



**Prosperous Communities
Committee**

Tuesday, 18 March 2025

Subject: STEP: Progress Update and Future Activity

Report by:	Director of Planning, Regeneration & Communities
Contact Officer:	James Makinson-Sanders Economic Growth Team Manager James.ms@west-lindsey.gov.uk
Purpose / Summary:	To update committee on the progress of the STEP Fusion programme and confirm the 2025/26 programme of enabling activity.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

- (1) To accept the programme update and agree to receive a written committee update on the STEP programme in Q1 2026, covering the period FY 2025/26.**
- (2) To agree that officers will continue to evolve the concept of the STEP Investment Plan (and linked workstreams) and identify co-funding opportunities to deliver enabling activities.**

IMPLICATIONS

Legal: There are no legal considerations with regards to this report/funding enabling activities.

Financial : FIN/147/25/MT/SST

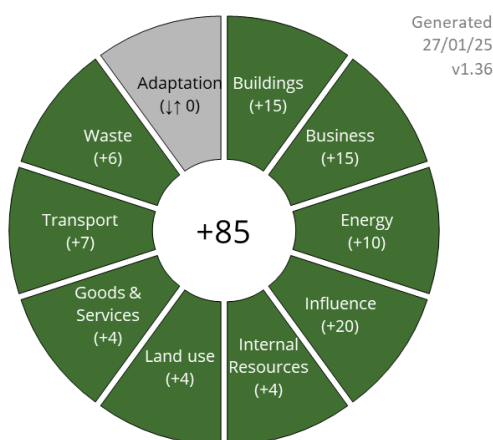
There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Staffing : There are no Human Resource implications with regards to this report/funding enabling activities. A small cohort of WLDC officers will continue to support partnership initiatives as part of their 'day-job' – within existing capacity.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights : There are no Equality and Diversity (including Human Rights) considerations with regards to this report/funding enabling activities.

Data Protection Implications : There are no Data Protection implications with regards to this report/funding enabling activities. Given the nature of the SIP, it is highly unlikely that any personal data would be requested/used – should this position change, any requests would be considered in compliance with best practice and our duties under the Data Protection Act 2018.

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities: There are no known (measurable) Climate Risks associated with this report/funding enabling activities which is predominantly focussed around desk based activity. More broadly, WLDC support for the various preparatory stages of the STEP project will help to ensure the timely realisation of commercial fusion energy generation which has the potential to create limitless clean energy - radically decreasing carbon emissions locally and internationally through the adoption of the STEP technology. Consequently, the CESIA tool returns and overwhelmingly positive impact analysis:



West Lindsey District Council will be net zero by 2050 (24 years and 11 months away).

The development at West Burton also has the potential to deliver highly skilled local jobs (and training/skills development) in the green industries and advanced manufacturing sectors.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:

There are no S17 Crime and Disorder considerations with regards to this report/funding enabling activities.

Health Implications:

There are no Health or EQIA implications with regards to this report/funding enabling activities.

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report :

N/A

Risk Assessment : There are no direct risks to WLDC associated with regards to this report/funding enabling activities. Where procurement activity takes place, WLDC will observe procurement compliance, utilising specialists to support the procurement of commissioned services. Payment of commissioned works is likely to take place of completion of agreed milestones in order to mitigate any risk associated with the non-delivery of commissioned consultancy.

Call in and Urgency:**Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?**

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

☐

No

x

☐**Key Decision:**

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

x

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No

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Committee regarding the Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production (STEP) fusion programme and the work that WLDC and wider stakeholder cohort have/are undertaking to support the programme. The report then considers the programme's next steps and the ongoing enabling activity required to ensure that the forecast economic benefits from the programme can be realised in West Lindsey and Lincolnshire more broadly.

Significant programme progress has been made since WLDC's formal involvement in the programme commenced in 2023. This has been made possible through a range of different activities, delivered (or in-delivery) through the continued direction of the STEP Strategic Collaboration Group (SCG) which was established in mid-2023, including:

- (1) a STEP Economic Impact Assessment;
- (2) the Trent Valley Clean Energy Super Cluster Vision (TVSCV);
- (3) a Transport Study (STEP Base Year Traffic Model);
- (4) Skills collaboration; and;
- (5) Community/Business Events and Communications

The programme will continue to evolve during 2025 at both strategic and operational levels, including elements of enabling work specific to West Lindsey.

Discussions between Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire local government representatives have already taken place (January 2025) to explore how the next phase of enabling works should be organised to ensure ongoing geographic collaboration and benefit realisation. More programme management and commissioning discussions will take place in 2025.

Importantly, the EIA and visioning work is feeding into the development of the Strategic Growth Priorities for the emerging GLMCCA. Discussions have been initiated as to how the required package of enabling works will be funded moving forward, to ensure that Lincolnshire is able to contribute to supporting the delivery of STEP and maximising the benefits.

