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Environmental Appraisal Non-Technical Summary	Pegasus Environmental Appraisal	

ENVIRONMENTAL APPRAISAL NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

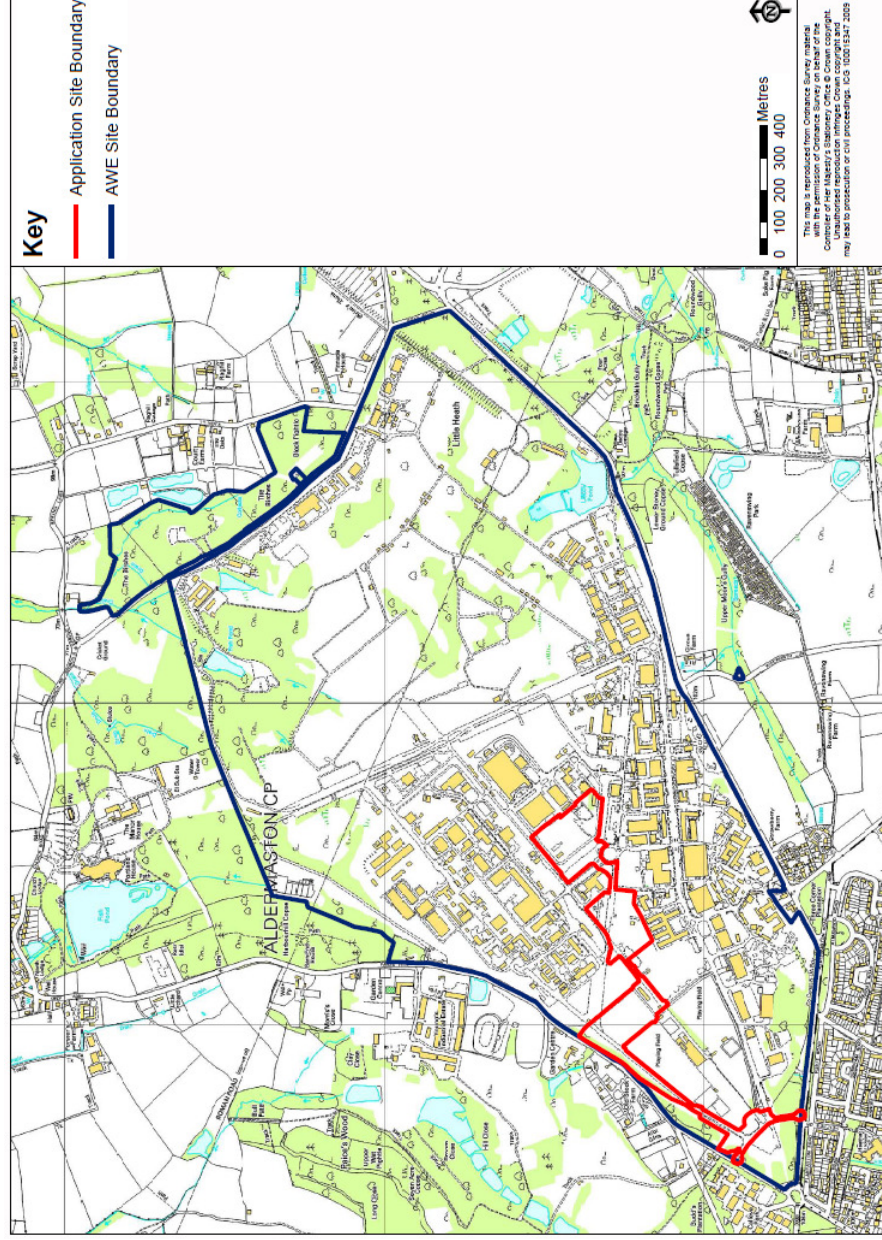
1. Introduction

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) hereafter referred to as 'the Applicant' is seeking detailed planning permission for a development on part of the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) site at Aldermaston, Berkshire (Figure 1). Detailed planning permission being sought is for a replacement component storage and handling facility along with associated office accommodation, hereafter referred to as the 'Proposed Development'.

