

Additional Statement of Common Ground between West Berkshire District Council, Reading Borough Council and Office for Nuclear Regulation regarding the Reading Borough Local Plan Partial Update

January 2026

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement of Common Ground has been prepared by West Berkshire District Council (WBDC), Reading Borough Council (RBC) and the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR), collectively referred to as “the parties”. It is in addition to the Statement of Common Ground signed in April 2025 between WBDC and RBC and relates specifically to issues around the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) Burghfield.
- 1.2 AWE plc operates AWE Burghfield, which is situated within West Berkshire District. It is operated on behalf of the Ministry of Defence and is a nuclear licensed site. WBDC is the lead local authority for emergency planning for AWE Burghfield and is the owner of the AWE Off-Site Emergency Plan (OSEP). ONR is the independent nuclear regulator and, acting jointly with the Environment Agency, is the competent authority responsible for nuclear-licensed sites.
- 1.3 A Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) is defined around AWE Burghfield which extends into both West Berkshire District and Reading Borough, as well as into Wokingham Borough. This zone was defined in 2020, and reviewed in 2023, after the existing Reading Local Plan was adopted.
- 1.4 Proposed updates to policy OU2: Hazardous Installations at the Pre-Submission stage of the Local Plan Partial Update (LPPU) seek to reflect the issues around AWE Burghfield.
- 1.5 WBDC and ONR made comments on proposed updated policy OU2 of the Pre-Submission Draft LPPU. RBC is not opposed to the principle of some of the proposed changes but these would likely constitute main modifications to be considered through the examination process. The purpose of this additional Statement of Common Ground is to set out the changes which the parties agree should be made to policy OU2 and any outstanding matters relating to AWE Burghfield.

2. Areas of agreement relating to policy OU2

- 2.1 The parties agree that the changes to policy OU2 (Hazardous Installations) detailed in Appendix 1 are required to ensure that the policy is sound. WBDC and ONR consider that additional changes are needed to ensure consistency in the approach across impacted neighbouring authorities – please see section 3.

3. Areas of disagreement

- 3.1 There are some outstanding points from WBDC's and ONR's responses at Pre-Submission stage that are not dealt with by the proposed modifications, and WBDC and ONR maintain that the following change is required for soundness:
- That the policy should explicitly state that should the ONR as the regulator advise against development this will have significant weight and will be likely to lead to refusal.
- 3.2 WBDC further consider that the following change is required for soundness:
- That the ONR consultation zones should be shown on the Proposals Map.
- 3.3 WBDC consider that the following change would be advantageous for clarity but is not a soundness issue.
- That Policy OU2 should be split into separate policies on (a) hazardous sites under Control of Major Accident Hazard Regulations 2025 (COMAH) sites and Major Accident Hazard Pipelines 1996 (MAHP) and (b) AWE Burghfield.
- 3.4 WBDC's comments at Pre-Submission stage regarding sites falling within the DEPZ under policies SR1 and SR4 are unaffected by this Statement of Common Ground.

4. Signatories

Signed for Reading Borough Council



Name: Matthew Golledge

Position: Acting Assistant Director for Planning, Transport and Public Protection

Date: 08.01.2026



Name: Laura Callan

Position: Planning Service Lead

Date: 8.01.2026

Signed for Office for Nuclear Regulation



Name: Alistair Hillery

Position: Deputy Director of Regulation

Date: 9 January 2026

Appendix 1: Proposed main modifications

The modifications and references in the following table show changes to the Local Plan Partial Update Pre-Submission Draft, November 2024 (LP003b on the examination documents list).

The above document is already in tracked changes format and shows how the adopted Local Plan (November 2019) would be amended. Please therefore be aware that there are two types of amendments shown in this schedule.

Changes already proposed to be made in the LPPU Pre-Submission Draft [LP003b]:

- Additional text that would amend the adopted Local Plan (2019) is shown in green and underlined: [Example](#)
- Deleted text that would amend the adopted Local Plan (2019) is shown in green and struck through: [Example](#)

Changes proposed as a main modification through the examination process:

- Additional text that would amend the Pre-Submission Draft LPPU (November 2024) is shown in blue and underlined: [Example](#)
- Deleted text that would amend the Pre-Submission Draft LPPU (November 2024) is shown in blue and struck through: [Example](#)

Amendments in blue supersede those in green, so for instance where a change proposed to the adopted Local Plan in green is proposed to be further amended or deleted, this is shown in blue only.

