

**STRATEGIC SITING ASSESSMENT**

Preview of Nominations  
and Assessment Process,  
Draft Exclusionary and  
Discretionary Criteria and  
Indicative Timeline

JUNE 2008

DRAFT

## **Strategic Siting Assessment – Preview of Nominations and Assessment Process, Draft Exclusionary and Discretionary Criteria and Indicative Timeline**

This draft document is issued to coincide with the Government's Investors' Conference on nuclear new build on 12 June 2008 to give an indication of the Government's current thinking in relation to the proposed Strategic Siting Assessment. It is also being published on the website of the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR).<sup>1</sup> The details of the Strategic Siting Assessment – the process for nominations and assessment, draft exclusionary and discretionary criteria and proposed timetable – are from a draft public consultation document which will be launched shortly after the Investors' Conference. The details of the Strategic Siting Assessment process described in this document take account of work undertaken to date as part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment. The SSA details may change between 12 June and subsequent publication. In particular, they may change as we continue to develop the SEA Environmental Report. We are not inviting comments on this draft document but will, of course, be inviting responses when the full consultation document is published shortly.

---

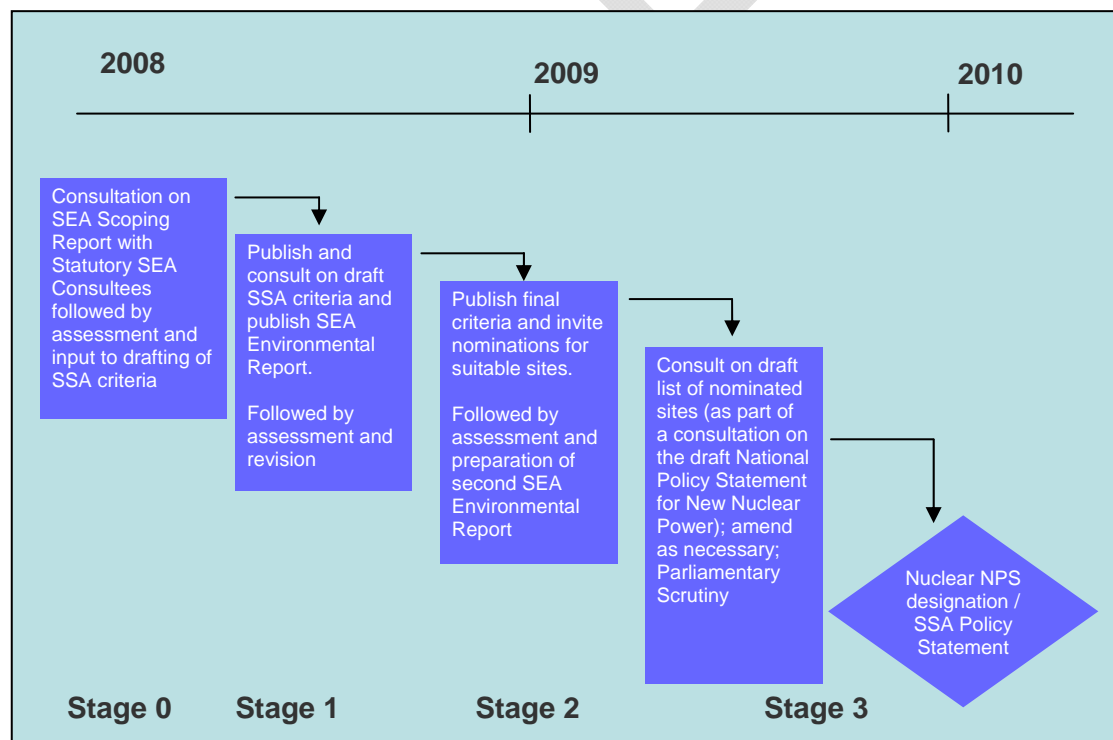
<sup>1</sup> <http://www.berr.gov.uk/energy/nuclear-whitepaper/consultations/page44523.html>

## Overview of the Strategic Siting Assessment Process

### Background

1.1 The White Paper on Nuclear Power (January 2008)<sup>2</sup> set out a proposed process for a combined Strategic Siting Assessment (SSA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment<sup>3</sup> (SEA). The purpose of the SSA is to develop criteria for determining the suitability of sites for new nuclear power stations and then to assess nominated sites against those criteria. The results of the SSA will inform the development of the proposed National Policy Statement (NPS) for new nuclear power. Under the proposed new planning regime to be established under the Planning Bill, the NPS is the statement of national policy that an independent Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC) would use as the framework for its decision on an individual planning application. The SEA will consider the high level environmental impacts of applying the SSA criteria.

**Figure 1 – Strategic Siting Assessment Process – with indicative timeline**



### The Proposed Strategic Siting Assessment Process

<sup>2</sup> Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (January 2008) *Meeting the energy challenge: a white paper on nuclear power* <http://www.berr.gov.uk/energy/nuclear-whitepaper/page42765.html>

<sup>3</sup> Directive 2001/42/EC of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (O.J. L197, 21.7.2001, p.30) implemented by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes regulations 2004 (S.I. 2004/1633).

