

3. Planning Policy Context

Environmental Appraisal
Volume I

3. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 Background

This Chapter of the Environmental Appraisal (EA) considers the development proposals in the context of Government guidance contained within the Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) and more recently the Planning Policy Statements (PPSs). PPGs and PPSs represent national, strategic policy on different aspects of planning and outline how local policies should conform to the wider planning process.

The Chapter also considers regional planning guidance as set out in the adopted Berkshire Structure Plan. Given the site's location on the county boundary some examination also needs to be made of the Hampshire County Structure Plan and the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan. It should however be made clear that the site lies entirely within the County of Berkshire.

At the local level, the Chapter goes on to consider the detailed development control context as set out in the policies of the Adopted West Berkshire District Plan, and other Supplementary Planning Guidance prepared by the authority. A Site Development Context Plan (SDCP) has also been prepared in order to provide guidance for the future development of AWE Aldermaston and Burghfield.

For the purposes of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the development plan comprises Regional Guidance for the South East (RPG9). The Joint Structure Plan for Berkshire of July 2005 and the adopted West Berkshire Local Plan. The overall approach in these documents is positive in so far as the proposal involves additional employment generating activity with respect to an already significant employment use. This chapter was written by URS Corporation Limited.

3.2 National Planning Policy

3.2.1 Summary of National Guidance

National guidance on planning matters is contained within Planning Policy Guidance Notes, Planning Policy Statements, Circulars and other Statements of Government policy. Under the new Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (The Act), some Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) are to be superseded. However both they and their updated counterpart are included in this Chapter as the relevant Structure and Local Plans were formulated under the 'old' PPGs and their reviews are not subject to the transitional arrangements under The Act.

The PPGs and PPSs relevant to the site are:

- PPS1 Delivering Sustainable Development (2005);
- PPG4 Industrial and Commercial Development and Small Firms (1992);
- PPS7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (2004);
- PPS9 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (2005);

- PPS10 Planning for Sustainable Waste Management (2005);
- PPG11 Regional Planning (2000);
- PPG13 Transport (2001);
- PPG15 Planning and the Historic Environment (1994);
- PPG16 Archaeology and Planning (1990);
- PPG17 Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (2002);
- PPS22 Renewable Energy (2004);
- PPS23 Planning and Pollution Control (2004);
- PPG24 Planning and Noise (1994);
- PPS25 Development and Flood Risk (2006)

3.2.2 PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development (2005)

PPS1 has recently been adopted and supersedes PPG1 (General Policy and Principles). The PPS sets out the Government's vision for planning and the policies and principles that should form the foundation of the planning system. This PPS complements other national policies and should be read in conjunction with them. Many of the principles contained within the former PPG1 are reiterated in this PPS. Sustainable development is therefore continued as the cornerstone of the planning system with the need to ensure that economic, residential and other development is located in suitable locations.

PPS1 states that planning should facilitate and promote sustainable patterns of urban and rural development by:

- Making suitable land available for development in line with economic, social and environmental objectives to improve the quality of life;
- Contributing to sustainable economic growth;
- Protecting and where possible enhancing the character of the natural and historic environment and the quality and character of the countryside for existing communities;
- Ensuring high quality development through good design; and
- Ensuring that development supports and makes a positive economic contribution to existing communities and contributes to the creation of safe and sustainable communities with good access to jobs and key services.

3.2.3 PPG4 – Industrial and Commercial Development and Small Firms (1992)

This PPG sets out guidelines for commercial development having regard to locational demands, compatibility with existing uses and other criteria.

It advocates the provision of choice, flexibility and competition in sites and asks Local Authorities to be realistic in their assessment of the needs of business.

ensuring that there is sufficient land which is readily capable of development and serviced by suitable infrastructure in order to meet demand. It also advocates the provision of a variety of sites available to meet differing needs. The proof of this need, or demand, is seldom a material consideration for Local Planning Authorities in assessing speculative applications, the PPG states.

It recognises the flexibility of the business Class (B1) and confirms that all new business/commercial developments should be located in places which minimise the length and number of trips and which can be served by energy-efficient modes of transport. It acknowledges that certain businesses can co-exist with residential development without causing unacceptable disturbance but that decisions on such proposals will depend on factors such as the scale of development, the nature of the use and location of site.

3.2.4 PPS7 - Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

This Guidance details the governments status of protection for areas such as AONB's (areas of outstanding natural beauty) and confirms that conservation of such areas should be given great weight in planning policies and development control decisions.