Ref	Page number [LP003b]	Policy/ Paragraph [LP003b]	Main Modification	Reason for modification
A	168	Policy OU1	<i>Amend policy as follows:</i> <u>a.</u> Proposals for hazardous substances consent, or development in the vicinity of hazardous sites or pipelines, will not be permitted unless it has been satisfactorily demonstrated that the amount, type and location of hazardous substances would not pose adverse health and safety risks to the surrounding population and environment; and that any necessary special precautions to limit other potential societal risks to acceptable degrees would be put in place prior to the development commencing.	To respond to Reg 19 comments by ONR and MOD

Ref	Page number [LP003b]	Policy/ Paragraph [LP003b]	Main Modification	Reason for modification
			<p><u>b. Any proposal for development within the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) of AWE Burghfield (AWE B), shown on the Proposals Map or as subsequently amended, that would increase the residential or non-residential population and/or level of activity will not be acceptable be refused unless:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>it does not prejudice the security and future current and future operations and defence capabilities of AWE B; and</u> <u>any increase in population within the DEPZ can be accommodated in the context of the AWE B Off-Site Emergency Plan (or any successor under an alternative name) at the time of the planning application.</u> <p><u>c. A proposal that falls within the consultation zones for nuclear sites set out by the Office for Nuclear Regulation at the time of the planning application and which triggers the relevant criteria will be subject to consultation with ONR. If the proposal poses an external hazard to a nuclear site or if it cannot be accommodated within the Off-Site Emergency Plan it will be refused.</u></p>	
B	169	Paragraph 4.7.14	<p>Amend paragraph as follows:</p> <p>The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and, for nuclear licensed sites, the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR), acting jointly with and the Environment Agency (EA), who together form the statutory body of the COMAH (Control of Major Accident Hazards) Competent Authority, and provide specialist advice to the Borough on matters relating to <u>non-nuclear</u> hazardous sites. Therefore, both planning applications for development within specified distances of <u>non-nuclear licensed</u> hazardous sites, or pipelines, and/or proposals for new</p>	To separate references to COMAH and nuclear regimes to avoid confusion.

Ref	Page number [LP003b]	Policy/ Paragraph [LP003b]	Main Modification	Reason for modification
			hazardous installations will be referred to the HSE and/or EA and Emergency Planners . The principal aim of the COMAH Competent Authority is to reduce the risks of potential major accidents that are associated with the handling of hazardous substances. The Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) is the independent nuclear regulator and, acting jointly with the EA, is the COMAH competent authority responsible for nuclear-licensed sites.	
C	169-170	Paragraph 4.7.16	<p><i>Amend paragraph as follows:</i></p> <p>WBDC maintains the Off-Site Emergency Plan (OSEP) for AWE Burghfield, and Emergency Planning at RBC will be best placed, in consultation with WBDC, which maintains the Off-Site Emergency Plan (OSEP) for AWE Burghfield, and the AWE Off-Site Emergency Planning Group as necessary, to judge how a proposal will impact the OSEP and therefore the health, safety and wellbeing of the community. Proposals for any increase in population or activity within the DEPZ (including working or visiting population) should be subject to consultation with ONR, AWE and the Ministry of Defence (MOD) as well as Emergency Planning services in both West Berkshire and Reading. ONR should also be consulted on planning applications of certain types within the Outer Consultation Zone (a 5 km radius) of AWE Burghfield and the 12 km zone of both AWE Burghfield and AWE Aldermaston. Details of these types of application are provided by the ONR¹¹⁸. Consultation zones may change during the plan period, and the ONR will provide the latest information. The ONR will normally advise against a development should they not receive adequate assurance that the development can be accommodated within the AWE OSEP. As a result, the ONR will consider feedback provided by WBDC Emergency Planning Service, as the AWE OSEP owner under REPPiR. As the regulator, the ONR's response will carry</p>	To accurately reflect consultation arrangements and refer to consultation zones.

Ref	Page number [LP003b]	Policy/ Paragraph [LP003b]	Main Modification	Reason for modification
			<p><u>significant weight. Should an unacceptable risk to the AWE OSEP be identified, a planning application would be refused.</u></p> <p>Add footnote as follows:</p> <p>¹¹⁸<u>Land use planning Office for Nuclear Regulation</u></p>	
D	239	Paragraph 6.2.1	<p><i>Add additional key principle as follows:</i></p> <p><u>j. The Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) for AWE Burghfield places a constraint on development in parts of South Reading, and development within the zone will need to comply with the relevant policies in particular OU2.</u></p>	To ensure that the DEPZ is recognised as a high-level issue in South Reading as highlighted in a representation by AWE and MOD.
E	243	New paragraph 6.2.13	<p><i>Add new paragraph 6.2.13 as follows:</i></p> <p><u>6.2.13 A significant part of South Reading falls within the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone for AWE Burghfield and this is a strategic consideration that will need to be carefully considered. Policy OU2 and its supporting text provides more detail.</u></p>	To ensure that the DEPZ is recognised as a high-level issue in South Reading as highlighted in a representation by AWE and MOD.