Additionally, in order for West Lindsey to realise the longer term opportunities/benefits identified through delivery of the programme(s), WLDC need to prepare a STEP vision for Gainsborough. The 'STEP Investment Plan' (SIP) will position Gainsborough as a thriving hub of innovation, clean energy and advanced manufacturing - leveraging the proximity of West Burton (STEP) and the surrounding supercluster to drive economic/housing growth, attract investment and create high-quality jobs for decades to come.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Committee regarding the Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production (STEP) fusion programme and the work that WLDC and wider stakeholder cohort have/are undertaking to support the STEP programme to maximise the socio-economic benefits.
- 1.2 The report then considers next steps with the programme and the ongoing programme of enabling activity required to ensure that benefits from the programme can be realised in West Lindsey and Lincolnshire.

2 Background

- 2.1 Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production (STEP) was announced as part of the Government's 'Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution' in 2020 which sought to design and construct a prototype fusion power plant by the 2040s. This internationally significant, first of its kind programme will result in the UK being one of the first countries in the World to commercialise fusion energy generation, placing it at the forefront of the clean energy revolution.
- 2.2 Led by the UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA), a nationwide process to identify potential sites for STEP was initiated (2020). A cross-sector consortium was formed, representing commercial, public and academic interests from across the Midlands, to work with land-owners and nominate the former West Burton Power Station (WB) site.
- 2.3 As part of the site assessment process UKAEA identified that nominating consortium must outline how the STEP programme would be part of increased collaboration between local, regional and devolved institutions around the requisite enabling works as well as science, research and innovation. This requirement embedded collaborative working as a guiding principle for the consortium under the banner of 'Midlands Fossil2Fusion', resulting in WB being selected for regeneration via the development of a fusion energy cluster, delivering long-term transformational benefits including the creation of thousands of high-value employment opportunities and linked fusion and STEM skills development.
- 2.4 The collaborative approach was further reinforced through the formal establishment (2023) of both strategic and operational engagement/collaboration groups in partnership with UKAEA, representing the interests of 30+ organisations/businesses in the Midlands. These groups operate with the shared purpose of enabling the progression of STEP development to maximise the direct/indirect socio-

economic benefits from the programme, with STEP acting as a catalyst for wider regional benefits.

2.5 To date the consortium has collaborated to (list not exhaustive):

- Procure, co-fund or steer key enabling studies including transport modelling, a long range economic impact assessment and a vision for the 'Mega-Watt Valley';
- Initiate supply-chain mapping to animate academic and commercial opportunities;
- Provide strategic and technical input into the site characterisation process, informing the development of a masterplan for the site;
- Develop the 'Fusion Skills Café' training facility;
- Form a skills consortium to bid for and deliver the UKAEA's skills provision (via a cohort of local providers);
- Deliver community events to develop the STEP vision and animate the programme to school children;
- Identify broader energy opportunities linked to Small Modular Reactors and waste handling;
- Identify opportunities for STEP to contribute to biodiversity net gain;
- Evolve STEP branding and communications;
- Understand the development dynamics at large construction sites e.g. Hinkley Point C; and;
- Respond to consultations e.g. the emerging National Policy Statement for Fusion Energy.

2.6 The STEP programme has been led by the UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) from its inception, however on the 6 February 2023 the Science and Innovation Minister, George Freeman announced the creation of UK Industrial Fusion Solutions Ltd (UKIFS). The new body was established as a programme delivery organisation, driving performance and pace and engaging industry in this endeavour. The delivery of STEP will be led by UKIFS, as a wholly owned subsidiary of the UKAEA. The formal 'public facing' transition of the STEP programme from the UKAEA to UKIFS took place on the 1 November 2024.