The Pegasus Application Site is a previously used, 'brownfield' site which mainly comprises an area of cleared bare earth, access roads, a hardstanding car park and sporadic small areas of vegetation (mainly mown grassland). The Application Site is centred at National Grid Reference SU 596 634 and covers an area of approximately 12.3 hectares (ha).

The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has considered the proposals for the Proposed Development and under direction of Regulation 4 (4)(a)(ii) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2008, determined that the requirements of those Regulations shall not apply for this application.

Figure 1: Site Location



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This Environmental Appraisal (EA) therefore presents the results of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) conducted generally in accordance with the appropriate regulations to assess the potential impacts of the Proposed Development on existing baseline conditions within the Application Site and the local area.

The EA considers the environmental impacts of the Proposed Development during site preparation, construction and operational phases, and has considered the likely impact of the Proposed Development on its surroundings, neighbours, wider area and overall context. The EA also details a number of mitigation measures, which have been developed to avoid, remove or reduce any potential adverse impacts on the environment. Where mitigation measures have been identified, these have been incorporated into the project design wherever possible. In cases where no mitigation is required, this is stated. Impacts that remain following the implementation of mitigation measures are termed 'residual impacts'. These residual impacts are classified in accordance with a standard set of significance criteria.

The EA comprises two volumes:

Volume I - EA: This document forms the main body of the EA detailing the results of environmental investigations, impacts arising and proposed mitigation measures.

Volume II - EA Technical Appendices: The Technical Appendices provide detail on the

assessments undertaken and information used to inform the EA Volume I. The Appendices provided are:

- Appendix A - Ground Conditions;
- Appendix B - Water Resources;
- Appendix C - Transport;
- Appendix D - Noise and Vibration;
- Appendix E - Landscape and Visual;
- Appendix F - Cultural Heritage;
- Appendix G - Ecology; and
- Appendix H - Sustainability.

This Non-Technical Summary (NTS) provides an overview of the findings of the EA.

The full assessment of the environmental impacts associated with the Proposed Development are presented within the EA Volumes I and II.

The EA is available for viewing by the public during normal office hours at the West Berkshire Planning Department. Comments on the planning application should be forwarded to West Berkshire Council at the address as follows:

Planning Department
West Berkshire Council
Council Offices
Market Street
Newbury,
RG14 5LD

Copies of the EA can be purchased from West Berkshire Council at a cost of £10 for the NTS, £100 for Volume I and £125 for Volume II. This is also available electronically on the West Berkshire Council's website.

2. EA Methodology

The EA process ensures that potential impacts of a new development are taken into account when considering a planning application. It provides a systematic analysis and presentation of information on the main anticipated environmental issues relating to the Proposed Development.

Whilst the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has determined that the Pegasus proposals are exempt from the EIA Regulations, an EA has been undertaken which will include all of the necessary information to allow an informed decision to be made on the merits of the planning application. This commitment by AWE is in line with the Secretary of State for Defence Policy Statement within JSP 418, which states that:

"where the Ministry of Defence (MOD) has been granted specific exemptions...from legislation...it will introduce standards and management arrangements that are, so far as reasonably practicable, at least as good as those required by the legislation".

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The EA has been prepared in accordance with current guidance for the preparation of EIA and is based on:

- The establishment of baseline environmental conditions in and around the Application Site;
- Consultation with statutory and non-statutory consultees;
- Review of secondary information, previous environmental studies and publicly-available information;
- Assessment of the relevant national, regional and local planning policy and guidance;
- Physical surveys and monitoring
- Preparation of desk-top studies;
- Modelling and assessment; and
- Expert judgement.

The EA has considered the positive and negative, short and long-term impacts of the Proposed Development on the baseline environmental and socio-economic conditions of the Application Site and its surrounds. The significance of any impacts has been identified and measures for avoiding or minimising adverse impacts have been incorporated into the final design.

