

Matter 6- Radioactive Waste Policy

Statement by Northamptonshire County Council

Issue R1

Should the policy relate to waste management rather than disposal?

- 1.1 The policy was developed because the Council considered that there was a policy gap in the MWDF in respect of radioactive waste disposal. This was of course driven by the fact that the county is now home to a national disposal facility, albeit one with a temporary permission that lapses in 2026 (2016 until extension granted in 2013).
- 1.2 It is considered that proposals that involve the management of radioactive waste, were they ever to be put forward within the county, would be more appropriately determined under Policy 13.

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Issue R2

Does the policy properly reflect national policy and guidance?

- 2.1 The policy has been developed to conform with national policy and guidance on policies, but in relation to the topic it covers there is actually no national *planning* policy on radioactive waste, although guidance on radioactive waste management and disposal does have a role; this includes the UK Strategy for the Management of Solid Low Level Radioactive Waste from the Nuclear Industry and the Policy for the Long Term Management of Solid Low Level Radioactive Waste in the United Kingdom. The Local Plan policy is in conformity with both the UK strategy and policy on LLW.
- 2.2 It is therefore important that the planning considerations of radioactive waste development are set out in a local plan when the planning authority considers it justified. This authority considers it is justified to set out specific considerations relating to radioactive waste disposal in its local plan because of the existence of an existing disposal facility within the plan area.
- 2.3 The MWLP sets out the local planning requirements and considerations - those stated in Policy 21 are not in conflict / inconsistent with national policy / strategy (and no evidence has been put forward to demonstrate such apparent inconsistencies). The wording of Policy 21 sets out factors to be taken account of in assessing applications for radioactive waste disposal and has been drafted to ensure clarity on such matters.

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Issue R3

Are the criteria contained in the policy appropriate? What is their justification?

- 3.1 As stated under Issue R2 the Council considered it appropriate to have a specific policy on radioactive waste disposal policy in the Plan.
- 3.2 It is considered that how the policy is set out, with general criteria first and more detailed criteria where the proposal for determination is as a consequence of decommissioning at a nuclear licensed site, is appropriate as are the criteria set out in both parts of the policy.
- 3.3 In relation to the first part of the policy it is considered that reference to disposal forming the last available management option should be stated for the avoidance of doubt as there is no national *planning* policy guidance on the matter of radioactive waste. However, this is in line with the UK Policy for the Long Term Management of Solid Low Level Radioactive Waste in the United Kingdom (March 2007) minimisation of waste arisings (para 17-18) and consideration of all practicable options for the management of LLW (para 19), as well as UK Nuclear Industry LLW Strategy (August 2010) S 2.5.6 (pg. 24). Nevertheless market drivers and maximising opportunities may not necessarily always see fit to ensure other treatment options are utilised prior to disposal and so it is necessary to clearly state that local preference is for disposal to form the last available option.
- 3.4 The waste hierarchy sets out the priority order for waste management processes, however it does not specify that options for disposal should be rigorously assessed and justification given as to why the rejected options are not practical hence the second sentence of the second bullet point is required in Policy 21.
- 3.5 The policy highlights the need to drive waste up the hierarchy and take account of broader sustainability issues, including transport movements, by seeking to identify facility catchment areas through the third bullet point.
- 3.6 The mitigation of potentially adverse impacts to acceptable levels supports the protection of the receiving environment and community from unacceptable harm/adverse impacts and promotes sustainable development.
- 3.7 The potential for the disposal of radioactive waste to prejudice/displace existing waste uses (and associated capacity) needs to be addressed to support the plans intent of achieving net self-sufficiency.
- 3.8 In relation to the second part of the policy, this is considered necessary because it sets out the Councils preferred strategy for disposal of such wastes. The UK Strategy (S 2.5.6 pg 26) and UK Policy (Annex 1 Supplementary notes - para 19) look at alternative disposal options. The sequential approach identified in Policy 21 applies these alternative disposal options but identifies local preference and links this to communities taking more responsibility for their waste and disposal to the nearest appropriate installation. Where there are local issues / circumstances that would prevent other options being utilised this should be clearly demonstrated and outlined in the planning

application (as detailed in Policy 21) – this may include how such matters were considered as part of the BAT/BPEO. Such information feeds into the (planning application) decision making process and is important in ensuring that outcomes are well considered, supported by robust evidence, balanced and support sustainable development.