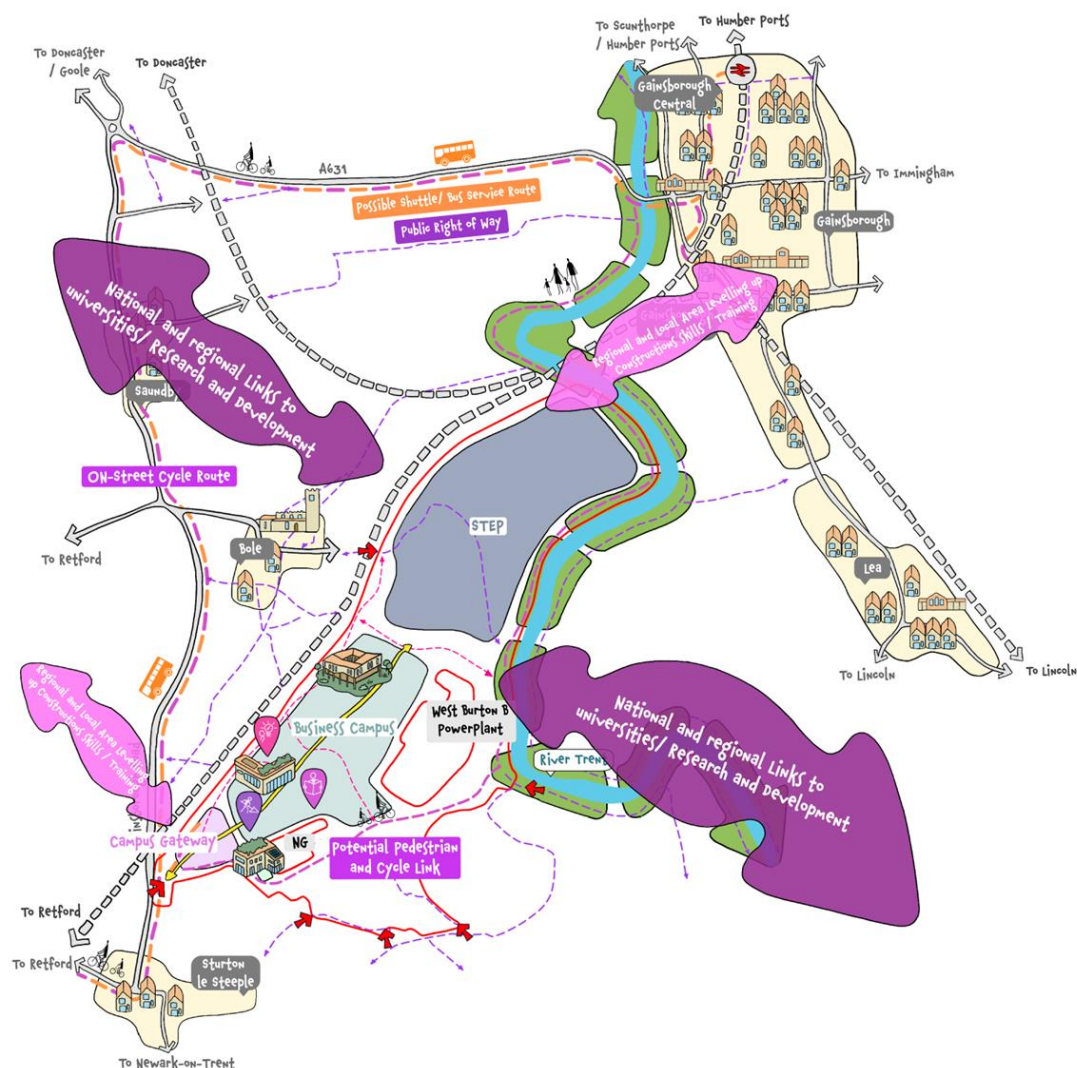
2.7 The UKAEA will continue to be STEP's Fusion Partner, working alongside two industry partners – one in engineering and one in construction – to spearhead the development of a UK-led fusion industry. A major procurement exercise is currently underway to select STEP's strategic, long-term industry partners, with the shortlist announced in January 2025: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/plan-for-change-to-deliver-jobs-and-growth-in-uk-leading-fusion-industry>.

2.8 In line with the STEP programme timetable, work is underway on the evidence gathering phase. This is focused on better understanding the

wider West Burton site and undertaking detailed site-specific assessments that will enable decisions on the location of the prototype fusion plant and associated supporting infrastructure in 2025. A site masterplan is expected to be completed by the end of 2025.

- 2.9 More information relating to the characterisation of the West Burton site can be found at:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/2f7cd4b0ce984a5595e7d26e8a1dca47>



- 2.10 Between 2025 and 2032, the design of the STEP facility will be further developed through detailed engineering design and, at the same time, planning permission to build the power plant will be sought via the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project process. The aim is to have a fully evolved design and approval to build by 2032, enabling construction to begin.
- 2.11 The proposed phased development of the site will initially see the provision of the 'Campus Gateway' and a Business and Supply Chain

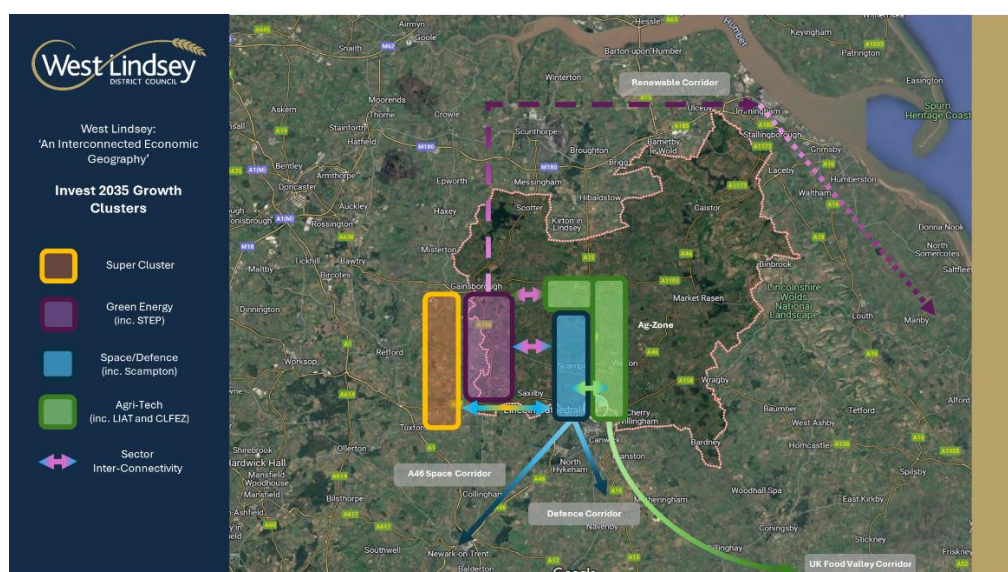
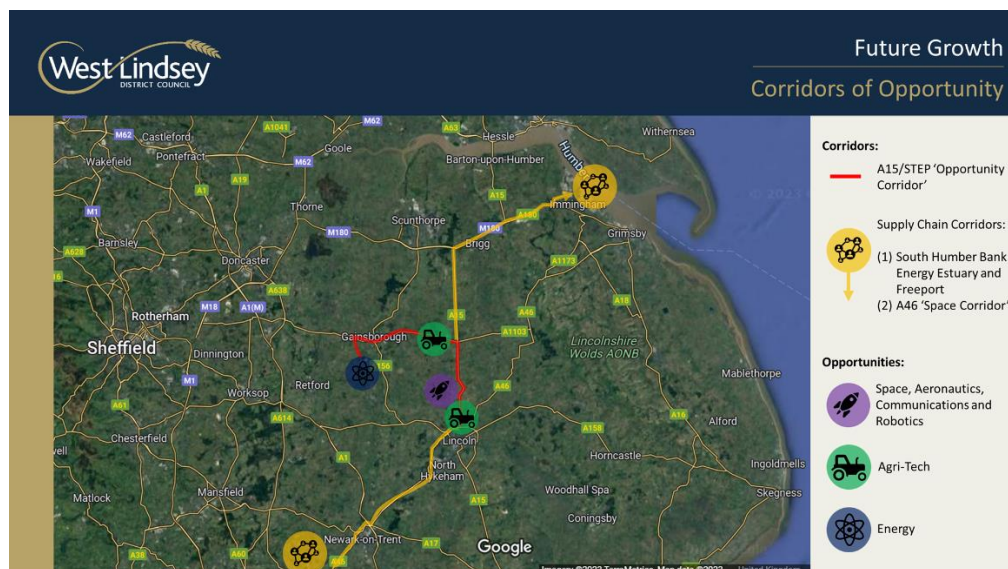
Zone (which will incorporate the on-site **Fusion Skills Centre**), followed by a STEP Support Zone and STEP Secure Zone (the power station).