The significance of residual impacts has been evaluated with reference to accepted criteria and legislation where available. Where it has not been possible to quantify impacts, qualitative

assessments have been carried out, based on professional experience and judgement. Impacts have been classified as being adverse, negligible or beneficial in significance and of minor, moderate or major in magnitude.

3. Planning Policy Context

The Proposed Development has been assessed against relevant national, regional and local planning policies.

National policy and guidance emphasises the need to take environmental and social issues into consideration as a routine part of all Proposed Developments.

The overriding objective in national policy and advice is one of sustainable development with an emphasis on the efficient use of land and the location of development proposals where they can be close to good public transportation, pedestrian and cycle links/facilities.

Regional level policy takes these objectives further by encouraging new development in and around urban areas throughout the South East, ensuring that new developments are well designed and consistent with the overall strategy. The Proposed Development would meet these objectives.

Local policy was also assessed in regards to the adopted West Berkshire Local Plan, which is used for development control purposes throughout the

District. The approach of the Local Plan is to support development relating to existing uses where it is needed to maintain continued use.

4. Alternatives and Design Evolution

Analysis of alternatives is a key part of the process and serves to ensure that environmental considerations are built into the project design at the earliest possible stage.

The consideration of alternative solutions to provide a continuation of AWE's capability was addressed in three stages, as follows:

1. The approach to Project Pegasus in the context of the overall AWE modernisation programme;
2. The broad options for the provision of Project Pegasus; and
3. Siting and design considerations.

Over the course of each of the design stages, the Proposed Development has evolved through consultation and a progression of ideas that have lead to its present scale and form.

The consolidated design of the Proposed Development and its location within the AWE Aldermaston site is considered the best option to ensure all of AWE's requirements are fulfilled.

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5. Proposed Development

The Proposed Development covers area of 12.3 ha of the AWE Aldermaston site. The red line boundary of the Application Site is shown in Figure 1.

The Proposed Development consists of the following main elements:

- The Proposed Facility;
- The temporary construction enclave, implemented in order to isolate construction activities from the main AWE Aldermaston site and
- The landscaping and Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) proposals.

The Proposed Development (see Figures 2, 3 and 4) will consolidate the component storage and handling activities carried out at AWE Aldermaston, into one purpose built facility designed to modern safety case standards. The scheme allows rationalisation of the floor space currently used by existing operations, creating an opportunity to improve working conditions for employees and the overall environmental performance. No new operations will be undertaken.

The Proposed Facility will have a footprint of 10,496 metres squared (m²). The Proposed Facility will comprise of two main elements; the component storage and handling areas and the associated

office area. The component storage and handling areas are contained within the main section of the building and will be connected by an entrance atrium to the office area in the south-east of the building. Both elements will be constructed within a steel framed structure with weatherproof cladding.

The component storage and handling areas of the Proposed Development will measure 135.74 metres (m) by 73.5m, giving a total 18,489m² of floor space. The component storage and handling areas of the Proposed Development will consist of five distinct sections:

- Receipt and dispatch;
- Material handling;
- Stores;
- Changing facilities; and
- An internal loading bay.

The office area of the Proposed Development extends from the south-east of the structure and measures 50.07m by 20.66m. It will be constructed in curtain walling with glazing to provide daylight for the occupants. Offices will be located on two storeys, giving a total 1,425.7m² of floor space.

The component storage and handling area of the Proposed Facility has a clad barrel roof which raises to a maximum height of 16.2m above the ground level. A stack will be located at the northern end of the Proposed Facility as the discharge point from the main Heating, Ventilating and Air Conditioning

(HVAC) systems and will extend to 19.5m above the ground level.

