



Newsletter January 2014

Council braced for Hinkley C impact on Sedgemoor housing demand

Nov 26, www.thisisthewestcountry.co.uk

PEOPLE looking for a home in the Bridgwater area are facing a massive struggle – with rents rocketing and Hinkley C about to crank up demand.

That's according to Sedgemoor District Council, whose housing team has published a report this week which says rents on some types of home in the district have more than doubled in just two years.

The report said: "Evidence is showing a marked increase in market rents in the Sedgemoor area from £209 for a one bedroom property in July 2011 to £455 for a one-bed property in July 2013.

"The continued use of the private rented sector will face a new challenge from the proposed EDF Hinkley C nuclear power station."

The report said a "substantial number" of EDF workers would be looking for rented accommodation.

EDF Energy is proposing two worker campuses in Bridgwater, as well as on-site accommodation at Hinkley C, to house a total of 1510 workers.

It says it is focused on ensuring the campuses are as attractive as possible and equipped with the best possible facilities to ensure they are fully occupied.

But Dave Baxter, Sedgemoor's strategic housing manager, told the Mercury: "Hope-fully if the campuses are used to capacity then it will be fine, but if people don't want to live in these campuses then they will turn to private rented accommodation.

"The assumptions for Hinkley C have also been that people will travel up to 45 minutes to the site but if people decide to live closer then obviously Bridgwater will be hit."

On the current rental situation in Sedge-moor, Mr Baxter said: "There is a shortage of rented accommodation. The market has responded but not quickly enough.

"Young people in particular are finding it increasingly hard to find a home."

Paul Calcutt, lettings manager at CJ Hole, in Bridgwater, said there had been a significant increase in outside investors looking for buy-to-let properties for when Hinkley C begins.

He said: "I don't think we need any more flats but we need houses. We are looking for stock for these investors."

Richard Curtis, director at Hollands and Curtis in Bridgwater, and Andrew Lees, of Andrew Lees Lettings, said they had confidence in EDF's plans for worker accommodation. Both also said they had seen no evidence of rents shooting up on the scale described by the district council.

Mr Lees said: "Rents are probably about the same in Bridgwater as a few years ago, I would say. It's hard to predict what the future will hold with Hinkley, but they've obviously thought about accommodation."

Mr Curtis added: "The market is changing. I think people now find it easier to buy. The Government schemes have helped."

'Illegal UK state aid' probe hits nuclear plans

14 Dec, Ecologist

A full-scale investigation is being launched into whether Britain's deal with French nuclear giant EDF to build new stations at Hinkley Point in the west of England, is illegal state aid.

The investigation by the European Commission delays any expansion of the industry for at least a year and may permanently damage its prospects.

Nuclear subsidies have never before been looked at in Europe, since they pre-date existing EU policy on competition. However, Germany, which is phasing out nuclear power in favour of renewables following the Fukushima accident, believes the UK's nuclear subsidy is incompatible with EU policy.

The UK argues that a guaranteed price for electricity over 35 years, plus £10 billion (US \$16.36 bn) in loan guarantees for building the

station, and insurance cover in case of accident, do not constitute subsidies beyond what would be available to other low carbon forms of generation, and are therefore permissible.

Tom Burke, former advisor to Conservative environment minister John Gummer, asks why, if there is no public subsidy, the Government needs to apply to Brussels for state aid clearance for this deal.

But the UK Department of Energy and Climate Change counters: "The Commission is aware of our timetable for implementation. We are confident that the case we have put forward is robust and consistent with state aid rules." It expects to receive clearance by mid-2014.

Objections to the deal are expected to be numerous, however, and an investigation could take far longer than that. If the decision goes in favour of the UK it will be a serious blow to the renewable industry, so supporters of wind, solar, wave, tidal and bio-gas technologies are all likely to submit objections.

Mark Turner of Lightsource Renewable Energy, has written to Prime Minister David Cameron to point out that Britain's solar industry can deliver the same energy production as Hinkley C within 24 months at comparable cost.

Hinkley won't be able to generate for the ten years it would take to build the plant. Solar power, on the other hand, could provide energy security quickly, reduce electricity bills and protect the environment at the same time, he said.

Before the last election all political parties said that nuclear power stations would be built only if they could compete with other forms of generation without subsidy. The Government then agreed to pay EDF £92.50 per megawatt hour over 35 years -double the existing price of electricity.