- 2.12 By 2040 STEP will bring the world's first prototype fusion energy plant into commission and demonstrate a path to commercialisation of fusion energy.
- 2.13 STEP is undoubtedly a highly complex programme and the genuinely collaborative approach to programme management to deliver preparatory works has fostered a greater sense of trust amongst cross-sector partners (with a dichotomy of political mandates and operational cultures) through a shared STEP vision and a clear set of time-bound programme goals. The inclusivity of the collaboration groups has leveraged multiple benefits - facilitating pooled resource, improving communications, ensuring accountability and evolving a focussed, adaptive and agile programme management approach - all of which is beginning to realise sustainable long-term economic benefit for the region.

3 West Lindsey District Council and Stakeholders

- 3.1 Significant programme progress has been made since WLDC's formal involvement in the programme commenced in 2023. This has been made possible through a range of different activities, delivered through the continued direction of the STEP Strategic Collaboration Group (SCG) which was established in mid-2023.
- 3.2 At a strategic level, the SCG provides an important strategic platform to guide the direction of travel for the work undertaken. Chaired by Sir John Peace (Midlands Engine) with representatives from UKIFS, UKAEA, relevant District and County Councils, Universities, MPs, Midlands Connect and government departments and agencies. At the first meeting of the SCG it was recognised that stakeholders from Lincolnshire were required and therefore WLDC (alongside LCC) were asked to join the SCG in late 2023. The representatives from WLDC are the Deputy Leader and the Director for Planning, Regeneration and Communities.
- 3.3 Operationally, the STEP Collaboration Programme Team meets monthly and enables officers from the different organisations to collaborate and to coordinate programme activity. WLDC is represented on this group by the Director for Planning, Regeneration and Communities and Economic Growth Manager. The collaboration programme is also supported by WLDC Communications (who meet for monthly communications meetings), Strategy and Policy, Communities and Economic Growth.

- 3.4 WLDC's Deputy Leader hosted a 'Trent Valley Super Cluster Vision' event on the 16th January 2025 at the Guildhall. Guests included Sir Edward Leigh (Member of Parliament for Gainsborough) and Cllr Rob Waltham (Leader of North Lincolnshire Council) and presentations were delivered by Dr James Cowan (STEP Programme Director, UKAEA) – the STEP development, Adam Shepherd (Vision and Planning Director, ARELI Developments Ltd) – the Trent Valley Super Cluster and Sally Grindrod-Smith (Director of Planning, Regeneration and Communities, WLDC) – the enabling programme moving forwards.
- 3.5 STEP is identified as a keystone opportunity in the emerging WLDC growth strategy 2025/30 and a critical element of the 'corridors of opportunity', which positions West Lindsey as the 'engine room' for the development of clean energy, defence and agri-technology sectors in the Greater Lincolnshire economy:



The following section provides a headline summary of the key work packages evolved or delivered during 2023/25.

At its' first meeting on 20th September 2023, the Strategic Collaboration Group considered what was required to understand STEP's potential economic benefits to the region and concluded that three interrelated pieces of work should be commissioned: (1) an Economic Impact Assessment; (2) a Strategic Vision (Super Cluster); and; (3) a Transport Infrastructure Study; and. Being mindful of the interrelated elements of the three the stakeholders sought to initially move forward with the Economic Impact Assessment.