Whilst the AWE Aldermaston site is outside of the AONB, the impacts of visual amenity on views to and from the AONB are considered within Chapter 13 Landscape & Visual of this EA.

3.2.5 PPS9 - Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (2005)

PPS9 sets out planning policies on protection of biodiversity and geological conservation through the planning system. A joint Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (06/2005) and Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (01/2005) Circular has been published to accompany this PPS. This sets out the wide range of legislative provisions at the international and national level that can impact on planning decisions affecting biodiversity and geological conservation issues. A separate guide will also be published which sets out good practice in relation to planning for biodiversity and geological conservation. Chapter 15: Ecology of this EA details more information on ecology and biodiversity.

3.2.6 PPS10 - Planning for Sustainable Waste Management (2005)

PPS10 sets out the government's policy for sustainable waste management, which seeks to protect human health and the environment by producing less waste and using it as a resource wherever possible.

Paragraph 35 of PPS10 states that good design and layout in new development can help to secure opportunities for sustainable waste management, including for kerbside collection and community recycling as well as for large waste facilities. Planning authorities should ensure that new development makes sufficient provision for waste management and promote designs and layouts that secure the integration of waste management facilities, without adverse impact on the street scene or, in less developed areas, the local landscape.

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3.2.7 PPS11 – Regional Spatial Strategies (2004)

The main principles of the new arrangements are to deliver policy better at the regional level and contribute to the culture change necessary to deliver the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan.

The RSS, incorporating a Regional Transport Strategy (RTS), provides a spatial framework to inform the preparation of LDDs, Local Transport Plans (LTPs) and regional and sub-regional strategies and programmes that have a bearing on land use activities. It is a two-way relationship since the RSS also takes account of those strategies and programmes as they evolve. Other relevant strategies and programmes at national, regional or sub-regional level include but are not limited to air quality, biodiversity, climate change, education, energy, environment, health, soil use and sustainable development.

3.2.8 PPG13 – Transport (2001)

PPG13 seeks to shape the pattern of development and influence the location, scale, density, design and mix of land uses whilst helping to reduce both the need to travel and the length of journeys. PPG13 also seeks to make it safer and easier for people to access jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling.

Under PPG13, Local Authorities are urged to actively manage patterns of urban growth and to accommodate housing and other uses at locations which are highly accessible by public transport, walking and cycling. It also urges Authorities to ensure that development comprising jobs, shopping, leisure and services offers a realistic choice of access by a variety of modes of transport other than the car.

PPG13 reiterates guidance already set out in PPG3 on the location and accessibility of sites for housing. It emphasises the need to have regard to design, safety and mix of uses and refers in particular to the Government document 'Places, Streets and Movement'. Local Authorities are urged to adopt the planned approach by identifying preferred areas for B1 uses which should be, as far as possible, accessible by public transport, walking and cycling. The PPG seeks to encourage businesses to adopt travel plans. Local Authorities are encouraged to harness the use of new technologies to encourage local employment opportunities which reduce the need to travel.

For the first time the guidance introduces maximum parking standards and asks Local Authorities not to require developers to provide more spaces than they themselves wish to provide. Safe, convenient and secure cycle parking should also be provided within development proposals. Parking standards are set out in Annex D of the guidelines.

Finally the guidance considers the use of planning obligations and Travel Plans in considering what measures may make development acceptable.

3.2.9 PPG15 - Planning and the Historic Environment (1994)

Paragraph 2.24 of PPG 15 relates to historic parks and gardens and states that local planning authorities should protect registered parks and gardens in preparing development plans and in determining planning applications. The

effect of proposed development on a registered park or garden or its setting is a material consideration in the determination of a planning application.

3.2.10 PPG16 - Archaeology and Planning (1990)

Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (PPG16): 'Archaeology and Planning' sets out the Secretary of State's policy and guidance for the protection of archaeological remains on land. Many of these recommendations have also been integrated into local development plans.

Planning authorities, when they propose to allow development which is damaging to archaeological remains, must ensure that the developer has satisfactorily provided for excavation and recording, either through voluntary agreement with the archaeologists or, in the absence of agreement, by imposing an appropriate condition on the planning permission.

PPG16 itself forms part of an emerging European context which recognises the importance of the archaeological and historic heritage in consideration of development proposals. This has recently been formulated in the Code of Good Practice on Archaeological Heritage in Urban Development Policies established by the Cultural Heritage Committee of the Council of Europe, and adopted at the 15th plenary session in Strasbourg on 8-10 March 2001¹. As stated at the beginning of that document however, 'a balance must be struck between the desire to conserve the past and the need to renew for the future'.

