

## **4 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT**

### **4.1 Introduction**

4.1.1 This chapter of the ES sets out, in summary form, the planning context for the proposed development. A more detailed Planning Statement and a separate ‘very special circumstances’ report is also provided in support of the application.

4.1.2 The following plans and guidance are primary material policy considerations relevant to this outline planning application:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (2023).
- Planning Practice Guidance (2023).
- The Adopted Development Plan, comprising:
  - Sunderland Core Strategy and Development Plan 2015-2033 (CSDP), adopted January 2020; and
  - International Advanced Manufacturing Park, Area Action Plan (AAP), adopted November 2017.

1.1.1 These aspects are considered further, below.

### **4.2 Planning History**

4.2.1 The International Advanced Manufacturing Park (IAMP) is allocated within the IAMP Area Action Plan (AAP) (adopted November 2017) for up to 392,000 m<sup>2</sup> of advanced manufacturing and automotive uses on 150 ha of land, with 110 ha of land designated for ecological and landscaping mitigation. IAMP is split into two employment areas: a Northern Employment Area and a Southern Employment Area as defined by the IAMP AAP. These employment areas are separated by a belt of agricultural land that lies within the Green Belt. This land is also designated as an Ecological and Landscape Mitigation Area (ELMA). The River Don and its tributary (Usworth Burn) run through the centre of the ELMA. Of the 110 ha of land for the ELMA, 43.6 ha relate to IAMP ONE and 66.4 ha relate to IAMP TWO.

4.2.2 The first phase of IAMP, known as IAMP ONE, was granted planning permission in May 2018 for up to 156,840 m<sup>2</sup> of floorspace for automotive and advanced manufacturing uses (around 1.69 million ft<sup>2</sup>) (ref. no. 18/00092/HE4). This site lies within the Southern Employment Area at IAMP. To date, three buildings and the internal spine road (known as International Drive) have been completed, whilst the IAMP ONE Ecological and Landscape Mitigation Area (ELMA) has been created. A further planning

permission was subsequently granted in June 2020 for a reconfiguration of land to allow the occupancy of larger units (up to 1m ft<sup>2</sup>) (ref. no. 20/00556/OU4).

4.2.3 The AESC Plant 2 application (ref. no. 21/01764/HE4) was granted planning permission in October 2021 and construction work is progressing onsite. Subsequent to receiving planning consent, amendments to the AESC Plant 2 scheme design were proposed that necessitated the submission of a Section 73 application. The Section 73 AESC Plant 2 planning application (ref. no. 23/1542/VA4) was submitted to SSC in June 2023 and planning consent was granted in September 2023. The proposed (AESC Plant 3) development is further development at IAMP.

4.2.4 The part of the site known as IAMP TWO is the second and larger part of the IAMP development previously constituted a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) that was to be delivered by a development consent order (DCO) application. The DCO application has since been withdrawn and planning consent for the 'Early Infrastructure and Northern Employment Area' applications (21/02807/HE4 and STC/1172/21/FUL) were approved in August 2023. These applications included an extensive area of land for landscape and ecological mitigation which is referred to as the 'IAMP TWO ELMA' within this ES.

### **4.3 National and local planning policies and guidance**

#### ***National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)***

4.3.1 The NPPF was published and came into effect in 2012 and was last updated in December 2023. It sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides the framework within which local development plans are produced but does not contain specific policies for nationally significant infrastructure projects.

4.3.2 Achieving sustainable development through the use of economic, social and environmental objectives is at the heart of the NPPF, with a presumption in favour of sustainable development forming the core principle.

4.3.3 Section 6 of the NPPF addresses economic expansion and delivery of economic growth and productivity and sets out the ways in which planning policies should seek to promote this.

4.3.4 Section 9 of the NPPF relates to the promotion of sustainable transport, noting that transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals, so that potential impacts of development on transport

networks can be addressed. Opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use should be identified and pursued; and environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure identified and addressed.

- 4.3.5 Section 12 relates to quality of design and achieving well designed places, including the use of design guides and codes to provide a framework for creating distinctive places.
- 4.3.6 Section 13 relates to protecting Green Belt land by excluding development within the green belt except where 'very special circumstances' exist and are demonstrated.
- 4.3.7 Section 14 relates to supporting the transition to a low-carbon future, planning for and meeting the challenge of climate change (including flooding).
- 4.3.8 Section 15 relates to the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, through protection (at international, national and local level) and through the development of improved networks of habitats and green infrastructure, including across local authority boundaries.
- 4.3.9 Section 16 addresses the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment, recognising that, where a development would adversely affect a non-designated heritage asset, a balanced judgement is required, having regard to the scale of loss and significance of the asset. Developers should be required to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage asset to be lost, in a proportionate manner.