4.1 STEP Economic Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 4.1.1 The EIA is a key element of the detailed STEP business case prepared by the UKAEA for submission to government. Therefore, the UKAEA and local authority partners sought to procure consultancy services to prepare an EIA which identified both a detailed economic baseline for the programme as well as the long-term economic benefits that will be derived from the STEP programme.
- 4.1.2 In December 2023 Management Team approved the allocation of £12,500 from the 'Investment for Growth Reserve', covering 12.5% of the commission budget.
- 4.1.3 This commitment reflected the strong linkages between the STEP programme and WLDC's Corporate Plan strategic ambitions including: (1) raising the profile of West Lindsey as an investment location/proposition (to support growth opportunities, improve skills and increase the number of higher value, sustainable employment opportunities for residents); and; (2) reducing carbon emissions and realising net-zero ambitions by 2050. Given the nature of the programme and West Lindsey's adjacency to the West Burton site, STEP has the potential to generate socio-economic benefit for generations of local residents as well satisfy net-zero ambitions via the generation of low carbon, clean energy (as well as green-construction, transport infrastructure and investment in nature and nature displacement).
- 4.1.4 Following a procurement exercise, which WLDC inputted into, Amion Consulting (AMION) were appointed to undertake the EIA, working with representatives from the STEP Collaboration Programme Team (and wider stakeholders) throughout 2024 to undertake the commission.
- 4.1.5 The completed EIA provides a highly detailed and technical assessment of the wider economic impact of STEP which, moving forwards, will

inform business cases for the programme, as well as policies to ensure that the local and wider benefits from STEP are maximised.

4.1.6 The EIA provides robust analysis on the transformative economic potential of STEP for the region, with projections of thousands of jobs and billions of pounds in Gross Value Added (GVA) to the UK economy.

4.1.7 Headline metrics include:

Once fully operational, STEP is forecast to account for 8% of current residence-based job⁷ in Bassetlaw and 6% in West Lindsey.

Forecast Annual average GVA and jobs impacts (2019-65)								
Area	Annual Average GVA (£m)			Annual Average Jobs			Operations Peak	Operations peak jobs as % of current residence-based jobs
	Construction	Operations	Total	Construction	Operations	Total		
Local Authorities								
Bassetlaw	40.1	110.9	150.9	506	1,460	1,966	4,502	7.67%
W. Lindsey	47.9	55.0	102.9	605	724	1,329	2,100	5.51%
County Councils								
Nott CC	85.7	209.6	295.3	1,083	2,760	3,843	6,519	1.62%
Lincs CC	76.3	121.4	197.8	965	1,598	2,563	3,775	1.08%
Combined Authorities								
GLCA	84.6	141.6	226.3	1,069	1,865	2,934	4,332	0.83%
EMCCA	117.1	285.4	402.5	1,479	3,758	5,237	8,392	1.06%
SYCA	58	89.5	147.5	734	1,177	1,911	2,497	0.38%
Regions								
EM	235.6	489.2	724.7	2,976	6440	9,416	13,938	0.59%
Midlands	311.9	596.9	908.8	3,941	7,858	11,799	16,661	0.17%
UK								
UK	512.7	986.9	1,499.6	6,478	12,993	19,471	27,660	0.08%

4.1.8 The EIA also confirms that public sector partner support for the programme will help to maximise the local impacts of the STEP programme through:

- construction and operations phase training – equipping local people and others with the necessary skills to compete for the job opportunities;
- local recruitment – promoting opportunities to local people;
- supply chain development and opportunities – promoting and providing support for local enterprises to access supply chain opportunities;
- sector/cluster development – supporting the development of the UK fusion sector and facilitating the creation of a local cluster of clean energy related businesses;
- inward investment – attracting investment in particular from overseas; and;
- local homes, sites/premises and services – ensuring the local supply of suitable accommodation and services. It is likely that just under

3,000 new homes will be required in the immediate geography to support site construction and operation.

4.1.9 The EIA report and summary are available to access at: [x](#)

4.2 Trent Valley Clean Energy Super Cluster Vision (TVSCV)

4.2.1 The TVSCV is a significant element of the broader STEP visioning work and centred around identifying how a coordinated approach to redeveloping West Burton, Cottam and High Marnham (former coal-fired Power Station sites with National Grid connections) could contribute towards the UK's global leadership in addressing Climate Change through decarbonisation of the economy - while simultaneously revitalising the region.