3.2.11 PPG17 – Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (2002)

This guidance note seeks to emphasise the importance that Government places on the influence open space, sport and recreation have on people's quality of life. The guidance encourages the provision of open and recreational space in and around commercial and industrial areas and also seeks to provide better rights of way and other facilities for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders.

3.2.12 PPS22 - Renewable Energy (2004)

This PPS replaces Planning Policy Guidance Note 22 (PPG22) issued in 1993. PPS22 sets out Government Objectives and national planning policies, which includes the key principles of renewable energy, regional targets, regional spatial strategies and local development documents, and locational considerations, as well as other considerations.

3.2.13 PPS23 - Planning and Pollution Control (2004)

PPS23, published in November 2004, is intended to complement the new pollution control framework under the Pollution Prevention and Control (PPC) Act 1999 and the PPC Regulations 2000

3.2.14 PPG24 – Planning and Noise (1994)

This guidance seeks to provide advice on how the planning system can be used to minimise the effects of noise without placing undue burdens on developers and states that noise sensitive developments should be separated from major sources of noise, such as transportation routes or industrial sites. The PPG introduces the concept of Noise Exposure Categories, aimed to help Local Planning Authorities consider planning applications for residential development near transport related noise sources. Annex 1 of the PPG illustrates how the measure should be applied.

In assessing the impact of noise, both on existing development and on the development proposed, the guidance requires that likely future noise levels should be considered as well. The effects of noise levels during different parts of the day should also be assessed.

The guidance suggests a number of methods of anticipating the effects of noise, these being by engineering (i.e. insulation, fencing etc), layout and administration (i.e. control on levels of operation). The use of conditions is identified as acceptable to enable development to proceed where it may otherwise have been refused.

3.2.15 PPS25 – Development to Flood Risk (2006)

Planning Policy Statement 25 (PPS25) recently replaced the former guidance note PPG25 and sets out what needs to be considered to assess whether a proposed development is likely to be safe, whether it will increase flood risk elsewhere and whether flood risk elsewhere can be reduced. The policy guidance aims to discourage inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding and to ensure that where development does occur that flood risks and future climate change have been taken into account and flood risk management measures are put in place to ensure that the development is safe throughout its lifetime. The Proposed Development has responded through the evolution of a suitable Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS) (Chapter 8: Water Resources).

3.3 Statements of Government Policy

¹ A Better Quality of Life: A Strategy for Sustainable Development for the UK (1999)

The aim of this document is to ensure a better quality of life for everyone, both now and for generations to come. It sees this as:

- social progress which recognises the needs of everyone;
- effective protection of the environment;
- prudent use of natural resources; and
- maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth.

For the UK the priorities for the future are:

- more investment in people and equipment for a competitive economy;
- reducing the level of social exclusion;
- promoting a transport system which provides choice and also minimises environmental harm and reduces congestion;
- improving the larger towns and cities to make them better places to live and work;
- directing development and promoting agricultural practices to protect and enhance the countryside and wildlife;
- improving energy efficiency and tracking waste; and
- working with others to achieve sustainable development internationally.

Progress towards sustainable development is measured through a system of sustainability indicators. Fifteen headline indicators identify key issues relating to the overall quality of life – covering concerns including: the economy; levels of crime; road traffic; education; water quality, and housing.

3.4 Regional Planning Policy

3.4.1 RPG9 Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (2001)

This guidance covers the period up to 2016, setting the framework for the longer-term future of the South East Region, and superseding the 1994 issue. Under the Town and Country Planning (Initial Regional Spatial Strategy)(England) Regulations 2004, RPG9 is described as the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the region, in line with details held within Section 1 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. RPG9 will remain the RSS until such time as the new RSS (The South East Plan) is formulated and adopted.

The purpose of this guidance is to provide a regional framework for the preparation of Local Authority Development Plans and to provide the spatial framework for other strategies and programmes, including: the preparation of Local Transport Plans by Local Authorities, the regional strategies of the South East of England Development Agency (SEEDA) and East of England Development Agency (EEDA).

The guidance highlights the growing understanding that economic, social and environmental issues are inextricably linked, and places emphasis on sustainable development. The four objectives for sustainable development as set out in the 'Strategy for Sustainable Development in the UK' form part of the vision which the guidance seeks to promote. The Guidance emphasises that concentration of development is key to a sustainable development strategy for the Region.