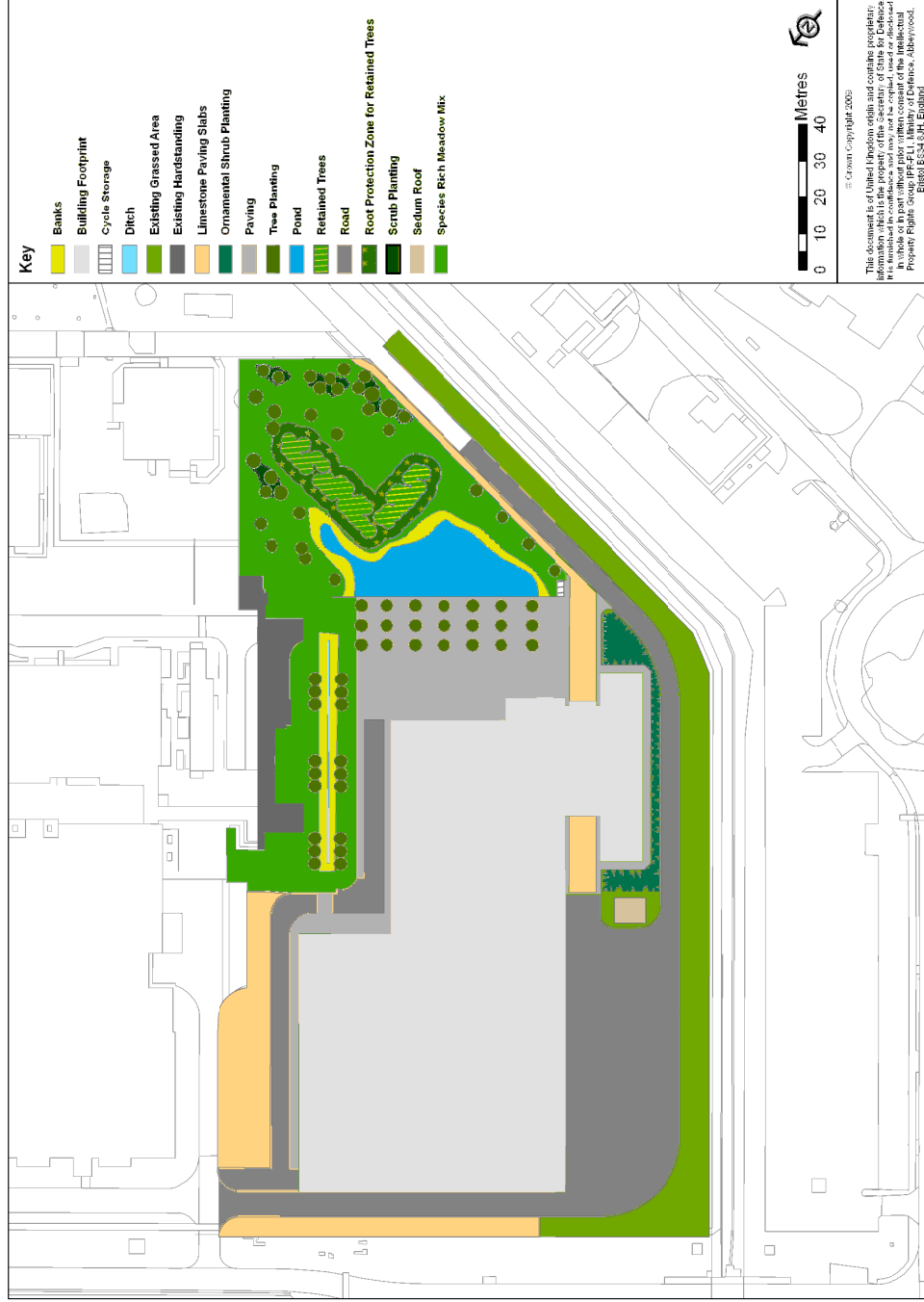
The woodland edges and tree avenues on site are to be retained within the development and will remain unlit. These features are of ecological value and will add maturity to the Proposed Development's planting scheme.

The landscape proposals for the facility will use native planting to provide high quality landscaping and to promote nature conservation by attracting local wildlife. Native planting will also tie in with the existing vegetation on the site. 90% of all new planting on site would be native and beneficial to wildlife.

