeated here. In regard to the Site, there is one application that appears to be relevant; 52/10/00004 was approved in the 1950s for development comprising the erection of a 'single-storey canteen building, two-bay shower block, three-bay shower block and two-storey office block'. Whilst these details are not available to view online, it is understood that this formed development in the 'Contractor's Village'.

## 4.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The proposed development comprises: 'the erection of a temporary office building for a period of 5 years'. The proposed use will be to accommodate employees associated with the STEP programme during its embryonic stages of development at West Burton.
- 4.2 The STEP programme will demonstrate the ability to put net electricity on the grid and will pave the way to enable future commercial fusion energy plants. Fusion energy has great potential to deliver safe, sustainable, low-carbon energy for generations to come.
- 4.3 The Government-backed STEP programme will create thousands of highly skilled jobs and attract other high-tech industries to the region, furthering the development of science and technology capabilities nationally.
- 4.4 This development comprises a single-storey prefabricated building with a GIA of 312.06 m<sup>2</sup>. The building, proposed to be supplied by Portakabin, will have a capacity for 24 workstations.
- 4.5 The 'Proposed GA Plan & Elevations 105A, demonstrate the proposed development.

## 5.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS 2017

- 5.1 Whilst the proposal is located within the wider West Burton site, the proposal does not include electricity generation and, therefore, does not fall under the thresholds for development contained in Schedule 1, 2 or 3 of The Town and County Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 which require Environmental Impact Assessment ('EIA') screening opinions to be requested from the Local Planning Authority. Therefore, no EIA screening application is required.

## 6.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 6.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) states that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 6.2 The Development Plan for Bassetlaw District Council is the 'Core Strategy' and 'Development Management Policies Development Plan Document' and the 'Local Development Framework Proposals Map' for Bassetlaw. Other material considerations comprise the:
- National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance; and
  - Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule.
- 6.3 The Draft Bassetlaw Local Plan 2020-2038 is significantly advanced in the examination process and is currently at the 'Main Modification' stage. The local plan Inspectors have identified the Main



Modifications that they consider necessary to ensure the plan is legally compliant and sound. These modifications were consulted upon, with the consultation closing on October 3<sup>rd</sup> 2023, the summary of the consultation has yet to be made public. It is possible that the emerging plan will be adopted by the time that this application is determined; as such, it should be considered a material consideration in the determination of this application. Furthermore, the emerging local plan supports development that assists the STEP programme, acknowledging the government-backed project.

- 6.4 This section is descriptive; it lists the planning policies contained within the statutory development plan and the relevant material considerations.

## **National Planning Policy Framework**

- 6.5 The Government published the amended National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2023. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The policies contained in the NPPF are material considerations which should be taken into account in decision-making.
- 6.6 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, with three overarching objectives including economic, social, and environmental. To ensure that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 6.7 At paragraph 11, the NPPF sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development and states that development which accords with an up-to-date development plan should be approved without delay.
- 6.8 Chapter 6 is clear that planning policies and decisions should create conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt (paragraph 81), and this is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation. Paragraph 83 states that planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes making provision for clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative, or high-technology industries.
- 6.9 The NPPF makes clear that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety or the cumulative residual impacts on the road network would be severe (paragraph 111).
- 6.10 Paragraph 119 of the NPPF sets out that planning policies and decisions should promote the effective use of land. Supporting paragraph 120 states that planning decisions should, inter alia, promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings (criterion d).
- 6.11 Paragraph 126 of the NPPF provides that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places to live and work and helps make the development acceptable to communities.
- 6.12 The NPPF, at paragraph 130, requires that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure new developments deliver high-quality schemes.
- 6.13 With regard to flood risk, the NPPF seeks to direct development away from areas of high risk of flooding and states that, where appropriate, applications should be supported by a site-specific flood risk assessment (paragraph 167).
- 6.14 Paragraph 174 of the NPPF requires planning decisions to contribute to and enhance the natural environment in a number of ways, including inter alia, minimising impacts on and providing net gains

for biodiversity and recognising the intrinsic and beauty of the countryside and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services.

- 6.15 The NPPF is supplemented by extensive national guidance on a wide range of technical issues. However, these are not considered in detail here.

