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Your ref: APP/U3100/V/23/3326625
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4th October 2023

Dear Ms Palmer,

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 - SECTION 77 AND TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (INQUIRIES PROCEDURE) (ENGLAND) RULES 2000
APPLICATION BY OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL SITE ADDRESS:**

APP/U3100/V/23/3326625: LAND BETWEEN A34 MILTON INTERCHANGE, AND B4015 NORTH OF CLIFTON HAMPDEN, OXFORDSHIRE

I write on behalf of my client the UK Atomic Energy Authority ("UKAEA"). UKAEA controls the Culham Science Centre ("CSC") in Southern Oxfordshire, the future development of which is directly dependent on the delivery of the road proposals contained in the above-mentioned and now 'called-in' application.

As you know from previous correspondence, UKAEA intends to appear at and participate in the forthcoming inquiry. This will probably be as 'third party', with UKAEA's CEO, Professor Sir Ian Chapman giving evidence on the importance of the HIF road to CSC and me giving technical planning evidence. However, it is difficult to be definitive in this regard until the 'matters in dispute' and the 'main issues' have been aired and agreed such that UKAEA can properly determine how best to engage with the inquiry, what matters it needs to address and how to frame its submissions. This is why in my email of 14th September I asked if I could attend the Case Management Conference (CMC) on behalf of UKAEA and I am very grateful to the Inspector for confirming that that is acceptable.

I note from the original 'start letter' that third parties were required to submit any additional comments/evidence to PINS by 4th October. This letter is submitted in response to that deadline and on the basis that, whilst I appreciate that the start date for the Inquiry has now been pushed back to 20th February next year, I have not seen any correspondence to confirm that the date for third party submissions has also been pushed back. I thought it might also assist the Inspector to have sight of UKAEA's position head of the CMC.

UKAEA's Case

The need for the road scheme between the A34 Milton Interchange and the B4015 north of Clifton Hampden ("the Didcot Garden Town HIF road scheme") first emerged through the Local Plan drafting exercises in

South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse around 10 years ago. The Didcot Garden Town HIF road scheme is intended to relieve development pressures, which are a legacy of the previous Local Plan (the Core Strategy) in South Oxfordshire. It is also required to support new growth as allocated in the extant South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2034 and the Vale of White Local Plan 2031 - in all, the delivery of around 14,000 homes, and several thousand jobs.

CSC is at the northern end of the proposed Didcot Garden Town HIF road scheme and combines world-class publicly funded research into fusion power; commercial technology organisations and Culham Innovation Centre, to create a powerhouse of high technology innovation and enterprise in South Oxfordshire. The CSC has been home to fusion research since 1965 and has grown in scale and influence since then. It is an asset on an international, not just national, scale.

CSC is 'inset' from the Oxford Green Belt and is allocated under Policy STRAT8 for significant growth in the extant South Oxfordshire Local Plan (2011-2034). The CSC also forms a key part of two regional employment strategies: "Science Vale" and the "Knowledge Spine," and is one of the largest employment centres in Oxfordshire. CSC currently supports around 4,000 jobs.

The supporting text to Policy STRAT8 states that:

The delivery of the following infrastructure is expected to be complete in 2024, as it is to be forward funded by the Government's 'Housing and Infrastructure Fund' and other existing funding:

- *the Didcot to Culham River Crossing; and*
- *the Clifton Hampden Bypass.*

The land for the road scheme is also 'safeguarded' through Local Plan Policy TRANS3: Safeguarding of Land for Strategic Transport Schemes.

UKAEA worked closely with South Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council, in its role as highway authority, to secure the Policy STRAT 8 allocation. The Inspector appointed to examine the then emerging Local Plan commented in his report [at his paragraph 112] that:

"[Culham Science Centre] is internationally important for research, and it is essential that change and growth can be accommodated in the future. The purpose of the allocation is to enable the site in its entirety to realise its full potential as a science campus where publicly funded science research and commercial technology growth can flourish."