A small pond is to be constructed as part of the development proposals. The pond will be 'wildlife friendly' designed and native flora species planted to provide additional habitat on site for birds, bats, invertebrates, amphibians and reptiles.

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Figure 2: Proposed Development Layout



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Figure 3: An image of the Proposed Development from the south-east.



Figure 4: An image of the Proposed Development from the south.



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6. Construction Phase

It is envisaged that the whole scheme will take approximately 8 years to complete. This includes up to 6 months for site establishment, 3 years for the construction and 2 and half for equipment installation (which will have approximately a 2 year overlap with the construction phase). In addition, there will be approximately 5 and half years of testing and commissioning (which will have approximately an 18 month overlap with the construction and equipment installation phases).

The existing component storage and handling facility will continue to be fully operational until the Proposed Facility is fully commissioned. Once the Proposed Facility is fully commissioned it will gradually take over operations from the existing facility over a three year period.

Post operational clean out of equipment within the existing facility is anticipated to take an additional 2 years to complete before it will be handed over to the relevant authority within AWE for decommissioning and demolition.

The construction phase can be split into three key elements which are briefly summarised as follows:

- Site Establishment – this will involve the creation of a construction enclave to isolate construction activities from the main AWE Aldermaston site. This will be in place for the start of construction phase.

- Construction – Construction of the permanent features will follow a standard construction process of: substructure works; superstructure works, cladding and roofing; fit-out; commissioning and completion.
- Testing and Commissioning.

Environmental impacts can arise either from day-to-day construction operations, or from normal and abnormal operations, or accidents.

AWE has committed to a Code of Construction Practice (CoCP). This CoCP explains the overall approach of AWE to manage and control effectively overall environmental impact arising from the construction activities involved with the Proposed Development.

Throughout all phases of construction a 'good housekeeping' policy will be applied, as outlined in the AWE CoCP. All work areas will be kept tidy and road surfaces will be kept in a good condition and cleaned. Relevant dust suppression measures and controls will be employed on the site to minimise airborne dust. In addition, it is expected that hoardings and security fences will be frequently inspected, repaired and repainted as necessary.

7. Ground Conditions

A detailed appraisal of the baseline environmental conditions (ground and groundwater conditions and related land contamination) was undertaken at the Proposed Development site. The appraisal

determined whether and to what extent the Proposed Development will be affected by current ground conditions including potential radiological, explosives and chemical contamination from either current or historic uses. Studies of the site have comprised a desk study, geophysics survey and a review of intrusive investigation data from over 400 trial pits and boreholes and analysis of soil, sediment and groundwater samples. The results informed a 'Conceptual Site Model' thus enabling potential, residual and cumulative impacts to be determined.

The Application Site is considered to exhibit forms and general levels of contamination that are broadly typical of sites that have been involved in some or long term 'industrial' type use. The underlying geology and associated hydrological context of the site does not suggest that, in general terms, these levels of contamination raise any particular issues of concern in relation to mitigation of any potential health and environmental risks. It is therefore considered that the Proposed Development can be implemented without significant adverse impacts. As the Proposed Development offers the opportunity to better understand ground conditions and to deal with any individual cases of contamination there are beneficial impacts for the ground at the Application Site.

8. Water

This chapter provides an assessment of the impacts of the Proposed Development on identified water

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environment features during both construction and operational phases.

Potential impacts to the water environment are associated with changes in surface water run-off rates (resulting from increases in hardstanding area) and potential for increased discharge rates to surrounding watercourses. In addition, the Proposed Development has the potential to reduce flood storage capacity, contaminate surface waters and groundwater and create additional water resource demands.

The proposed development will be served by a Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) to collect surface water (particularly in the event of surface water flooding) and allow silt settlement prior to discharge off-site. It would be expected that this scheme would limit the potential for particulate-bound contaminants being discharged off-site.