The guidance distinguishes between two predominant areas, that of London, and that of the Rest of the South East (ROSE). Throughout the ROSE area, development should be primarily concentrated within urban areas, enable the renaissance of urban areas; the integration of transport; a multi-purpose

countryside; and the conservation of natural resources in the region. However, different parts of the ROSE require specific and particular policy approaches.

Policies Q1-Q8 deal with the 'Quality of Life in Town and Country', and Policy Q1 identifies that development plans should:

- Concentrate development within the Region's urban areas and seek to achieve at least 60% of all new development in the ROSE on previously-developed land and through conversions of existing buildings;
- Ensure that new developments in and around urban areas are well designed and consistent with the overall strategy for urban renaissance and sustainable development;
- Use growth opportunities to restructure existing urban areas by encouraging development in and around existing centres and promoting local neighbourhood centres as places where people can go for day-to-day shopping and other services; and
- Follow advice in PPG3 regarding development outside urban areas.

Policy Q2 affirms that the quality of life in urban areas should be raised through significant improvement to the urban environment, making urban areas more attractive places in which to live, work, shop, spend leisure time and invest, thus helping to counter trends towards more dispersed patterns of residence and travel.

Policies T1-T9 relate to the 'Regional Transport Strategy', and Policy T1 of that strategy requires policies to be developed which minimise the distance which people need to travel whilst enhancing choice and ease of access to activities, taking into account the needs of all users including disabled people and others with reduced mobility. In terms of transport-based locational criteria, development should: encourage safe movement on foot, by cycle and public transport; make best use of existing transportation networks; and enhance the viability of new and existing public transport services.

Policies RE1-RE5 relate to the economy and Policy RE2 addresses employment and land provision, which includes efficient use of existing and underused sites; and intensifying use of existing sites.

3.4.2 The Draft South East Plan

The South East Plan will set out the vision for the region until 2026, eventually superseding both RPG9 and the regions structure plan documents. The draft South East Plan was submitted to the Government on 31st March 2006, and was open for public consultation until 23rd June 2006. The examination in public ran between 28th November 2006 and 30th March 2007. Sustainable development underpins the whole plan. The policy places a clear duty on all public bodies to contribute to the goal of more sustainable development.

In terms of the economy, the plan strives to plan for strong economic networks and business clusters together with the provision of a good range of employment

sites and premises to reflect economic needs. It also positively promotes the provision of technology-enabled development and suitable sites, premises and facilities.

AWE Aldermaston falls within the "Western Corridor and Blackwater Valley" sub-region, within which the policy seeks to ensure that economic growth continues without unreasonably increasing the pressure on resources and the natural environment.

3.4.3 Berkshire Structure Plan 2001-20162

The Berkshire Structure Plan was prepared by the Berkshire Unitary Authorities' Joint Strategic Planning Unit and was adopted by the Secretary of State on 15th July 2005. The Joint Strategic Planning Unit comprises Bracknell Forest Borough Council, Reading Borough Council, Slough Borough Council, West Berkshire Council, The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, and Wokingham District Council. It was established by the Six Unitary Authorities in 1988 to carry out the core strategic Planning Guidance of the former County Council on their behalf, and is jointly funded by them.

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 came into force in September 2004. This establishes provisions that replace regional planning guidance and structure plans with regional spatial strategies (RSS). The RSS for the South East Region, which includes Berkshire is called the "South East Plan" and is currently being proposed by the South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA), the regional planning body. Local Plans, are each replaced by a suite of documents referred to as "Local Development Documents" (LDDs).

In the interim, between the enactment of the Bill and the adoption of RSS and LSS, it is anticipated that the Unitary Authorities will "save" policies in the Structure Plan for up to 3 years after its adoption. These, together with Local Plans will form part of their local development framework (LDFs) until the local plan policies are superseded by those adopted under the new Act.

The overall vision for Berkshire is one of sustainable development and the creation of diverse, sustainable urban and rural communities to include the following:

- Berkshire will continue to play a major role in the national and international economy, resulting in increasing levels of prosperity amongst its population.
- The area's affluence will be spread more evenly within the community.

² For the purpose of this assessment of policy, the relevant strategic guidance is contained in the Berkshire Structure Plan. Given the location of AWE Aldermaston on the County boundary the Hampshire Structure Plan is also examined.

- Berkshire's natural resources of water, air, land, minerals and energy would be continually managed so as to ensure their availability to future generations.
- The area will be home to scenic and architectural assets in town and country, and to a wider variety of species and inhabitants.
- These assets will be protected for future generations and for their own sake.