## **Bassetlaw Local Plan 2011**

- 6.16 The following policies are applicable to the development site. The policies are discussed in detail in the Planning Assessment section of this Statement:
- Policy DM1: Economic Development in the Countryside
  - Policy DM3 General Development in the Countryside
  - Policy DM4: Design and Character
  - Policy DM7: Securing Economic Development
  - Policy DM8: Historic Environment
  - Policy DM9: Green Infrastructure; biodiversity & geodiversity; Landscape; Open Space & Sports Facilities
  - Policy DM10: Renewable & Low Carbon energy
  - Policy DM12: Flood Risk, Sewerage & Drainage
  - Policy DM13: Sustainable Transport

## **Community Infrastructure Levy**

- 6.17 CIL is payable on development that involves the creation or conversion of floorspace of 100m<sup>2</sup> or above. Temporary buildings are not exempt from CIL unless specified by the LPA. The site is in 'outer' Bassetlaw, and therefore, the chargeable amount for office development is £0.
- 6.18 Bassetlaw is progressing with a new CIL charging schedule; the draft document sets out that the chargeable amount for 'all other uses', which encompasses office development, within the whole district is £0.

## **Emerging Local Planning Policy**

- 6.19 The emerging Bassetlaw Local Plan 2020 – 2038 is currently being examined by an independent Planning Inspector. Main Modifications have recently been consulted upon, and the consultation concluded on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 2023.
- 6.20 The draft local plan is at a sufficient stage that requires it to be considered as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.
- 6.21 MM3.<sup>2</sup> includes the proposal to add a new paragraph at 3.23 of the draft local plan; that paragraph reads:

*'The Government announced in October 2022 that the West Burton Power Station site and wider brownfield land is expected to host a prototype fusion plant (known as STEP), which will drive the evolution of the UK nuclear fusion delivery industry.'*

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<sup>2</sup> Main Modification Schedule August 2023

- 6.22 The modification goes on to note that *'the STEP programme is at a very early stage. Future reviews of the Local Plan will address potential implications for the area's spatial strategy, as the STEP programme is not expected to grow to a size which will adversely affect the spatial strategy until Plan review, expected by 2028.'*
- 6.23 MM10.9<sup>3</sup> adds the sentence *'The green energy sector may be an appropriate part of the long term regeneration plans for the three power station sites at Marnham, Cottam (see Policy ST6) and West Burton because of each site's ability to provide direct connectivity to the national electricity grid via existing energy switching and/or transmission infrastructure. In these locations, proposals that are consistent with the new strategic policy, where relevant and Policy ST51 and the wider development plan will be supported however, this should not preclude consideration of other uses, where consistent with other relevant policies in this Plan'*
- 6.24 It is clear that the LPA acknowledge the contribution that STEP will make to the future reuse of the former power station site. This application for a temporary office building will seek to enable the STEP project team to be on-site and to begin planning for the delivery of the STEP prototype, which will be subject to a full consenting and planning process before construction begins. STEP is likely to be a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) and, as such, will be subject to the requirements of the Development Consent Order (DCO) process. UKAEA and their agents will engage proactively with the relevant authorities throughout this process.
- 6.25 As such, this application is supported by the policies in the emerging Bassetlaw Local Plan.

## 7.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

### Principle of Development

- 7.1 The proposed building is located within an existing employment site on land where similar buildings were previously located and have since been removed. The proposed use is commensurate with the use prevailing across the site and is in accordance with the national strategic aims for the STEP programme at West Burton.
- 7.2 There are no policies that restrict the proposed development at the Site. Policy DM1: Economic Development in the Countryside and Policy DM7: Securing Economic Development allow for the proposed development in this location. DM1 allows economic development in the 'countryside' whereby (ii) the development requires the specific location proposed and there are no other suitable sites, (iii) the scale, design and form are appropriate and compatible with its setting, and (vi) the development will not create significant or exacerbate existing environmental highway safety problems.
- 7.3 DM7 sets out that support will be given to economic development proposals that (iv) bring significant, good-quality inward investment opportunities to the District.
- 7.4 Therefore, the proposed development is considered to comply with the relevant policies, support the strategic aims of the district, and demonstrate an acceptable use in this location. Therefore, the principle of development is considered acceptable.

### Height, Scale, Massing, Design and Materials

- 7.5 Policy DM4 refers to the design and character of development, and whilst this policy primarily refers to major development, it also sets out some guiding principles for all development. The proposed development is single-storey and set on an existing area of hardstanding, where previously similar

<sup>3</sup> Main Modification Schedule August 2023

buildings were located. Arguably, within the context of the wider West Burton site, the development will be indistinguishable in the landscape. While the building is utilitarian, it is small and discreet.