The Proposed Development is not expected to have any significant impacts on the surface water quality, either directly through surface water discharges to sewer or indirectly via flood run-off flows through the implementation of the SuDS strategy

With mitigation, the significance of the residual impacts during construction is predicted to be **negligible** for receptors as a result of 'normal and foreseeable' construction activities.

The assessment has concluded that there were no adverse residual impacts from either the construction or operational phases.

9. Transport

An assessment of the impact of the Proposed Development on the surrounding transport network has been carried out.

Baseline transport data, including traffic data, pedestrian and cycle provision, passenger transport provision and personal injury accident data were identified from surveys and published data.

The Proposed Development will provide a facility that will replace activities carried out elsewhere on the AWE Aldermaston site. It is estimated that up to 82 operational staff will work in the building all of whom currently work at AWE Aldermaston. Accordingly, the application proposals will not generate any additional operational worker vehicle movements over and above the existing facilities and the only additional vehicle movements will be generated by construction activity.

Good pedestrian and cycle linkages to the site, together with travel plan initiatives, secured as part of the New Office Accommodation (NOA) development planning consent, have been / will be implemented by the assessment years. This includes the provision of controlled crossing facilities and foot / cycleways between Aldermaston Wharf and Aldermaston Village, and Heath End

roundabout and Aldermaston Village. Having regard to the improvements and initiatives, together with the vehicle trips that are predicted to be generated, it is not considered necessary to implement any further mitigation measures over and above these improvements and initiatives.

The potential residual impact from the construction and operation of the Proposed Development, on pedestrians, cyclists, passenger transport users and car drivers has been assessed and is considered to be **negligible** for severance, road safety, amenity and delay.

10. Air Quality

An assessment of the potential changes in local air quality as a result of the construction and operation of the Proposed Development has been undertaken. There are three aspects of the development that are assessed:

- Dust emissions during construction operations;
 - Emissions from construction vehicles using the local roads; and
 - Once operational, the emissions associated with the operation of the facility.
- These assessments are set in the context of the relevant planning policies, the appropriate significance criteria and the existing ambient (or background) conditions.

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For dust generating construction activities at low level (i.e. on the ground) and in the open-air the resultant plume of dust particles will tend to very rapidly decrease in concentration as particles are dispersed in the ambient or 'background' air, and are removed onto exposed surfaces by gravitational and turbulent settling. Consequently, after a few tens of metres from the site boundary dust levels are unlikely to vary significantly from the normal range (which can be quite wide).

All residential properties are located well away from the site boundary. The nearest properties are approximately 100m away. These properties are unlikely to be affected by any dust that may arise due to construction. The impact is likely to be negligible and the effect is not significant.

Local air quality in the vicinity of the site is considered to be good. Measured concentrations of pollutants known as PM10 (particulate matter) and Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) meet the respective air quality objectives. Concentrations of NO₂ and PM₁₀ from haulage vehicles are expected to have a negligible impact in terms of air quality.

There will be no change in the number of staff vehicle movements during the operation of the Proposed Development and consequently there will be no impact upon local air quality.

Radiological emissions from the operation of the Proposed Facility have been assessed and considered to be insignificant.

11. Noise & Vibration

An assessment has been carried out to determine the impact of noise and vibration associated with the Proposed Development. The assessment was based upon the results of baseline noise monitoring around the site perimeter and at sensitive receptors, and the prediction of expected noise and vibration levels during the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development.

Construction impacts are generally considered to be of negligible significance. However, the level of significance may vary slightly, depending on the location of the noise sensitive receptor and the location, duration and nature of construction works being undertaken. Although construction impacts are unlikely to affect off-site noise and vibration sensitive receptors, construction impacts do have the potential to affect on-site noise and vibration sensitive receptors. However, appropriate mitigation measures will be implemented to minimise any potential noise and vibration impacts during construction.

There is expected to be no change in operational traffic associated with the Proposed Development; operational impacts from traffic are considered to be of negligible significance.

Implementation of appropriate mitigation will ensure that fixed plants associated with the development are considered to be of negligible significance.