3.4.4 West Berkshire Local Plan

West Berkshire Local Plan was adopted in June 2002 and is currently used for development control purposes throughout the authority. There is no site-specific policy for AWE Aldermaston. However Section 4.5 of the Local Plan deals with the retention of existing employment sites. Paragraph 4.5.2A states:

"A number of MOD sites are located in West Berkshire rural areas, which are extremely important to the local economy. The sites concerned are AWE Burghfield & Aldermaston and RAF Welford and the army establishment at Hermitage".

Paragraph 2.52 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan refers specifically to defence and government establishments in the countryside and states at 2.52.1 that:

"Applications submitted for Crown development relating to existing establishments would be supported where required for the continuation of operational activities related to the use of the establishment within the context of other policies in the Plan"

In November 2005, AWE published a "site development strategy" that made clear the MoD's position, and stated the need for AWE Aldermaston to continue its operations.

The site itself is not designated within the Local Plan for any site specific purpose. However, the following development control policies are relevant to the site:

Policy OVS.1: Overall Strategy

The Council will follow the existing settlement pattern and hierarchy found within the district area in seeking sustainable locations for development which minimise the need to travel and with appropriate access to public transport services and other community facilities. In this context the Council would prefer to see the redevelopment of brownfield sites (land previously developed) than the use of 'greenfield' (undeveloped) land.

Policy OVS.2: Core Policy and Planning Benefits

The Council will require, where appropriate, all development proposals which accord with other policies of this Plan to:

- show a high standard of design including landscape treatment which respects the character and appearance of the area; and
- retain and protect important landscape and nature conservation features and provide for further landscape treatment where relevant to the safeguarding of local amenity; and
- retain important open space areas of recreational and/or amenity value within or on the edge of settlements; and
- preserve or enhance the character and setting of listed buildings and conservation areas; and
- preserve the site and setting of Scheduled Ancient Monuments or sites of especial local archaeological significance; and
- use materials of a quality appropriate to the nature of the development, the site and its surroundings; and
- comply with highway standards in respect of access, parking and pedestrian movement including where appropriate links to adjoining land; and
- safeguard public rights of way and the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers, including where relevant the provision of alternative rights of way of equal or enhanced quality; and
- provide buildings and spaces with suitable access arrangements and facilities for use by people with disabilities.

OVS.3 Planning and Community Benefits

The Council will require to be satisfied that the infrastructure, services and amenities made necessary by the development are provided or will be provided at the appropriate time so as to ensure the proper planning of the area. In addition, when considering proposals for development, opportunities will also be sought for securing environmental improvements and community benefits.

Policy OVS.5: Environmental Nuisance and Pollution Control

The Council will only permit development proposals where they do not give rise to an unacceptable pollution of the environment. In order to minimise the adverse impact on the environment or loss of amenity proposals should have regard to:

- The need to ensure the adequate storage and disposal of waste materials; and
- The installation of equipment to minimise the harmful effects of emissions; and
- The hours, days or seasons of operations; and
- Locating potential nuisance or pollution activities onto the least sensitive parts of the site or where the impacts can be best contained by physical or other appropriate measures.

Policy OVS.6: Noise Pollution

The Council will require appropriate measures to be taken in the location, design, layout and operation of development proposals in order to minimise any adverse impact as a result of noise generated. Special consideration is required where noisy development is proposed in or near Sites of Special Scientific Interest or which would harm the quiet enjoyment of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Proposals for noise-sensitive developments should have regard to the following:

- Existing sources of noise e.g. from roads, railways and other forms of transport, industrial and commercial developments, sporting, recreation and leisure facilities; and
- The need for appropriate sound insulation measures; and
- The noise exposure levels outlined in Annex 1 of PPG24. In the context of this policy noise sensitive uses are housing, schools and hospitals.

Policy OVS.7: Hazardous Substances

The Council will not permit development which on advice from the Health and Safety Executive would cause unacceptable risk or harm to personal safety due to the presence of hazardous substances on the site or other land in the vicinity.

Policy OVS.8: Hazardous Substances

Hazardous Substances Consent will not be granted where on advice from the Health and Safety Executive the risk arising to persons in the vicinity from the presence of a hazardous substance would be unacceptable.

Policy ENV.18: Control of Development in the Countryside

The nature and scale of development in rural areas should seek to encourage and sustain balanced rural communities. Development outside of settlements, allocated sites and other defined areas will be permitted only where:-

- It will benefit the rural economy in accordance with Structure Plan policy C2 and Local Plan policies ENV.16, ENV.19 and ENV.20; or
- It will provide beneficial use of a brownfield site in accordance with Structure Plan policy BU3 and Local Plan policies OVS.1, OVS.2, HSG.4 and ECON.2; or
- It is within the permissible categories of housing development in the countryside in accordance with Local Plan policy HSG.2;
- And provided it will maintain or enhance the environment and is appropriate in scale, form, impact, character and siting to its location in the countryside.