Two stations of the same EPR design as Hinkley are being built in Finland and France. They are both about seven years late and construction budgets have already doubled.

Brussels launches state aid probe into Cameron's nuclear project. See video here: <http://www.vieuws.eu/energy/in-focus-brussels-launches-state-aid-probe-into-camerons-nuclear-project/>

Peace Blanket reminder:

Jo Smoldon would like remind you, in the lull of January, to keep knitting (or crochet) the pink block 60cm x 100cm for the Burghfield to Aldermaston event on 16th August this year. For more details see our September newsletter or <http://actionawe.org> then put knitting in the search box. Thanks.

Nikki Clark's report on An Taisce's Judicial Review

On a cold and frosty morning in central London anti-nuclear activists went to the centre of London for the second time in a week. Activists had gathered earlier in the week to present a letter to DECC condemning the government's consultation on a dump for nuclear waste.



Undeterred by the usual deafening media silence on the nuclear issue, people brought banners and leaflets whilst Jo and I donned the nuclear waste barrel costumes for a bit of extra warmth! We leafleted passers by whilst highly paid barristers and legal bods argued the details of why the UK chose not to properly consult our Irish neighbours on their nuclear plans.

I went in to observe some of the legal circus for a little while and listened to the complex arguments being made by An Taisce's barristers. The gist of the case (as usual when it comes to British compliance with European legislation) is that Britain's interpretation is not in the spirit that the legislation was intended.

The critical legislation that concerns the Irish case is Aarhus and Espoo. Aarhus is about the rights of EU citizens to participate in Environmental decision-making whilst the Espoo convention specifically imposes responsibilities on EU member states to properly assess and consult on projects that potentially have significant impacts. Indeed both of these pieces of legislation were drawn up with projects such as nuclear in mind.

The ruling wasn't expected to come in until the new year. The case was very complicated, with lots of points of law argued, so it is absolutely mind-boggling that any truly independent judiciary could have so quickly made a ruling. Justice Patterson ruled against An Taisce and refused to refer to the European Courts of Justice. An Taisce can apply to the court of appeal and they can also go directly to the European Courts for a remedy. It remains to be seen whether they will do so. The full ruling can be found here <http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2013/4161.html>

Of course if you think that the judiciary were never going to take a decision out of step with government because they are compromised then things become a whole lot clearer....

Jo Smoldon's report on London Demo.

On Thursday 4th Dec Stop Hinkley went to London for the demo outside the High Court to support An Taisce (The Irish National Trust) legal challenge to the government. We had to travel up to the city the previous day to ensure a timed arrival so, on making the travel plans, we realised we had a few hours on Wed afternoon spare in London. What use could we make of ourselves? An impromptu event emerged....

Topical that week was Radiation Free Lakeland www.mariannewildart.wordpress.com taking letters to government in protest at the continuing implementation of the insane geological nuclear dump plan in the Lakes. So we decided to show our solidarity, albeit a day late. The nuclear waste barrels were rolled out again and we made a banner 'HOW ABOUT A NUCLEAR WASTE DUMP HERE?' We paraded this around the sights of London and had lots of support from passers-by, both locals and holiday makers, who could see our simple message. If London (government) is so in favour of nuclear, how about having a waste store under the city? Apparently the geology is suitable, so why not?

We handed out fliers with an ethical solution to the nuclear waste; being pumped direct to under floor heating systems in each house, 'having your share of electricity entitles you to your share of the waste,' we dropped one off to DECC to consider alongside all their other mad brained ideas.

We were moved on from The Houses of Parliament as we weren't in an acceptable location for protesting. We said we weren't protesting just asking the people of London for their views, but were moved on to new venues which we had planned anyway.

Downing Street got the best photo shot with a local policeman poised ready to engage with us.



We had some other interesting responses; a Royal Guard (bearskin) outside Clarence House, who don't normally speak to the public, (in fact people go to great lengths to try and get them to speak) started yelling at the top of his voice "LEAVE. You have 15 seconds or I am pushing the panic button" when we suggested a share of the waste should be stored there. We beat a

hasty retreat, asking him not to shout. It was the first time I have ever seen Nikki phased by anyone. It must have been something to do with the machine gun in his hand.....

Then on to Buckingham Palace. We decided it was a suitable venue for our banner as the Queen owns Uranium mines in America, Canada and Africa and so supports and makes money from the deadly business. We were included in many sightseers' photos in front of the now illuminated Palace.