12. Socio-Economics

An assessment of the socio-economic impacts of the Proposed Development has been undertaken. The assessment involved an economic impact assessment, including impact of the employment on the labour market and on the aerospace and defence sector. A review of other socio-economic impacts on supporting infrastructure such as the housing market, open space, libraries, retail and leisure facilities has also been undertaken.

It is estimated that the Proposed Development will generate approximately 344 net additional employment positions during the construction phase. This includes 136 new jobs in the local area, 130 new jobs in the wider South East region and 58 jobs further afield. This is considered to have a minor beneficial impact on the local economy over the medium term.

The existing facility has 46 operatives and a total headcount of 124 employees, including maintenance staff. Once fully operational it is anticipated that Pegasus will employ a similar number of staff as the existing facility. Therefore all existing jobs associated with the existing facility will be safeguarded and the impact of the Proposed Development is likely to be negligible.

The Proposed Development will modernise and upgrade the capacities of old facilities, enabling the evolution of the AWE site into a centre of world-class scientific and technical excellence. It will

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therefore enable AWE to develop world-class facilities that will help attract and retain skilled staff in a competitive global marketplace.

In summary, it is likely that the Proposed Development will have an overall positive socio-economic impact on the local and regional economy and would be a positive step towards meeting some of the strategic objectives of regional and local planning policy. The Proposed Development will help secure the long-term viability of AWE Aldermaston for the local area, and enable the 'Western Wedge' of the M40 corridor to maintain its reputation as a world-class high-technology economy.

13. Landscape & Visual

The Proposed Development is located in the central developed industrial zone of the AWE site at Aldermaston. It is a 'brownfield' site and the proposals would be totally in keeping with the character of this area.

The modern design of the new buildings, together with the comprehensive landscape proposals (which would provide an attractive hard and soft landscape setting to the development), including the retention of the existing copse of pine trees, would result in an improvement to the local character of the site.

There would be some temporary negligible visual effects resulting from the construction activity including cranes and additional temporary lighting.

The permanent visual effects of this development would relate to the introduction of the building roofline at 16.2m and the stack at 19.5m as small additional elements on the ridge line just above the tree canopy in some short to middle distant views. However, these would be seen in the context of the existing adjacent buildings which are up to 28m tall and a cluster of stacks in the locality of the development plot which are up to 46m tall.

There would be some negligible visual effects primary from the ridge line up to 7km to the north. However, the proposals would result in no significant adverse visual effects.

In summary there would be no long term adverse landscape effects, some minor beneficial landscape effects locally to the site and no significant adverse visual effects as a result of the Proposed Development.

14. Cultural Heritage

The assessment was carried out in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for 'Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment'. A study area of a 1 km radius around the Application Site has been used as a base for research.

The objectives were to determine the likely presence or absence, nature, condition and importance of known or potential archaeological or historic remains on the site, whether they may be

affected by the Proposed Development, and to advise whether undertakings may be required in order to mitigate these effects. The study has addressed archaeology, historic buildings and the historic landscape.

It is likely that any buried remains relating to the 1940s airfield and foundations of the 1950s weapons tower will be removed during construction of the proposed building, services, perimeter fence and landscaping.

The assessment has demonstrated a low potential for the survival of any pre-20th century archaeological remains within the Proposed Development site itself. The only remains that are likely to survive are concrete bases used to support the former weapons tower. These remains would be of low value and therefore would not warrant preservation in its current location.

While there is a medium potential for the survival of archaeological remains within the remainder of the application site, no intrusive works will be undertaken save for the erection of security fencing to provide a corridor to and from the Construction Enclave and Primary Construction Area. However, this work will have a negligible impact on any below ground remains and does not represent a significant impact.

Taking into account the level of former development within the Application Site and the impact from subsequent demolition work, the residual impact of

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the Proposed Development on the cultural heritage resource will be negligible.

15. Ecology

The AWE Aldermaston site as a whole supports a diversity of flora and fauna, including legally protected species and those identified as priorities for conservation within national and local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP).