#### **4.4 National Planning Practice Guidance**

- 4.4.1 On 6<sup>th</sup> March 2014 the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) launched a planning practice guidance (PPG) web-based resource covering a wide range of topics including design, climate change, EIA, the historic environment, travel plans / transport assessments and statements, water, and waste.

#### **4.5 Adopted Development Plan**

- 4.5.1 As noted above, the relevant parts of the adopted development plan are the Sunderland CSDP and the IAMP AAP.

##### ***Sunderland Core Strategy and Development Plan 2015-2033***

- 4.5.2 The CSDP was adopted in January 2020 and includes the following parts:

- Core Strategy and Development Plan (CSDP) sets out the overarching strategy, strategic policies and strategic allocations and designations for the future change and growth of Sunderland, as well as local policies for development management purposes.
- IAMP AAP 2017-2032 sets out the site-specific policies for the comprehensive development of the IAMP.

4.5.3 The CSDP notes (para. 1.6) that it and the IAMP AAP have superseded saved policies of the Sunderland Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 1998 and its 2007 Alteration (No. 2). The CSDP Policies that are relevant to the site and its immediate surroundings are:

- Policy NE1 Green and blue infrastructure. Landscaping proposals to create and manage new greenspace within the site.
- Policy NE2 Biodiversity and geodiversity. Biodiversity net gain (BNG) has been considered as part of the EIA and a BNG Assessment is included within Appendix 12.13 of the ES.
- Policy NE3 Woodlands / hedgerows and trees. The landscape plan for the proposed development proposes to retain existing hedgerows and trees (where possible), with enhancement via additional planting.
- Policy NE6 Green Belt. The site is in the Green Belt and therefore a 'very special circumstances' report has been prepared that accompanies the planning application.
- Policies T8 Pedestrians, T9 Cyclists, and T10 Paths and Multi-User Routes. These policies promote non-vehicular transport, including for people with disabilities.
- Policy T13, Highway Improvements, T14 New Development, and T15 Protection of Road Lines and Communications Corridors. These policies relate to requirements for improved transport infrastructure, noting that promotion of new roads that facilitate the movement of industrial traffic and assist the development of proposed industrial and commercial areas, will be supported.

4.5.4 A range of other CSDP policies relate to the more general aspects of development planning, including aspects such as environmental protection, transportation, noise and vibration, contamination, flooding and water quality. These are addressed within the Planning Statement prepared for this planning application.

#### ***IAMP Area Action Plan***



4.5.5 The IAMP AAP was adopted on 30th November 2017. It provides the planning policy framework for the comprehensive development of approximately 392,000 m<sup>2</sup> of floorspace for uses related to the automotive and advanced manufacturing sectors, delivered on a 150 ha site that has been removed from the Green Belt. The adjacent land to be retained for ecological and landscape mitigation (ELMA) (110 ha) remains in the Green Belt.

4.5.6 The AAP vision for the IAMP (para. 2.6) is:

*“A nationally important and internationally respected location for advanced manufacturing and European-scale supply chain industries. A planned and sustainable employment location that maximises links with Nissan and other high value automotive industries as well as the local infrastructure assets, including the ports, airports and road infrastructure.”*

4.5.7 Para. 2.7 of the AAP states that the type of place the Councils are seeking to create is:

*“An attractive working environment that creates the conditions in which businesses can establish and thrive and where people choose to work. A unique opportunity for increased job and business creation and the promotion of regional prosperity whilst taking advantage of natural assets and green infrastructure including the River Don corridor.”*

4.5.8 The AAP sets out a broad range of policies addressing development within the AAP. In addition to policies setting out how development is to be taken forward (Policies S1, S2 and S3) are policies addressing aspects such as design, the public realm, transport infrastructure and parking, flood risk, landscape, ecology, green infrastructure, and securing mitigation.

4.5.9 The application site mostly lies on land that is designated as Green Belt and as ELMA. A small part of the site lies on land that is allocated for automotive and advanced manufacturing uses.

4.5.10 The Planning Statement prepared as part of this planning application describes these in more detail.

#### **4.6 Analysis of the relevant planning policies**

The analysis of the relevant planning policies against the findings of the EIA is set out the Planning Statement prepared by Lichfields to accompany the planning application for detailed planning consent. This information is, therefore, not repeated here.