Crucially, the Inspector also concluded [again at his paragraph 121] that accompanying infrastructure was necessary to help facilitate growth at CSC and the adjacent housing allocation for 3,500 new homes and associated services and facilities (Policy STRAT9: Land adjacent to Culham Science Centre):

"Policy STRAT9 [Land Adjacent to Culham Science Centre] requires contributions towards a new crossing of the River Thames between Culham and Didcot and a bypass of Clifton Hampden (as clarified by MM12) and they must be delivered prior to any significant development at Culham. The intention is that the transport schemes will be delivered by 2024. The site is particularly well located in respect of the planned Didcot to Culham River Crossing and the Clifton Hampden Bypass, which are not only road links but also include pedestrian and cycle links and will help to facilitate new bus services, and there are also other opportunities for sustainable transport modes; in the interests of creating a sustainable development, MM12 requires high quality walking and cycling facilities and infrastructure to support public transport within the site."

The delivery of the Didcot Garden Town HIF road scheme is designed to improve active and sustainable travel; it is not a road scheme simply to support more car journeys - the intention is that improved bus

services, rail services and cycle and pedestrian connections will be provided alongside the road construction programme as part of a wider package of S106 measures linked to the proposed growth in housing.

The employment development at CSC, which the Didcot Garden Town HIF road scheme can 'unlock', will support the UK's Fusion Energy Strategy at CSC. Towards Fusion Energy: the UK Government's fusion strategy¹ was launched in October 2021 placing CSC (and its growth) at the centre of the UK's Fusion and sustainability ambitions. This was supported by the injection of c £184m of funding via the Fusion Foundations Programme (FFP). The government has shown its commitment to realising the Fusion strategy by announcing a £700M package of support within the UK's Energy strategy² (which incidentally was launched by the Prime Minister from the CSC, exemplifying its importance) and only this month announcing an additional £650M for fusion development³ UKAEA has been working to establish a Framework Masterplan for the site and to deliver the first phase of this by 31st March 2025. This includes the delivery of a new Main Gate building and infrastructure works directly linked to the Didcot Garden Town HIF road scheme.

The consequential risk of the Didcot Garden Town HIF road scheme not being delivered is that the UKAEA's planned infrastructure works will no longer be deliverable within the FFP funding window. Furthermore, UKAEA will miss out on opportunities to improve Active Travel (improved cycle routes for example) and support the modal shift towards a more sustainable "campus" that the HIF scheme was due to enable.

Planning applications for growth at CSC, which are currently with South Oxfordshire District Council, are contingent upon the Didcot Garden Town HIF road scheme progressing and UKAEA may have to determine the best course of action in that respect.

Whilst the above is hugely disappointing, the longer-term implications of the decision are more alarming. A failure by the County to upgrade the road network in the area, tackling long standing traffic issues, will make realising the development potential of the site more challenging. It will also place in jeopardy UKAEA's mission to lead the delivery of sustainable fusion energy and the scientific and economic benefit. This has not only national but global significance which must be closely considered during the upcoming inquiry.

UKAEA's Framework Masterplan clearly articulates the vision for redevelopment of CSC. It is ambitious and, with the right supporting road infrastructure, will deliver significant growth on site both in terms of building density and job creation. Consistent with the Government's Plan for Growth and its support for the science and technology sector, and in particular Fusion-related research and development, these high-quality jobs - bringing together those working directly in the private Fusion sector and those in its wider supply chain - will support the local economy as the transition to Net Zero continues.

I trust that this [interim] submission is helpful in outlining UKAEA's position.

Yours sincerely,



Steven Sensecall

¹ [Towards fusion energy: the UK government's fusion strategy \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/publications/towards-fusion-energy-the-uk-government-s-fusion-strategy)

² [Powering Up Britain - The Net Zero Growth Plan \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/publications/powering-up-britain-the-net-zero-growth-plan)

³ [Government announces up to £650 million for UK alternatives to Euratom R&T - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-up-to-650-million-for-uk-alternatives-to-euratom-r-t)

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