Dear Sirs

Application for Non Material Change 3 relating to Hinkley Point C Development Consent Order

We act on behalf of the Fairfield Estate ("the Estate"). As will be apparent from previous representations made in connection with the Development Consent Order ("DCO") process, the Estate owns a considerable area of land adjacent to and surrounding Hinkley Point C.

The Estate is concerned that the scale and scope of the proposed changes to the DCO cannot be properly described as being "non material".

It is accepted that in the context of a development of this size, changes to buildings which may be considered material when judged in isolation may be less discernible against the backdrop of a power station. However, this application seeks to increase the dimensions of 14 buildings beyond the generous parameters which were assessed and approved through the DCO process.

The fact that the amendments are being judged against the backdrop of a power station does not mean that any changes to the ancillary buildings should not be considered to be material. There must come a time when proposed changes must be considered to have a material effect on the impact of the scheme as assessed in the DCO. The Estate considers that this threshold has been reached and exceeded.

As will be noted above, 14 of the buildings comprised in the development have increased in size from the dimensions approved in the DCO. This includes more than doubling the cubic volume of the above ground elements of the Interim Spent Fuel Store from 243,750m³ (i.e. 150m length x 65m width x 25m height) to 501,510m³ (229m length x 73m width x 30m height). This represents an increase in the height of the building by 5m (disregarding the stack which was only a minor feature of the building). The length of the building has been increased by 79m (i.e. the proposed building is nearly twice as long as consented) and the width has increased by 8m.

Even in the context of a power station, these increases in size should be considered to be "material". When considered in combination with an increase in the dimensions of 13 other buildings forming part of the consented scheme, the suggestion that the amendments should not be considered to be "material" lacks credibility.
We note that on page 50 of the Application Statement, EDF states that the Interim Spent Fuel Store (Ref No 42) "will have less visual impact on views due to its reduced height and elimination of the discharge stack". However, as noted above, if the stack, which was only a minor feature of the building is disregarded, the height of the building has increased by 5m (see row 42 of the table at page 12 of the Application Statement which states that the building will be 30m in height). It is highly misleading to say that the increase in all of the dimensions of the building would have "less visual impact". This is particularly the case when, in paragraph 3.2.11 the Application Statement notes that this building will be visible from Principal Viewpoint 16 from operation year 1 until year 15 when the proposed restoration planting is anticipated to have matured (see para 3.2.13).

In addition, the Estate has not seen any evidence to suggest that the landscape and visual impact of the amended scheme has been properly or robustly assessed.

It is first necessary to reiterate the importance of the surrounding landscape. The development is located on land immediately abutting the Estate. This land was previously part of the Estate. The parts of the development site which are only required temporarily for construction will be returned to the Estate following restoration.

The Estate (which comprises a number of listed buildings including Fairfield House and the surrounding Fairfield Historic Parkland) has been in the same family for over 800 years. The Estate therefore views its role in these proceedings not only as landowner but also as custodian of a significant proportion of the local landscape.

The Estate land adjoining the western boundary of Hinkley Point C is high quality landscape from which there are panoramic views over the Bristol Channel, the Welsh coastline, the Quantock Hills and Exmoor. The landscape was evaluated by the Countryside Commission (now Natural England) in 1986/7 as being of outstanding scenic interest, which should be protected and preserved for public enjoyment. The intrinsic value of this land (referred to in short hand as the "Area of Outstanding Scenic Interest") was accepted by the Inspector in connection with the Hinkley Point C Harbour Empowerment Order Inquiry.

A number of public footpaths, including the long-distance West Somerset Coast Path, lie within the Estate’s land and are widely enjoyed by walkers for its scenic views and high tranquillity. Footpath access will continue during and following the construction of HPC.

It is therefore clear that the surrounding landscape is of high quality, contains a number of important heritage assets and is regularly used by sensitive receptors. In this context, given the scope and scale of the proposed changes to the scheme, it is essential that the landscape and visual impacts of the scheme as proposed should be comprehensively and robustly reassessed. The reassessment, together with the assumptions made, should be made available to the decision makers and interested parties.

The information provided to update the ES is insufficient to enable the decision maker or any interested party to assess the impact of the changes to the scheme. Only one computer generated visualisation has been provided showing the proposed changes in situ. This has been produced from an aerial perspective and does nothing to assist with an assessment of the impact of the proposed increase in the dimensions of the buildings on the local landscape.
The Application Statement contains a section on Landscape and Visual Assessment. Para 3.2.4 states “The proposed changes to the HPC permanent development site have been assessed by EDF Energy’s landscape consultants having regard to the visual impact assessment.” However, no copy of that assessment has been provided as part of the application documents.

Whilst the application is accompanied by two plans showing “Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Viewpoint locations”, no visualisations have been provided to show how the amendments to the scheme would impact upon those viewpoints.

At paragraph 3.2.6, the Application Statement states “It is therefore felt that with the possible exception of viewpoints 16 (short range) and 19 (medium range) located to the east of the proposals, there would be no significant material change to any of the short or medium range views, to the south and west of the site.” No other information is provided regarding the assessment of the impacts of the proposed changes from the viewpoint to the west of the site. This summary is wholly inadequate given the enormity of the impact of this scheme on the surrounding landscape and the likely change in impacts that will result from the proposed changes to the consented scheme.

Paragraph 3.2.8 of the Application Statement notes the anticipated effectiveness of landscaping to mitigate the visual impacts on local residents. It goes on to state “However, the large scale structures would be visible above the landscape proposals.” Given that a number of structures have increased in height, it should be necessary to ensure that the impact of the proposed changes on these viewpoints should be robustly and transparently assessed to enable the decision maker and interested parties to reach an informed view.

Despite the assurance in the Application Statement that the “proposed changes to the HPC permanent development site have been assessed by EDF Energy’s landscape consultants having regard to the visual impact assessment”, it is apparent that no assessment has been made from any of the viewpoints on the Estate’s land. No person has approached the Estate to request access to their land for this purpose (or otherwise).

As noted above, the Estate contains an important listed building (Fairfield House) and is a landscape designated as an Area of Outstanding Scenic Interest. It is disappointing that no assessment of the proposed “non material” amendments has been carried out.

Finally, as noted above, EDF seeks to place reliance on the effectiveness of landscaping mitigation which was secured at the DCO stage. However, it must be noted that the landscape mitigation implemented on the Estate’s land (and elsewhere) was designed to mitigate the impacts of the consented scheme. The increase in the height of a significant number of the buildings is likely to adversely affect the effectiveness of that mitigation. However, due to the lack of information and the failure to assess the impact of the changes from the viewpoint on the Estate’s land, it is impossible for the Estate or the decision maker to robustly assess the extent to which the landscape mitigation may need to be adjusted to mitigate the amended scheme.

In summary, the Estate considers that the application is not accompanied by adequate information to allow the impact of the proposed changes to be properly assessed by the decision maker or interested parties. Therefore, additional information should be requested from EDF to enable the landscape and visual impact of the amended scheme to be assessed and understood.
Yours faithfully

[Signature]

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