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This update report has been prepared with expert input from specialist planning and environmental consultancies MWH UK Ltd and Enfusion

# 1 Introduction

## Update Report

### 1.1 The purpose of this update report is to:

- Update the assessment of environmental and sustainability impacts of siting new nuclear power stations on sites identified through the application of Strategic Siting Assessment (SSA) criteria. This update reflects changes made to a small number of the proposed SSA criteria following a recent consultation. An initial assessment of the proposed SSA criteria was published in July 2008 in the document 'Applying the proposed Strategic Siting Assessment Criteria: a study of the potential environmental and sustainability effects'<sup>1</sup> (for ease of reference, this document is hereafter referred to as the 'environmental study' or 'the study').
- Set out the Government's current thinking on alternatives as outlined in the 'Consultation on Strategic Environmental Assessment for proposed National Policy Statement for new nuclear power'<sup>2</sup> (referred to hereafter as the 'scoping report') following responses to the scoping report and comments made in responses to the consultation on the environmental study.

**1.2** The environmental study was published alongside the "Consultation on the Strategic Siting Assessment Process and Siting Criteria for New Nuclear Power Stations in the UK"<sup>3</sup>. The consultation for both documents ended on 11 November 2008. As a result of the consultation, a small number of the SSA criteria have been amended, and further consideration has been given to the treatment of alternatives to the Nuclear National Policy Statement (NPS), which is discussed in Chapter 3 of this update report.

**1.3** The scoping report, the environmental study and this update report will contribute to the Appraisal of Sustainability (AoS) of the Government's Nuclear NPS. This environmental and sustainability assessment was referred to as a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) (incorporating an Appraisal of Sustainability) in the consultation on the SSA. In line with Government policy in relation to National Policy Statements, we now refer to this process as an Appraisal of Sustainability rather than an SEA. This change in terminology does not imply any change in the scope of the environmental and sustainability assessments since the AoS for the Nuclear NPS will incorporate an SEA.

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1 BERR (July 2008) Applying the Proposed Strategic Siting Assessment Criteria: A study of the potential environmental and sustainability effects, URN08/962, <http://www.berr.gov.uk/files/file47137.pdf>

2 BERR (March 2008) Consultation on Strategic Environmental Assessment for proposed National Policy Statement for new nuclear power, URN 08/680AN, <http://www.berr.gov.uk/files/file45240.pdf>

3 BERR (July 2008) Consultation on the Strategic Siting Assessment process and Siting Criteria for New Nuclear Power Stations in the UK, URN 08/925, <http://www.berr.gov.uk/files/file47136.pdf>

- 1.4** This update report sets out the following:
- Background to the proposed Nuclear NPS
  - Information on the Planning Act 2008, including the role of the Nuclear NPS and the requirement to undertake an AoS
  - An outline of work undertaken for the SEA to date and an explanation of how the SEA is incorporated into the requirement for an AoS
  - An assessment of the amendments to the SSA criteria that have been made as a result of the consultation
  - An update to the treatment of alternatives to the Nuclear NPS, as suggested in responses to the scoping report and environmental study
- 1.5** The Government's<sup>4</sup> response to the consultation on the SSA criteria and environmental study is set out in the document "Government Response to the Consultation on the Strategic Siting Assessment Process and Siting Criteria for New Nuclear Power Stations in the UK; and to the study on the environmental and sustainability effects of applying the criteria", hereafter referred to as the 'Government Response'<sup>5</sup>. The Government Response also includes a nomination form and guidance for nominators. It is being published at the same time as this update report. In addition, the Government Response also covers comments which were received on the Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report<sup>6</sup>.

## Background to the Proposed Nuclear National Policy Statement (NPS)

- 1.6** In January 2008 the Government published the Nuclear White Paper<sup>7</sup> which stated that:
- 1.7** *"The Government believes that it is in the public interest that new nuclear power stations should have a role to play in this country's future energy mix alongside other low-carbon sources; that it would be in the public interest to allow energy companies the option of investing in new nuclear power stations; and that the Government should take active steps to open the way to the construction of new nuclear power stations."*

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4 In October 2008, following machinery of Government changes, responsibility for energy policy moved from the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) to the new Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC). It is DECC which is now responsible for the SSA and development of the Nuclear NPS.