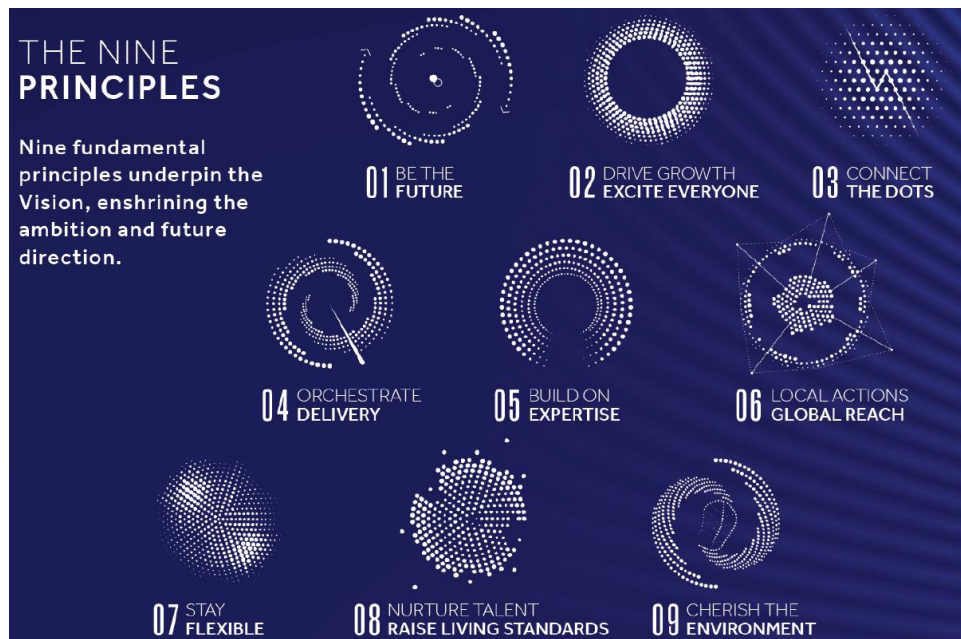
4.2.2 A consortium led by Areli Developments were commissioned by East Midlands Development Company on behalf of the emerging east Midlands Combined Authority, in to work with partners via a series of stakeholder interviews (during Summer 2024) to collectively outline how people think across the East Midlands, define the local social & economic heritage and how local authorities and institutions, private sector and education providers operate to stimulate and support growth – as well as highlighting opportunities and potential solutions to difficult challenges. The process included two interviews with the Leader and Deputy Leader, as well as officer engagement.

4.2.3 These deep insights were integrated with in-depth research and creative propositions developed by the consultant team with expertise in thinking around the future of Energy, Food, Economics, Placemaking, Transport and Services Infrastructure – these insights gave birth to The TVSCV, a path towards a remarkable future for the region as 'a place global challenges find solutions'.

4.2.4 The TVSCV identifies a compelling story with a level of ambition at a global scale (with a view to attracting and leveraging investment from across the World) which:

- Drives growth;
- Ensures joined up thinking;
- Considers relationships with surrounding areas;
- Maximises and leverages spin-off opportunities;
- Communicates the scale of investment opportunity;
- Presents a case that could bring together landowners; and;
- Demonstrates how the sites would link into the region and deliver benefits to residents.

4.2.5 Nine fundamental principles underpin the TVSCV, enshrining the ambition and future direction:



4.2.6 The TVSCV has identified the following ‘futures’ for the three sites: (1) West Burton – Fusion, Innovation and Development; (2) Cottam – Big Data and Digital Enterprises; and; (3) High Marnham – Hydrogen, Food and Agri-Tech:



4.2.7 The TVSCV has identified that the following local benefits could be delivered via the supercluster geography:

- (1) 15,500 FTE employment opportunities, many of which will be highly skilled (Level 4+);
- (2) 1000s of apprenticeships;
- (3) c.6,800 new homes and c.£75m additional annual household expenditure;
- (4) c.£930m GVA p.a.;
- (5) Significant transport and utility infrastructure investment and upgrades; and;
- (6) Significant local contributions to decarbonisation and net-zero.

4.3 Transport Study (STEP Base Year Traffic Model)

4.3.1 The UKAEA commissioned WSP UK in Spring 2023 to establish a baseline understanding of the existing road usage patterns and to undertake preliminary data collection and modelling work for the West Burton site. Nottinghamshire County Council was identified as the stakeholder lead for the commission.

4.3.2 Through a series of transport stakeholder workshops and consultations with National Highways as well as five local transport authorities including Lincolnshire County Council (and local planning authorities, including WLDC), a highly technical Base Year assignment model (combined with a gravity model which will predict the origins of workforce trips) has been developed. The model utilises both new data and existing strategic transport modelling.

4.3.3 The model will allow detailed analysis of routing of traffic and provide a robust basis for impact assessment, informing junction modelling and environmental assessments including: noise; vibration; and; air quality.

4.3.4 The model will also provide a tool that can be used iteratively with the development of a STEP transport strategy to inform the required mitigation and transport infrastructure investment and upgrading, including road, rail (passenger and freight), active travel and the potential use of the River Trent.

4.3.5 WSP will now work with stakeholders to calibrate/validate the model before it is signed off later in 2025.

4.4 Skills

4.4.1 To ensure a local and joined up approach to the delivery of the wider nuclear skills agenda within the region, Bassetlaw DC with WLDC led a collaborative process during 2024 to become UKAEA's preferred skills

provider. Following a two-stage competitive process, UKAEA identified EMCCA (as the suitable contracting authority representing the wider collaborative of local authorities and educational establishments) as the preferred partner to lead the training provision for the STEP skills centre.