1.2 The proposed Strategic Siting Assessment sets out to develop criteria for determining the suitability of sites for new nuclear power stations and to assess nominated sites against those criteria. This section describes:

- Who can nominate a site
- How to nominate a site
- When to nominate a site
- How we will use the exclusionary and discretionary criteria

### Who can nominate a site?

1.3 Anyone can nominate a site provided that they can satisfy the following conditions:

1.4 **Condition 1:** The site nomination must either be accompanied by a letter of support from a “Credible Nuclear Power Operator” (see below for definition) **or** the nominator must be able to demonstrate that it is a credible site for deploying<sup>4</sup> nuclear new build by 2025.

1.5 CNPO is defined below. The letter of support from the CNPO must demonstrate that the CNPO considers the site to be a credible site for deploying nuclear new build by 2025. This requirement is to ensure that nominators only propose those sites with reasonable technical and commercial prospects for a new nuclear power station.

1.6 A credible nuclear power operator is one which:

- Currently operates a nuclear power plant anywhere in the world; **and**
- Currently operates an electricity generating station subject to UK health, safety and environmental regulation, **or** which has made a public commitment to become an operator of an electricity generating station (with a capacity in excess of 50MW) by 2016-2025 in a market subject to UK health, safety and environmental regulation.

1.7 **Condition 2:** The nominator must be able to demonstrate that they or, where applicable, the CNPO have taken steps to engage local communities living in the vicinity of the nominated site (including the owner(s) of the nominated sites), and inform them of the intention to nominate the site. Such engagement might for example involve publicising the proposed nomination and inviting views from local communities or holding meetings to discuss the proposed nomination. In respect of existing nuclear sites this might include the site stakeholder group.

### How to nominate a site

---

<sup>4</sup> For the purposes of this document, ‘deploying nuclear new build’ means commencing operation of one or more new nuclear power stations on the site.

- 1.8 Nominators are expected to indicate the outline of their proposed sites during construction, operation and decommissioning, using a combination of maps, Ordnance Survey grid references and, where possible, appropriate Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data, the outline of their nominated site. However, the SSA is high level and we do not require a footprint of specific designs.
- 1.9 The National Policy Statement (NPS) on nuclear power will define clear boundaries for strategically suitable sites. Nominators must therefore be confident that the sites they propose are large enough to allow for the construction, operation and decommissioning of the site. However, to reduce the possibility of planning blight - and to allow the necessary environmental issues to be considered for each site as part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment - nominations must focus on sites for deployment rather than broad geographical areas.
- 1.10 In order to inform the assessment of site nominations, nominators will be required to complete a nomination form setting out, against each Discretionary Criterion, specific information to support their nominated sites and details of the mitigations or what their approach to mitigations will be to make the proposed site suitable. If further information is required to complete the SSA, Government will request this information during the assessment process. Nominators should also identify any other supporting documentation that can be made available if required.
- 1.11 We would expect nominators to support their nominations with robust evidence, which may include technical and environmental expert opinion. While we do not expect them to have conducted, for example, full site-specific environmental impact assessments at this point, we do expect that the nominator or the Credible Nuclear Power Operator will have given due consideration to the likely safety, environmental and social issues associated with development at a particular site and will have formed a reasonable opinion on the suitability of that site. We may need to adjust site boundaries as appropriate in discussion with nominators.

#### **When to nominate a site**

- 1.12 After considering responses to the consultation on draft SSA criteria, Government intends to publish the final criteria for the SSA and invite nominations for sites to be considered.
- 1.13 The period for making nominations will be limited to eight weeks. A full nomination will be required by the end of the nomination period. This early registration will allow the Government to begin to collate the necessary local level information required for the SEA Environmental Report. After this, Government will assess nominated sites.
- 1.14 Government intends to keep the nuclear NPS under review. As part of this, the Government will, if appropriate, conduct further nomination and

assessment processes in the future for sites which might come forward for deployment beyond 2025. The Strategic Environmental Assessment would be extended to take account of these future nominations as appropriate.

