

Date: 13 August 2021

To: The Chief Executive Officer
Head of Local Authority Planning Team

CC: Head of Local Authority Emergency
Planning Team

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051

Dear Sir/Madam,

Future ONR oversight of proposed developments around the AWE nuclear sites

I wish to advise you of some necessary changes in approach that ONR will be introducing as part of its continued oversight of proposed developments within the Detailed Emergency Planning Zones (DEPZs) and Outer Consultation Zones (OCZs) of the AWE nuclear sites¹; your local authority area is intersected by one or more of these zones.

Background

ONR provides advice to local planning authorities on planning applications for developments situated within our nuclear site consultation zones² that meet our consultation criteria. The advice provided seeks to limit the radiological consequences to members of the public in the event of a nuclear emergency and is based on consideration of the potential impact of the development on the credibility of the off-site emergency plan required by the *Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2019* (REPP19).

Issue

ONR considers that a change is needed in its approach to proposed developments in the DEPZs and OCZs of the AWE nuclear sites. The reasons for this are outlined below:

¹ Atomic Weapons Establishment Aldermaston and Atomic Weapons Establishment Burghfield

² The DEPZ and OCZ are consultation zones (further details of ONR's Land Use Planning arrangements are available on the [ONR website](#))

- The size of the AWE Burghfield DEPZ has substantially increased because of a redetermination prompted by REPPIR19 coming into force, significantly increasing the population that must be accommodated in the AWE Burghfield detailed off-site emergency plan;
- The significant demographic challenge around the AWE nuclear sites has been intensified by the cumulative effect of developments granted planning permission in the DEPZs and OCZs over many years;
- The off-site emergency plans, produced following REPPIR19 coming into force, are due to be tested for the first time in 2021 and therefore the safety claims within the plans have yet to be adequately demonstrated; and
- The volume of planning applications being made in the DEPZs and OCZs remains high.

These reasons, considered in their totality, suggest that further development may have the potential to impact upon the adequate implementation of the off-site emergency plans.

Future Approach

ONR intends to implement the following measures as part of its future oversight of proposed developments around the AWE sites.

1. **Discontinuation of Conditional Responses – 1st September 2021**

When consulted on a planning application, ONR seeks adequate assurance from the relevant emergency planners that the proposed development can be accommodated in the off-site emergency plan. Where ONR has not received a response from the emergency planners, it has the discretion to provide conditional responses. In such responses, the advice given is contingent on the views of the emergency planners.

From the 1st September 2021, ONR will discontinue this practice for planning applications for developments within the AWE nuclear sites' DEPZS and OCZs. From thereon, ONR is, in accordance with its Land Use Planning arrangements, likely to advise against any proposed development in these areas where the proposed development meets our consultation criteria and ONR has not received adequate assurance from the emergency planners that the development can be accommodated in the off-site emergency plan.

2. **Notification of Planning Decisions – 1st September 2021**

ONR requests that you put in place arrangements to ensure that ONR is notified when a decision is made to grant planning permission contrary to its advice. It requests that you establish such arrangements by 1st September 2021 or by an alternative, agreed date.

Next Steps

ONR will, both through data collected through its continued oversight and its routine regulatory interventions, seek to satisfy itself that off-site emergency plans for the AWE nuclear sites remain valid and tolerant of further development in the DEPZs and OCZs.

You are invited to conduct your own review of the situation. Should you choose to do so, you are invited to share your findings with ONR.

Yours faithfully,



Eamonn Guilfoyle
Specialist Inspector - ONR Land Use Planning

Distribution

Delivery Lead - Emergency Preparedness and Response

ONR

West Berkshire Council

Wokingham Borough Council

CEO, Head of Local Authority Planning Team and
Head of Local Authority Emergency Planning Team

Basingstoke and Dean Borough
Council

Reading Council