

LAND TO THE REAR OF THE HOLLIES NURSING HOME, READING ROAD

BURGHFIELD COMMONS RG7 3LZ

PLANNING APPEAL REF: APP/W0340/W/22/3312261

**OPENING STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF
THE OFFICE FOR NUCLEAR REGULATION (2nd R6 PARTY)**

1. The Second Rule 6 Party, the Office for Nuclear Regulation (“ONR”) is GB’s independent nuclear regulator for safety, security, and safeguards. It exists to protect people by securing safe nuclear operations.
2. The first inquiry was ONR’s first participation in a planning inquiry. It is a rare position for a regulator such as ONR to feel compelled to object and appear in a planning appeal. It demonstrates the importance placed on the issues which the Inspector will consider and the ONR’s concern that the implications of the Inspector’s decision may impact on nuclear safety.
3. ONR opposes the proposed development. It supports and agrees with the Council’s assessment of the lack of capacity of the Offsite Emergency Plan (“OSEP”) to cope with further development in the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (“DEPZ”). The OSEP is a critical document for nuclear safety and the ONR’s analysis is that it is under significant pressure.
4. The ONR notes the focus in the written evidence on hypothetical scenarios and theories. It questions the extent to which this is relevant to the issues in this Inquiry, which occurs in circumstances where there is an OSEP already in place. A planning inquiry is not the forum to attack the OSEP nor the DEPZ.
5. The OSEP needs to cope with whatever nuclear emergency it is presented with. As the emergency unfolds, responders will need to establish the characteristics of the accident and determine the associated risk to the public and emergency workers. That takes time and resource. It is not a desk-based exercise as the response is a real world response. Consequently, the arrangements set out in the OSEP must be agile, so that they can be put into effect without delay when required. The arrangements must also be scalable, so they can

adapt to the specific circumstances of the emergency, which cannot be predicted with certainty beforehand and could be more, or less, severe than has been planned for.

6. The OSEP does not take a view on the likelihood of a certain event occurring, so a discussion of likelihood is unlikely to be of assistance to the Inspector. When evaluating the adequacy of the OSEP, the underlying assumption is that the radiation emergency has happened: however likely or unlikely that might be.
7. Similarly, ONR suggests that evidence seeking to minimise harms or to reduce the planned emergency response is of no assistance: an OSEP is the response to a radiation emergency with serious consequences. It is unsurprising that a precautionary approach must be adopted, given the nature of the subject matter.
8. It is also wrong to focus simply on mathematical models and probability. A nuclear emergency is more than a dose of radiation. It is a multi-faceted, multi-agency, local and national event with serious consequences which implicitly cannot be accurately predicted.
9. ONR suggests that the critical question is whether the proposed development would increase pressure on the OSEP and the risk of it failing in the event of an emergency. Anything that degrades that effectiveness impacts on nuclear safety and the safety of the public in the DEPZ.
10. Any further development permitted in the DEPZ may have the potential to impact upon adequate implementation of the OSEP. Although the impact on the potential future residents of the proposed development is an important matter, as a statement of the obvious, increasing the population of the DEPZ in circumstances where time and resources are finite means that the proposed development would inevitably have an impact on the whole of the DEPZ.
11. As a result of its regulatory engagement and statutory testing, the ONR has assured itself that the Council's decision-making arrangements for recommendations are suitable and the Council's analysis of the OSEP is reasonable. The Council is the guardian and implementor of the OSEP. If the Council cannot make a positive case that the proposed development can be accommodated within the OSEP, the ONR's respectful advice is that appeal should be dismissed.

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