- 7.6 Furthermore, the proposed development comprises a short-lived temporary consent and will be removed from the Site and the Site reinstated (to hardstanding) at the end of the planning consent period.
- 7.7 Therefore, the proposed development is considered to comply with local plan policy DM4, as well as NPPF Paragraph 126.

### **Ecology, Biodiversity, Arboriculture and Landscaping**

- 7.8 The proposed development is located on existing hardstanding, no vegetation or trees are to be removed or disturbed as part of the proposals. A Technical Note has been prepared by WSP<sup>4</sup> which has undertaken a review of potential ecological constraints associated with the proposal. There are no statutory or non-statutory biodiversity conservation sites within or bordering the Site. The nearest statutory biodiversity conservation site is Lea Marsh SSSI, which is over 2km to the north-east. The nearest non-statutory biodiversity conservation site is West Burton Reedbed Local Wildlife Site (LWS), which is over 250m to the north-east and designated for reedbed habitat. The Proposed Development will be entirely within existing gravel and hardstanding and is likely to have no effects on biodiversity conservation sites.
- 7.9 It is understood that the Site is to be released to UKAEA as gravel and hardstanding, without built or temporary structures. There will, therefore, be no loss or disturbance of bat roost habitat.
- 7.10 The Technical Note concludes that the proposed development will not result in loss of habitat and will have no effect on designated biodiversity conservation sites. It is likely to have either no effect, or a negligible effect, on badger, bats, otter, water vole, birds, great crested newts, reptiles and other species/taxa of biodiversity conservation importance.
- 7.11 Therefore, the proposal complies with local plan policy DM9 and paragraph 174 of the NPPF.

### **Highways and Transport**

- 7.12 The proposed development will allow for up to 24 STEP project employees to be based at West Burton, through the provision of 24 workstations. Located previously on the Site was office accommodation which allowed for approximately 54 employees (associated with EDF operations). Therefore, the proposal does not result in a net increase in employees, and therefore, there is no net increase in movements to the site.
- 7.13 Parking will be provided for STEP project staff in the existing car park located to the south of the application site, where there is a vast supply of parking spaces.
- 7.14 Therefore, the proposal complies with local plan policy DM13 and chapter 9 of the NPPF.

### **Drainage and Flooding**

- 7.15 The site is located in Flood Zone 1, the lowest probability of flooding.
- 7.16 A drainage plan has been submitted with the planning application and demonstrates both the surface water and foul drainage strategy for the development. The proposal connects to existing drainage and sewerage systems. The development does not increase the area of impermeable surface, and therefore, it is not considered necessary to provide further information on surface water drainage.

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<sup>4</sup> 25<sup>th</sup> September 2023

7.17 Therefore, the proposal complies with local plan policy DM9 and paragraph 167 of the NPPF.

## **Historic Environment**

7.18 The development site is located approximately 450m to the north of a Scheduled Monument known as, '*Medieval settlement and open field system immediately south east of Low Farm*' (List Entry Number: 1017741).

7.19 However, in the context of the wider West Burton site, the proposed development is not considered to have any impact on the significance of the historic asset. Furthermore, the application is for a short-lived temporary development that is small and discreet in nature.

7.20 Therefore, the development complies with local plan policy DM8 and chapter 16 of the NPPF.

## **8.0 CONCLUSION**

8.1 This planning statement has been prepared on behalf of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority to accompany and support a planning application for the construction of a temporary office building at West Burton Power Station.

8.2 The development will provide office space for the Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production programme ('STEP'). The Government-backed STEP programme seeks to deliver a prototype fusion energy plant.

8.3 The proposed development comprises: '*the erection of a temporary office building for a period of 5 years*'. The proposed use will be to accommodate employees associated with the STEP programme during its embryonic stages of development at West Burton.

8.4 The principle of development is considered acceptable on the site in planning policy terms, in regard to both the adopted Bassetlaw Local Plan 2011 and the emerging Draft Bassetlaw Local Plan 2020-2038.

8.5 The proposed temporary office building application is applying for consent for 5 years. This includes the operation of the building for 4 years and a period of 1 year to allow for construction and decommissioning.

8.6 Other impacts with regard to height, scale, massing, design and materials, ecology, biodiversity, arboriculture, landscaping, drainage and flooding and the historic environment have been appropriately considered in the Planning Assessment section of this statement against relevant planning policies.

8.7 There are no known material considerations which stand against the proposals. In the circumstances set out above and considering the local and national planning policy context sitting behind the proposals, the proposal can be supported and planning permission granted.