4.4.2 The collaboration will be formalised during 2025 and training provision will start to be shaped with providers:

- **Model for training** – In designing the model for the STEP on-site Skill Centre and training provision, a collaborative framework for training will be utilised whereby skills and training provision is delivered by a range of regional training providers, coordinated by EMCCA. This is to ensure that the provision is net additive to the local skills landscape and supports the growth of training providers and businesses, rather than introduce competition.
- **Investing early** – The skills facility will be the first major construction on the STEP site, which is a conscious decision to invest early in skills development. This was a lesson learnt from several other UK megaprojects, including Hinckley Point – this will establish a strong regional supply of skills as STEP grows.
- **Outreach** – The fusion industry is on a significant growth trajectory, as such outreach is a crucial factor in the STEP skills strategy. STEP is already engaging widely with regional schools at primary and secondary level and the team have also increasingly targeted outreach to teachers, including a programme of teachers workshops so the fusion opportunity can be embedded in classrooms.
- **Wider fusion skills** – Not all skills needed for fusion are specialist and many are in high demand (e.g. welders, project managers. etc.). By investing in flexible local training provision, national shortages in these areas are partially mitigated. The STEP skills centre will also be able to make positive contributions for other local business by supporting additional training in these vital areas. This may provide an opportunity to re-ignite the local Engineering Apprenticeship Scheme.
- **Wider national strategy** – All provision will sit within a broader national fusion skills strategy which seeks to train an additional 2,200 individuals for fusion in the next five years. This encompasses skills from entry level through to PhD and post-doctoral level and is being delivered by UKAEA on behalf of the wider fusion sector.

4.4.3 Skills collaboration partners (in addition to local authorities) currently include:



4.4.4 West Lindsey (Gainsborough) schools have benefitted from the 'STEP into Schools' programme which animates fusion technology and future career pathways to both primary and secondary school children. With the exception of local special schools, all Gainsborough (and environs) schools will have taken part in the programme by July 2025 (eight schools engaged in 2024 and eight will in 2025).



4.4.5 On the 6th December 2024, Mercer's Wood Academy (Gainsborough) hosted a Department of Education and Careers and Enterprise

Company visit (linked to the 'Start Small; Dream Big' Programme: www.greaterlincolnshirelep.co.uk/whats-new/new-primary-school-programme-to-help-children-dream-big/) which incorporated a fusion workshop – reinforcing the huge potential the STEP programme has for future generations of Gainsborough residents.

4.4.6 Bassetlaw District Council has worked in partnership with the UKAEA to develop a Fusion Energy Café at the Bridge Skills Hub in Worksop. WLDC members and officers attended the official opening of the world's first fusion energy themed café on 28th November 2024. The café is intended to inspire local communities and businesses to learn about and engage with fusion energy and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) related activities. The café offers an immersive skills outreach environment inspired by the design of a tokamak – a machine used in the creation of fusion plasmas. It will also support hospitality and catering work placements, offering inclusive work placement opportunities for individuals with a learning disability, who are not in education, employment, or training, or are long-term unemployed. There is the potential for a second café to be developed in Gainsborough once a business case can be established by UKIFS.

4.4.7 The skills initiatives which the broader STEP programme are delivering/will deliver are closely aligned to our corporate commitment to develop employment opportunities and improve skills levels across the district. We will continue to work with STEP related employers and local training providers to ensure the residents of West Lindsey have access to expert fusion careers advice, job search support and assistance to gain the required skills and experience to develop a career in this emerging sector.

5 Community/Business Events and Communications

5.1.1 UKAEA have led on the delivery of numerous STEP community consultation events over the past 18 months in Gainsborough, Retford, Sturton-le-Steeple and Lincoln. This programme will continue in 2025 and include an increasing number of supply-chain events for local businesses.

5.1.2 The STEP brand was launched in July 2024 at an event at Trinity Arts Centre, Gainsborough which brought together both the local community and key figures including Claire Ward, Mayor of East Midlands, Sir John Peace, Chair of Midlands Engine, Professor David Gann, Chair, and Paul Methven, CEO, of UK Industrial Fusion Solutions, the company that will be responsible for the delivery of STEP.

5.1.3 WLDC led on a STEP submission to the Institute of Economic Development annual awards Submitted by WLDC which was shortlisted for the IED's 'Collaborative Initiative of the Year'.

5.1.4 WLDC's Growth Team prepare a quarterly STEP newsletter which provides members with summary information around STEP project development. The newsletter is circulated by the members newsletter.

6 2025 – Future Actions

The programme will continue to evolve during 2025 at both strategic and operational levels, including elements of enabling work specific to West Lindsey.

6.1 EMCCA Investment Fund Capital Allocations 24/25, Sprint Bid and Lincolnshire Response

6.1.1 As part of the East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA) Investment Fund 2024-25, a capital allocation of up to £3m has been identified to support the 'Trent Clean Energy Supercluster – Advancing to Delivery' programme.

6.1.2 The programme will (subject to full business case development and cost identification) progress the 'feasibility assessment of further potential early capital investments'. Proposed elements include:

- Growth Pole sizing and basis for infrastructure planning;
- Communities and regeneration needs assessment;
- Refined planning scenarios and basis for infrastructure;
- Strategic Energy Assessment inc. existing/planned infrastructure, energy use and consumption;
- Energy system analysis and sizing;
- Digital infrastructure requirements;
- Water cycle high level assessment;
- Governance and commercial delivery options for delivery of regional infrastructure; and;
- Supercluster Discovery Centre - The Vision identifies an early opportunity to deliver an inspiring environment where great thinking happens, with laboratories, incubators, co-working, training & conferencing and a supercluster discovery centre.