Policy Econ.24: Employment Schemes on Non-Protected Sites

Proposals to redevelop, re-use or extend non-protected existing employment generating sites will be permitted, provided that:

- The proposed buildings and structures are of a scale and character appropriate to the nature of the site and sympathetic to the surrounding environment; and
- Landscape proposals are included where necessary as an integral part of the scheme to help blend the development into the wider environment; and
- The proposals make provision for employment opportunities important to the local economy; and
- There is no material intensification of use leading to increased traffic activity or other forms of environmental intrusion; and
- There are no transport/highway objections and adequate provision has been made for access and parking; and
- The development does not give rise to pressures for housing development additional to the provision made in the local plan.

Although the AWE Aldermaston site does not have any special environmental designations, it does lie immediately south of Aldermaston Court which is designated as a Historic Parks and Garden. The Application site is also in close proximity to protected employment sites, a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a large area of Special Landscape Importance (see Figure 3-1). Therefore, the following policies should be noted in the context of any possible development to AWE Aldermaston.

ENV.1 The Wider Countryside

The Council in considering proposals for development will seek to conserve and enhance the special features and diversity of the different 'landscape character areas' found within West Berkshire.

Policy Env.9- Nature Conservation Sites (Including Sites Of Scientific Interest)

The Council in considering development proposals which could affect nature conservation sites or interests will have regard to:

- Expert nature conservation advice;
- The ecological value and objectives for which the site was classified or designated;
- The integrity of the site in terms of its nature conservation or ecological relationships;
- The likely impacts of cumulative uses or developments on the nature conservation interest and value of the site;
- The need to sustain the ecological diversity of the site;
- The presence of protected species and appropriate habitat area/wildlife corridors including those which abut the West Berkshire boundary;

- Proposed measures to safeguard and enhance existing nature conservation and habitat area including wildlife corridors; and
- The opportunity to create new habitat areas to help improve the conservation status of locally vulnerable species.

Hampshire County Structure Plan

The Hampshire Structure Plan (review) was adopted by Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth City Council and Southampton City Council in February 2000. The Structure Plan sets out the planning strategy to 2011 and beyond.

The plan will shape the pattern of development in the plan period proposing an overall strategy for improving the environment and managing the need to travel. It sets out how much new housing should be built and how proposals for economic growth should be considered.

The Plan's vision for the strategic area is to be "a prosperous and attractive area where social and commercial needs are met in ways that, while minimising the need for travel, improve the quality of life and sense of community for present and future generations".

Basingstoke & Deane Local Plan 1991 - 2001 (Adopted 1998)

AWE Aldermaston is located in the most southern part of the West Berkshire Council's boundary. In view of its location, Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, as the neighbouring Local Authority could be consulted on any proposal that was submitted for the site due to its proximity to their own boundary. Consequently, the relevant policies of Basingstoke and Deane have been considered.

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council adopted the Local Plan 1996 - 2011 in June 2006. The local plan is to be replaced by the Local Development Framework under the new planning legislation, though no timeframe has been outlined at this stage.

The site's southern boundary is located immediately north of the settlement boundary of Tadley. Although there are no specific designations affecting this part of the surrounding area in either the adopted or emerging Local Plan, the following general development policies would be considered by Basingstoke and Deane Council for development at the site in its relationship to the built up area of Tadley:

Policy Emp100: Economic Development

Planning permission for business, industrial and storage and distribution development, including the extension or redevelopment of existing premises, will normally be granted subject to satisfying the following criteria:

- The development must have satisfactory means of access, adequate parking provision and must not generate traffic of a type or amount

- inappropriate for roads or nearby properties nor require improvements which would be detrimental to the locality;
- Adequate services and infrastructure are available or can be provided satisfactorily;
- By virtue of its height and massing the development does not adversely affect the setting of adjoining buildings and, particularly on prominent sites, the development does not detract from the immediate surrounding area;
- The development will be appropriately landscaped;
- Any large areas of surface level car parking must be subdivided with tree and shrub planting and otherwise adequately landscaped or screened;
- Development must not normally displace existing car parking unless it can be demonstrated that suitable alternative provision can be made and retained to the satisfaction of the Borough Council;
- Development must not normally detract from the accessibility and convenience of pedestrians and cyclists and where appropriate provides for adequate replacement of footpaths where diversions are necessary; and
- The proposal is consistent with other policies contained in the Local Plan.