### **How the exclusionary and discretionary criteria will be used**

- 1.15 The Government will be consulting on **exclusionary** and **discretionary criteria** for assessing nominated sites. The criteria will also be included in the nuclear NPS and will be considered by the IPC insofar as they are relevant at local level. We will also be consulting on a range of **local issues** which we think the IPC will need to address when considering specific planning applications for development consent on sites listed in the nuclear NPS. These issues will also be listed in the nuclear NPS because of their relevance to final decisions on siting of new nuclear power stations. We describe the criteria and local issues further below.
- 1.16 It is important to make clear at the outset that the SSA will be a strategic level assessment. Whilst the process will be robust, transparent and based on a proper consideration of relevant information, because it is being conducted at a strategic level it will not involve large volumes of site specific data.
- 1.17 **Exclusionary Criteria** are those criteria that, for safety, regulatory, environmental or other reasons will categorically exclude a site from further consideration in the SSA as being strategically suitable site for a new nuclear power station.
- 1.18 The Government will assess nominated sites against these criteria at the outset and we will exclude sites that breach any of these criteria. There will be a procedure for informing the nominator of any such breach.
- 1.19 **Discretionary Criteria** are those criteria that the Government considers, for various reasons, could, either singly or in combination, make a site unsuitable for a new nuclear power station but which need to be considered in order to come to a conclusion as to the site's strategic suitability. These criteria will address issues such as flood risk, proximity to protected sites or access to suitable cooling. The Government will assess these issues at a strategic level through the SSA. It is important to note that as this stage of the SSA process, BERR will be conducting a high-level assessment that will not involve site-specific investigations or detailed site-specific data. In reaching a decision on whether to include a site that appears to engage one or more discretionary criteria in the list in the nuclear NPS, the Government will consider the following factors:
- whether the nominator has demonstrated that there is a reasonable prospect of appropriately mitigating (wholly or in part) any potential adverse impacts in relation to the relevant discretionary criterion or criteria;

- where a potential adverse impact or impacts cannot be appropriately mitigated, whether the potential adverse impact should prevent the site from being considered suitable at strategic level taking account of the Government's objectives on energy policy.
- 1.20 Government does not expect to form a view as to the viability of detailed proposals for mitigation or the precise extent of any potential adverse impact. Rather, this will be a matter for the IPC to assess when it receives a specific planning application to build on a site listed in the nuclear NPS. However, we would expect the nuclear NPS to make clear that the IPC, when examining an application, would need to consider the mitigation measures above in more detail before making its decision in relation to the granting of development consent for a specific application to build on a site included in the list in the Nuclear NPS.
- 1.21 We will also consider the cumulative impact of the discretionary criteria in relation to a nominated site. Where a site breaches a significant number of discretionary criteria, it may be appropriate to exclude it from the Nuclear NPS.
- 1.22 **Local Issues.** In developing the SSA criteria, we have identified a number of issues which cannot be appropriately assessed at a strategic level, largely due to the need for detailed site-specific investigations and data. Nonetheless, nuclear NPS will highlight these local issues as important considerations for the IPC. The local issues in the SSA are not intended to be an exhaustive list of issues for consideration at a local level by the IPC or by the safety, security or environmental regulators.

## Proposed criteria for new nuclear sites

- 1.23 The draft criteria on which the Government will be consulting, have been developed taking account of inter alia:
- National and international regulatory guidance and practices
  - The views of Government departments with responsibility for policies underpinning the criteria and independent regulators
  - The advice of the independent regulators for nuclear safety (the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate), the environment (Environment Agency) and security (Office of Civil Nuclear Security).
  - Professional technical opinion
  - Comments received during the (May 2007) consultation on the proposed process for the Strategic Siting Assessment.<sup>5</sup>
- 1.24 Table 1 lists the proposed criteria for assessing sites for nuclear new build nominated to BERR in the SSA process and Table 2 lists the local issues which would be flagged for IPC consideration.

<sup>5</sup> Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (May, 2007) *The Role Of Nuclear Power In A Low Carbon UK Economy* <http://www.berr.gov.uk/consultations/page39704.html>

**Table 1 – SSA Draft Criteria**

<b>Criteria related to nuclear safety</b>		<b>Status</b>
1.1	Seismic risk (vibratory ground motion)	Exclusionary
1.2	Capable faulting	Exclusionary
1.4	Flooding	Discretionary
1.5	Tsunami, storm surge and coastal processes	Discretionary
1.7	Proximity to hazardous industrial facilities and operations	Discretionary
1.8	Proximity to civil aircraft movements	Discretionary
1.10	Demographics	Exclusionary
1.12	Proximity to military activities	Exclusionary and Discretionary
<b>Criteria related to environmental protection</b>		
2.1	Internationally designated sites of ecological importance	Discretionary
2.2	Nationally designated sites of ecological importance	Discretionary
<b>Criteria related to societal issues</b>		
3.2	Areas of amenity, cultural heritage and landscape value	Discretionary
<b>Criteria related to operational requirements</b>		
4.1	Size of site to accommodate construction, operation and decommissioning	Discretionary
4.2	Access to suitable sources of cooling	Discretionary

**Table 2 – Local issues flagged for IPC consideration**

<b>Issues related to nuclear safety</b>		<b>Status</b>
1.3	Non-seismic ground conditions	Flag for local consideration
1.6	Meteorological conditions	Flag for local consideration
1.8	Proximity to civil aircraft movements	Flag for local consideration
1.9	Proximity to mining, drilling and other underground operations.	Flag for local consideration
1.11	Emergency planning	Flag for local consideration
<b>Issues related to societal issues</b>		

3.3	Significant infrastructure / resources	Flag for local consideration
<b>Issues related to operational requirements</b>		
4.3	Access to transmission infrastructure	Flag for local consideration

**END**

DRAFT