6.1.3 In addition to the Investment Programme allocation, the East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA) launched the East Midlands Investment Zone (EMIZ) Sprint Initiative" in September 2024 with a deadline of 15 October 2024 for submission of bids. To further build on

the EIA and Vision, a EMIZ Sprint submission titled “Trent Clean Energy Supercluster – Advancing to Delivery” was submitted to EMCCA by Nottinghamshire County Council.

6.1.4 The visioning and EIA identified work that is required to deliver on the Vision and maximise the benefits arising from STEP. The bid was informed by this expert advice and seeks funding to continue and build on the work that has been done to date, with a focus on enablers and early wins that would help move the visioning proposals from concept to delivery. This includes:

- Commissioning work to identify potential improvements that could be undertaken to improve transport infrastructure and digital connectivity across the area covered by the Trent Clean Energy Supercluster area. For example, infrastructure planning and business cases, road and rail improvement feasibility studies.
- Commissioning work to better understand the skills landscape at a district level, better understand the requirements of the UKAEA and identify the key actions that would be needed in the short, medium and long term to support development.
- Raising awareness regionally and internationally - work to promote the inward investment opportunity STEP offers, raising the profile of the area and attracting international, national and local companies to build a fusion ecosystem which would benefit green industries and advanced manufacturing as a whole across the area.

6.1.5 **Discussions between Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire local government representatives have already taken place (January 2025) to explore how the next phase of enabling works should be organised to ensure ongoing geographic collaboration and benefit realisation. More programme management and commissioning discussions will take place in 2025.**

6.1.6 **Importantly, the EIA and visioning work is feeding into the development of the Strategic Growth Priorities for the emerging GLMCCA. Discussions have been initiated as to how the required package of enabling works will be funded moving forward, to ensure that Lincolnshire is able to contribute to supporting the delivery of STEP and maximising the benefits.**

6.2 STEP Investment Plan

6.2.1 The final outputs from both the EIA and Visioning work provide:

- Robust evidence to demonstrate the transformational economic potential of STEP, with projections of thousands of jobs and billions of pounds in Gross Valued Added (GVA) to the local economy.

- An ambitious and galvanising vision for how transformative economic growth could be realised, arising from the redevelopment of the West Burton, Cottam and High Marnham power station sites, connecting in with and complementing wider regional initiatives, and underpinned by a compelling evidence base.
- Valuable insights into how to now advance a local programme of delivery, including suggested actions to maximise local impact and advice on the structure and phasing of priorities.
- Together, the EIA and Vision demonstrate the significant regional scale economic growth and renewal the STEP programme and the wider vision offer, as well as diverse, high quality employment opportunities across multiple sectors.

6.2.2 In order for West Lindsey to realise the longer term opportunities/benefits identified through delivery of the programme(s), WLDC need to prepare a STEP vision for Gainsborough. The ‘STEP Investment Plan’ (SIP) will position Gainsborough as a thriving hub of innovation, clean energy and advanced manufacturing - leveraging the proximity of West Burton (STEP) and the surrounding supercluster to drive economic/housing growth, attract investment, and create high-quality jobs.

6.2.3 The key objectives of the SIP will include:

1. Attracting High-Tech, High Value Industries: Positioning Gainsborough as an ideal (and commercially viable) location for firms in advanced manufacturing, clean energy, and R&D tied to fusion technology and supercluster sectors.
2. Developing a Skilled Workforce: Equipping the local population with the skills required for jobs in fusion-related industries and other high-growth sectors.
3. Enhancing Growth Infrastructure: Upgrading transport, utility, housing, digital and commercial infrastructure to support business growth and improve connectivity with the supercluster.
4. Fostering Collaboration: Creating partnerships with research institutions, businesses and policymakers to drive innovation and investment.

6.2.4 The SIP will develop a measured narrative around Gainsborough’s emerging strategic opportunities, including:

1. Proximity to West Burton (STEP):

Leverage Fusion Expertise: Establishment of Gainsborough as a key supplier and service hub for the STEP fusion project, targeting firms involved in: (1) Advanced materials; (2) Precision engineering; (3) Robotics and AI for energy systems; and (4) Specialized construction services for high-tech facilities.

Generate Footfall: Multiply secondary benefits via the creation of volume footfall for Gainsborough's retail and service core.

Innovation Spillovers: Collaboration with the 'fusion research centre' to attract spin-off companies and start-ups focused on clean energy solutions.

2. Emerging Supercluster:

Cluster Integration: Position Gainsborough as a vital node within the supercluster by offering: (1) Commercial space for satellite facilities; (2) Co-working hubs for start-ups and researchers; and; (3) Conference and event facilities for industry networking.

Sustainability Hub: Promote Gainsborough as a site for sustainable technology firms that align with the clean energy focus of the supercluster.

6.2.5 The SIP will deliver an overarching spatial vision for Gainsborough (and into Lincolnshire), forming a key input into the next iteration of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, as well as the emerging requirements for a Spatial Development Plan.

6.2.6 Market testing suggests that it is likely the SIP will cost in excess of £250k to commission and officers will continue to investigate opportunities to co-fund delivery.