Ineos boss says Hinkley nuclear power too expensive

16 Dec, BBC

Power from the new Hinkley C nuclear generator will be too expensive, the boss of one of the UK's biggest energy consumers has warned. Jim Ratcliffe told the BBC that UK manufacturers would find the price unaffordable.

The government has guaranteed a price of £92.50 per megawatt hour (Mwh).

Mr Ratcliffe said Ineos [the world's fourth-largest chemicals company, with its headquarters in Switzerland] recently agreed a deal for nuclear power in France at 45euros (£38) per Mwh.

The government has guaranteed that the new Hinkley station, being developed by France's EdF and backed by Chinese investors, can charge the £92.50 minimum price for 35 years.

"Forget it," Mr Ratcliffe said in an interview with the BBC. "Nobody in manufacturing is going to go near [that price]. The UK probably has the most expensive energy in the world. It is more expensive than Germany, it is more expensive than France, it is much, much, more expensive than America. It is not competitive at all, on the energy front, I am afraid."

A spokesperson for the Department of Energy and Climate Change said the UK needed an affordable energy supply. "The UK Government has always been clear that EDF will only be offered an investment contract for the Hinkley Point C new nuclear power plant if it is fair, affordable, value for money and consistent with state aid rules. No consumer in the UK will pay anything for electricity from Hinkley until 2023."

When running at full capacity the new Hinkley plant is expected to generate about 7% of the UK's electricity.

Ministers and EdF were in talks for more than a year about the minimum price the company would be paid for electricity produced at the site., In the end, the government guaranteed the group a price for electricity in 2023 at twice the current level of wholesale prices.

Nuclear train in level crossing accident

A Direct Rail Services locomotive hauling an empty nuclear transport wagon collided with a car straddling the level crossing on the Cumbria/Lancashire border on 14th January. The car driver managed to abandon the vehicle before it was struck by the train from Sellafield which carried the car some 300 metres down the track. No injuries were sustained and there was no derailment.

Nuclear transport trains routinely leave the Sellafield site on a number of days each week, returning empty spent fuel flasks to nuclear power stations around the UK where they are refilled and returned to Sellafield. DRS is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority. The NDA confirmed that the train was bound for Oldbury nuclear power station (which shares the Berkeley railhead) to collect spent fuel for Sellafield.

Information from CORE.

Areva may use French fund to help pay for UK nuclear plant

Dec 16 – Reuters

Areva is in talks with the French government to release some funds set aside for dismantling its nuclear installations in France to help the company finance a new British nuclear reactor, a newspaper reported.

State-owned Areva is taking a 10 percent stake in the consortium that will build Hinkley C and wants to ensure the project will not impact its debt, which is rated BBB, one notch above "junk" territory. It will need £500 million to finance its share of Hinkley Point according to one source. "Talks have started," said Areva's Chief Financial Officer Pierre Aubouin. "If we obtained this authorisation, this would neutralise the impact on our debt."

A 2012 French parliamentary report showed it could cost Areva up to 7.1 billion euros to dismantle its nuclear installations.

The funds Areva has put aside for winding up the sites are tied up in bonds and shares and are ringfenced by government decree. Read full story: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/12/16/uk-areva-hinkleypoint-funds-idUKBRE9BF0KS20131216>

2014 Subscription Renewals:

Renewal reminders are enclosed with this newsletter.

Those of you who pay by standing order have the luxury of not having to worry about it. If you haven't set up an SO please consider doing so, as it saves both you and us postages costs, time and trouble.

Thank you for your support

Stop Hinkley Constitution

It has been proposed that we change the fourth paragraph of Aims in the SH Constitution. It currently reads:

- To campaign for other energy sources, which mitigate climate change and particularly renewable sources as well as energy conservation.

The proposed new wording is:

- To campaign for energy conservation and renewable sources of energy.

It is also proposed to delete the second paragraph, which reads:

- To co-ordinate and organise this opposition.

These proposals will be discussed and a decision made at the next AGM on March 10th. In the meantime, members' comments are most welcome: admin@stophinkley.org or write to Val [see address in Contacts].

Events

**Stop Hinkley meeting
Monday February 10th
Business 6.30-7.30pm
7.30pm Nuclear films
West Bow House, Milton Place
off West Street, Bridgwater TA6 3RT**

**Stop Hinkley AGM
Monday March 10th, as above.**

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