

Local Transport Board, 12 December 2017

Paper C

Huntspill Energy Park, Bridgwater

Recommendation: This report is for noting.

Introduction

One of the Growth Deal 3 projects is the provision of an access route linking the site of the proposed Huntspill Energy Park to the major road network. This report provides an update on the current status of the project.

Background

Huntspill Energy Park is a strategic employment site allocated in the Sedgemoor Local Plan for low carbon and renewable energy generation and complementary uses. It has been seen as having the potential to support up to 5,000 jobs, and provide capacity for the Hinkley C supply chain.

It is the 635 acre site of a former Royal Ordnance Factory, and it is located north of the A39 just to the east of M5 Junction 23. The current highway access route from the A39 passes through the small communities of Puriton and Woolavington. The Growth Deal 3 project is for the construction of a new highway access from the A39, which will remove the need for traffic to and from the Energy Park to pass through these communities.

The Energy Park is the site of the Sedgemoor element of the Enterprise Zone.

Current Status

The site has been in the ownership of BAE Systems, who have responsibility for a number of former MOD establishments. This has posed a question about their priorities for moving forward with such sites, especially in view of the need for on-site remediation to mitigate the impact of the former activities.

However, in the past month there have been significant developments which bring some clarity about the ability of the project to move forward. The whole site has been acquired by the Salamanca Group, a corporate finance group which is based in London and operates on an international basis.

Following this acquisition the Section 106 agreement has been signed and the outline planning consent for the energy park development, including the access road, has been granted. Salamanca will be progressing acquisition of the necessary land for the access road at an early date.

It is understood that BAE Systems have retained responsibility for decommissioning and remediating the site, and that these works will be progressed imminently.

It is also understood that Salamanca have an agreement in place with an energy provider for on-site generation. They envisage that this facility will provide energy for other occupiers of the site which may include manufacturing, logistics and other industry and business.

Business Case Process

As this is a transport project, being progressed to unlock a key employment site, it has been agreed that the business case will be considered by both the LTB and SIP, on the basis of a single business case submission. Salamanca will be the promoters of the project. It is currently envisaged that the business case will be considered by the LTB in March 2018 and by SIP in April 2018.