5 DECC (January 2009) Government Response to the Consultation on the Strategic Siting Assessment Process and Siting Criteria for New Nuclear Power Stations in the UK; and to the study on the environment and sustainability effects of applying the criteria, URN 09/581, [www.berr.gov.uk/whatwedo/energy/sources/nuclear/consultations/closed-response/page47749.html](http://www.berr.gov.uk/whatwedo/energy/sources/nuclear/consultations/closed-response/page47749.html)

6 BERR (July 2008) Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report, URN 08/928, <http://www.berr.gov.uk/files/file47138.pdf>

7 BERR (January 2008) Meeting the energy challenge: a white paper on nuclear power, URN 08/525 <http://www.berr.gov.uk/files/file43006.pdf>

- 1.8** The Nuclear White Paper also stated that the Government would undertake a number of “facilitative actions” to reduce regulatory and planning risks associated with investment in new nuclear power stations. These included:
- Improving the planning system for major electricity generating stations in England and Wales, including nuclear power stations, by ensuring it sets a framework for development consents that gives full weight to policy and regulatory issues that have already been subject to debate and consultation at a national level, and does not re-open these issues in relation to individual applications.
  - Running a SSA process to develop criteria for determining the suitability of sites for new nuclear power stations and then assessing nominated sites against the criteria. Subject to some European legislative requirements, this would enable the planning process to focus on the proposals rather than debate whether there are other more suitable sites for development.
  - In conjunction with the SSA, taking further our consideration of the high-level environmental impacts in accordance with the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive<sup>8</sup>. This would limit the need to consider such high-level environmental impacts of nuclear power stations during the planning process. The Planning Act 2008 requires an AoS for all NPSs and the SEA will be incorporated within the AoS for the Nuclear NPS.
- 1.9** To take these actions forward, on 22 July 2008 the Government launched the consultation on the SSA process and criteria to seek the views of interested parties on:
- The proposals for the nominations process
  - The proposals for the assessment process
  - The proposed criteria for assessing sites for potential new nuclear power stations (“the SSA criteria”)
- 1.10** As part of the process for developing the SEA, alongside the consultation the Government also published an environmental study which set out an assessment of the environmental and sustainability impacts of applying the proposed SSA criteria. The Government was also seeking views on the environmental study.
- 1.11** The Government also published a Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report in relation to the SSA criteria and said it would consider any comments on the report.

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<sup>8</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).

## The Planning Act 2008, the Nuclear NPS and the Strategic Siting Assessment

- 1.12** The Government has taken steps to improve the planning system for major infrastructure projects through its recent planning reforms. These were brought into effect by the Planning Act 2008<sup>9</sup> which establishes a new single consent regime for nationally significant infrastructure under which the Government will produce NPSs that seek to establish the national case for infrastructure development and set the framework for decisions by the new independent Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC). The NPSs will be subject to public consultation and Parliamentary scrutiny. Decisions on individual applications for major infrastructure projects will be made by the IPC.
- 1.13** The Nuclear NPS will set out the Government's policy on the national strategic issues which need to be taken into account when granting consent for the construction of new nuclear power stations. We expect that the Nuclear NPS will set out the Government's policy on nuclear power. A significant component of the NPS will be a list of sites which have been assessed at strategic level and which the Government considers to be strategically suitable<sup>10</sup> for the deployment of new nuclear power stations by the end of 2025. The SSA is limited to considering sites which are deployable by 2025. This is because it is important to focus on sites which can begin generating in good time to contribute to the Government's goals on climate change and energy security. Nominators will be asked to demonstrate why the site that they nominate is credible for deployment by the end of 2025. The Government will conduct the SSA using exclusionary and discretionary criteria. The final list of SSA criteria that will be used are presented in Annex C of this update report, and also in the Government Response.

## Appraisal of Sustainability incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 1.14** The Planning Act requires an AoS to be carried out for all NPSs. The purpose of completing an AoS is to provide decision makers, statutory consultees and other interested parties with information on the wider effects of future development.
- 1.15** The Government began the process leading towards a Nuclear NPS prior to the passing of the Planning Act and considered that it would be appropriate to undertake an SEA of the Nuclear NPS in accordance with the SEA Directive. From the outset, this assessment was extended to include additional topics to

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<sup>9</sup> The Planning Bill was being considered by Parliament when the consultation on the SSA and environmental study was launched. It received Royal Assent in November 2008 and became the Planning Act 2008. It can be viewed at [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2008/ukpga\\_20080029\\_en\\_1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2008/ukpga_20080029_en_1)

<sup>10</sup> As set out in the Planning Act 2008, an NPS may identify one or more locations as suitable (or potentially suitable) or unsuitable for a specified description of development. For the purposes of this document, "deployment of new nuclear power stations" means commencing operation of one or more new nuclear power stations on the site. Strategic suitability means the judgment Government is able to take on the information available at the SSA stage, against the assessment of those criteria it has identified as strategically important.







































































