

# **HINKLEY POINT C**

## **PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION**

### **5 APPROACH TO SUSTAINABILITY**

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## 5.1 Government Policy

5.1.1 The Government’s White Paper ‘Meeting the Energy Challenge’, (January 2008<sup>6</sup>), concluded that nuclear had a role to play in the UK’s energy mix alongside other low carbon sources, and that it would be in the public interest to allow energy companies the option of investing in new nuclear power stations. The reasons for this were based on the environmental, social and economic characteristics of nuclear generation – that is, on characteristics relevant to its sustainability at a national level. The White Paper concluded that:

- climate change is a significant risk to global ecosystems, the world economy and human populations. The UK is becoming increasingly dependent on imports of oil and gas against a background of increasing global demand and the increasing politicisation of energy supplies; and
- new nuclear power stations can make a material contribution to meeting these critical challenges to the UK by tackling climate change and yielding economic benefits in terms of reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and improved security of supply.

## 5.2 Government Appraisal of Sustainability

5.2.1 In 2008 the Government carried out a consultation on the potential sustainability effects of applying its proposed strategic siting criteria for new nuclear power stations. In its response to the consultation<sup>7</sup>, the Government said it would undertake an Appraisal of Sustainability of the sites as part of its draft Nuclear NPS. This appraisal would contain a high level assessment of the potential impacts on environmental, social and economic factors of construction, operation and decommissioning of new nuclear power stations at these sites. The Government also recognised that detailed assessment of proposals for specific sites should take place at the development consent stage, when the necessary information would be available and sustainability measures would be incorporated into the proposed development.

5.2.2 The topic areas to be covered were identified in the consultation document<sup>8</sup>. They include a broad range of environmental, social and economic factors where significant effects might arise that could be assessed at this high level. In addition, the assessment would take account of the Government’s statement on whether it is satisfied that effective arrangements exist or will exist to manage and dispose of radioactive waste.

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<sup>6</sup> Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) (January 2008) ‘Meeting the Energy Challenge’: a White Paper on Nuclear Power

<sup>7</sup> Office of Nuclear Development (January 2009) Towards a Nuclear National Policy Statement: Government response to consultations on the Strategic Siting Assessment process and siting criteria for new nuclear power stations in the UK; and to the study on the potential environmental and sustainability effects of applying the criteria

<sup>8</sup> Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) (January 2008) ‘Meeting the Energy Challenge’: a White Paper on Nuclear Power



## 5.3 Promoter's Statement of Sustainability

- 5.3.1 The Government also recognised that detailed assessment of proposals for specific sites should take place at the development consent stage, when the necessary information would be available and sustainability measures would be incorporated into the proposed development.
- 5.3.2 EDF Energy's Sustainability Statement for the proposed Hinkley Point C development, together with its Environmental Statement, will fulfil this need. It will set out the contribution that the proposed development would make towards sustainability in each area where the impact is significantly affected by local and regional characteristics.
- 5.3.3 The significance of the impact will be assessed drawing on the sustainability objectives set out in the South West Sustainability Checklist, and in guidance published by the relevant local authorities and other statutory agencies, in particular by West Somerset and Sedgemoor District Councils. Irrespective of whether consents are granted by local authorities or by the IPC, these issues reflect local concerns that the Sustainability Statement will need to address.
- 5.3.4 The Sustainability Statement will set out the issues where the development both on and off-site has the potential to make a major contribution to sustainability. The most significant drivers are:
- economic diversification away from declining sectors, offering high quality employment and opportunities for local business, through an intensive construction period of around 10 years and a prospective operating lifetime of 60 years;
  - socio-economic renewal, with potential for attracting, training and retaining younger people within the area and for developing partnerships with local training providers and other agencies. This also supports improvements in transport and accommodation infrastructure; and
  - environmental benefits through management of the land outside the Hinkley Point C site in the interests of biodiversity and indigenous species. Management includes integrating attractive pedestrian and cycle routes, and maintaining historical and archaeological features such as Pixie's Mound.
- 5.3.5 The Sustainability Statement will also cover:
- ensuring that the site topography and its arrangements for flood prevention and coastal protection are secure under the anticipated impact of climate change;
  - making use of a site adjacent to the existing nuclear development to mitigate the incremental visual, lighting and noise impacts; and
  - creating a coherent transport, accommodation and healthcare strategy. This would manage the impacts especially during construction and potentially leave a significant infrastructure legacy, e.g. the promotion of sustainable transport modes for construction deliveries and to ensure reduced reliance on private car use.
- 5.3.6 It is expected that the draft Nuclear NPS will provide guidance at a national scale on the contribution to the sustainability of a new nuclear programme. At a more local level, EDF Energy's Environmental Statement will provide a focused assessment of the environmental impact of the proposed development. Taken together, along with the Sustainability Statement, these will provide a comprehensive basis to inform decision-making on the incorporation of appropriate sustainability measures into the design of the proposals.