Policy GS1: General Criteria For Development

Subject to other relevant policies of the local plan, proposals for development:

- Must not have a materially-detrimental effect on the local environment or be in serious conflict with public health, safety and the economy of public services provision.
- Must provide a safe and adequate access point to the public road network;
- Within settlements must be in sympathy with adjoining buildings and spaces;
- In the countryside must wherever possible be located within a sustainable landscape setting;
- Must be of appropriate layout and siting, scale, design and choice of materials;
- Must retain important landscape features, areas of nature conservation and archaeological significance, and must respect the character and siting of nearby buildings and/or structures of special architectural or historic interest;
- Must not generate traffic of a type or amount inappropriate for rural/local roads, nearby properties or settlements, nor require improvements which would detrimentally affect these roads or the general locality;
- Must normally include sufficient parking provision to meet current standards and must not normally result in an overall loss of parking;

- Must not cause excessive noise or other nuisance to nearby dwellings, schools, institutions and workplaces;
- Must include, where reasonably practicable, access arrangements for those with disabilities; and
- Must as far as is practically possible be designed to facilitate crime prevention.

Policy C101- Development In The Countryside

Within the countryside, permission will not normally be granted for development, which would adversely affect its scenic quality, the setting of a settlement or which would be intrusive in the countryside.

Policy T3.1: Highways And Development

Planning permission will not be granted for development which would result in a significant adverse traffic impact.

Basingstoke & Deane Revised Deposit Draft Local Plan (1996-2016)

Policy D10- Rural Exceptions

Planning permission will be permitted for development which the Council is satisfied will meet a genuine local need such as affordable housing, health, education, a similar community need or to provide small-scale employment premises. Development proposals should complement the character of the rural settlement, the character of the surrounding landscape and not be harmful to the rural environment.

Policy D1- Rural Brownfield Sites

As an exception to normal planning policies on development in the countryside, proposals for the appropriate reuse of suitable brownfield sites outside settlement policy boundaries for the development of residential, employment, tourism uses or local facilities will only be permitted where no unacceptable environmental or planning impact would arise.

Where the proposal would involve the loss of any existing or potential employment on the site:

- A thorough assessment of the implications of the loss of any existing or potential employment on the site should be undertaken, including any cumulative impact with committed schemes; and
- The site should be marketed for appropriate employment generating uses for at least 12 months.

Policy E10- Development Control

Proposals for new development will be permitted provided that they are of a high standard of design, respect the amenities of neighbouring occupiers, and do not result in inappropriate traffic generation or compromise highway safety. All development proposals should therefore:

- Be in keeping with the local character by virtue of size, scale, density, design, massing, form, height, layout, materials and detailing, and, for extensions, be in keeping with the host buildings; and
- Provide a comprehensive landscaping scheme, where appropriate, enabling the development to successfully integrate with the landscape and surrounds, and not result in the loss of or have a potentially adverse impact on protected trees; and
- Not generate traffic of a type or amount inappropriate for roads, properties or settlements in the locality, and provide safe and convenient access for all potential users, integrating into existing movement networks and open spaces;
- Provide a co-ordinated and comprehensive scheme that does not prejudice the development of adjoining land;
- Incorporate energy conservation features, water and refuse storage management refuse management, collection and recycling arrangements, necessary and appropriate street lighting and furniture, public and private spaces, and public art;
- Ensure that the infrastructure requirements of the development, including water and sewerage infrastructure, can be met.

Policy E6- Landscape Character

Planning permission will only be granted where it is demonstrated that the proposals will be, or are, sympathetic to the landscape character and quality of the area concerned. Development proposals should contribute, as appropriate, to the regeneration, restoration, repair or conservation of any landscape likely to be affected. In particular they should respect, and where possible improve the following:

- The particular qualities of the relevant Landscape Character Area (e.g. Loddon and Lyde Valley); and
- Visual amenity and scenic quality;
- The setting of a settlement, including important views to, across and out of settlements;
- The local character of buildings and settlements, including important open areas;
- Trees, hedgerows, water features and other landscape elements and features;
- Areas of nature conservation interest;
- Historic landscapes, features and elements; and

Consideration will also be given to the impact that development would have on sense of place, sense of remoteness or tranquility, and the quiet enjoyment of the landscape from public rights of way.