An extended 'Phase 1' habitat survey undertaken in May 2009 and extensive protected species surveys through 2006 to 2009. The findings of these surveys have been used to assess the impact of the Proposed Development on the existing ecological and nature conservation interest of the Application Site.

The wider AWE Aldermaston site is broadly characterised as an industrial environment with pockets of grassland and linear woodland boundaries. The landscape proposals for the site aim to enhance the Application Site for wildlife. Slightly beneficial impacts are expected for the two different habitats identified on the site: grassland and woodland.

With regards to species, slightly beneficial impacts are expected for bats, breeding birds, overwintering birds, amphibians and reptiles. A negligible impact is anticipated for badgers.

Overall it is considered that the Proposed Development will have a slight beneficial impact on the ecology present at the land within the Pegasus Project boundary.

16. Sustainability

A sustainability appraisal has been completed for the Proposed Development in accordance with the Sustainability Appraisal Handbook for the MoD Estates, the results of which have fed into the development of the scheme and the Environmental Appraisal. In addition, a preliminary Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) assessment has been undertaken for the Proposed Development.

The key beneficial impacts of the scheme in relation to sustainability can be summarised as follows:

- Use of a previously developed site;
- Adhering to measures set out in the CoCP to reduce and mitigate construction impacts;
- High quality environmental design, including good daylight, ventilation and acoustics;
- Minimise impacts to air quality through filtration and monitoring of atmospheric discharges;
- Provision of a Development that has no car parking and incorporates sustainable transport measures such as secure safe, waterproof cycle storage space and a travel plan;
- A development that uses energy efficient building techniques and a reduction in carbon emissions compared to the relevant Building Regulations known as Part L2;
- Minimisation of noise and vibration sources during construction and operation by careful siting and attenuation of plant;
- Siting of Proposed Development is in an area of low fluvial and tidal flood risk, and reducing water usage and risks of water pollution;
- The incorporation of pollution prevention measures such as oil separators/interceptors;
- Maximising the re-use and recycling of materials during construction;
- Maximisation of recycling and implementation of the best practicable environmental options for non-recyclable residual waste;
- Commitment by constructor to:
 - Develop and implement a Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP);
 - Sign up to the Considerate Constructors Scheme; and
 - Reduce construction site impacts.
- Minimising risks to soil and geology from construction and mobilising of pollutants;
- Maintaining stringent health, safety and wellbeing standards;
- Providing employment and enhancing the local, rural economy; and

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- Adopting strategies to procure materials sustainably, where possible.

17. Cumulative Impacts

An assessment of the potential effects of the Proposed Development in combination with other development has been undertaken. The cumulative impact assessment considered the incremental changes caused by reasonably foreseeable future developments together with the proposed scheme.

The cumulative scenario assessed comprises proposals detailed in the AWE Site Development Context Plan 2008 (SDCP08). A review of major planning applications within the parish of Aldermaston and adjacent parishes did not identify any schemes likely to affect the assessment or contribute to cumulative impacts.

By addressing the cumulative impacts from the Proposed Development, it is considered that there will be temporary adverse impact interactions during the construction stage.

When addressing the combined effects of the Proposed Development and the proposals contained within the SDCP08, it is considered that the provision of the Proposed Development, and modern buildings in a landscaped setting will have positive impacts particularly in relation to socio-economics, as well as providing benefits for ecology across the site.

18. Residual Impacts and Conclusion

The construction phase will lead to a number of short-term minor adverse residual impacts. Long-term operation of the Proposed Development will generally have a negligible impact upon the majority of environmental receptors, with a range of positive impacts including benefits in terms of socio-economics, landscaping and ecology.

The overall conclusion of the EA is that the Proposed Development will be a positive step towards meeting a number of the strategic objectives of regional and local policy. The Proposed Development will help secure the long-term viability of AWE Aldermaston for the local area and will provide a number of employment opportunities during the construction phase, and will safeguard existing employment during the operational phase.