Policy EC4- Large-Scale Employment Uses

Planning applications for large-scale employment development for occupation by a single operator, may be permitted in exceptional circumstances provided that:

- The development would result in substantial employment or other economic benefit;
- Proposals cannot be accommodated within the defined employment areas;
- Proposals do not give rise to unacceptable housing pressures;
- The development is accessible by public transport, walking and cycling; and
- No unacceptable environmental or planning impact would arise.

3.5 Supplementary Planning Guidance

Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) has been developed for the following areas:

- Affordable housing;
- Transport;
- Education;
- Libraries;
- Community;
- Health Care;
- Open Space;
- Recycling;
- Environmental enhancements;
- Archaeology, conservation and the historic environment;
- BREEAM;
- Provision of fire and rescue infrastructure; and
- Preventing crime.

These documents provide the criteria by which contributions are sought in respect of planning applications.

3.6 Local Development Framework (LDF's)

The Local Development Framework (LDF) is a local development document that outlines how planning will be managed in West Berkshire. The West Berkshire LDF will eventually replace the West Berkshire District Local Plan. The Council intends to produce the following documents as part of the LDF. These are known as Development Plan Documents and include the following:

- West Berkshire Planning Strategy;
- Newbury Town Centre Area Action Plan;
- Rural Communities in the Countryside;
- Core Strategy; and
- Housing Allocations.

The lead Document in the LDF is known as the core strategy and sets out the overall planning strategy without being specific about the site. This document in the form of the "West Berkshire Planning Strategy Preferred Options" was subject to a six week consultation period between 24th February 2006 and 7th April 2006.

The "preferred options" document recognises the important role that AWE plays in the District's economy and the need for cross boundary working in regard to the future of the Tadley area.

Responses on the West Berkshire Planning Strategy at the preferred options stage were taken into account to produce the submission version of the Planning Strategy. This was considered by a meeting of the Council on 27th July 2006 and formally submitted to the Secretary of State on 22nd September 2006. This was followed by a formal six-week consultation period, inviting any representations on the document to be submitted to the Council. This consultation period ended on 3rd November 2006.

The Council resolved to withdraw the Planning Strategy on 14th December 2006 as a result of guidance indicating the need to be more detailed and specific over locations for growth. The examination which was scheduled for May 2007 did therefore not take place.

3.7 AWE Site Wide Policies

3.7.1 Introduction

In addition to the statutory documentation, there are a number of studies, strategies and guidance documents that have informed the proposal but which also serve a wider purpose and or/area.

3.7.2 The Overall Approach to the AWE Estate

In 2002 AWE published a Site Development Plan (SDP) that involved the consolidation of the majority of AWE's activities at Aldermaston. By 2003 it was

clear that due to changes in the regulatory framework and operational issues this was impractical and the decision was made to retain AWE Burghfield and maintain a two-site operation in relation to AWE's principal activities.

In July 2005 the then Secretary of State for Defence announced a programme aimed at the refurbishment and renewal of facilities at both sites including those required to test systems in the context of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. The overall approach to the modernisation of AWE Aldermaston and Burghfield put forward in the programme is based on refurbishing and replacing facilities constructed principally in the 1940's, 1950's and 1960's.

A Site Development Context Plan (SDCP), 2005 and associated Illustrative Framework Plan was produced to describe the approach to the development of both sites. The key aims of the approach were:

- To improve the standards of design;
- To enhance the environmental performance;
- To reduce the environmental impacts;
- To manage traffic; and
- To maximise benefits to the community.

The process of refurbishment needs to be achieved whilst maintaining continuity in relation to the activities and processes occurring on the sites, and having regard to important issues such as decommissioning and safety and security which are all to be carried out in the context of nuclear site licences and other stringent controls.

These factors support the view that there is no practical and sustainable alternative to AWE's continued presence at Aldermaston and Burghfield.

Both sites have a long history of positive co-existence with the local community and provide significant employment and other economic benefits. They are also both "brownfield" sites that should be re-used in accordance with Government policy.

3.7.3 AWE Site-wide Policies

In addition to the statutory planning documentation, AWE implements its own set of strategies and guidance documents that have informed the proposal and which are aimed at delivering the changes/refurbishment in a sustainable way. These are site wide documents and include the SDCP, and matters such as construction, energy, surface water, design, sustainability, land contamination and site wide transportation issues. These are all issues that have been and continue to be progressed by AWE in any event but represent relevant background material to this specific proposal.

3.8 Summary and Conclusions

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

particular, the Planning Policy Guidance Note series (and new PPSs) together with other statements of Government policy require developers to take into account matters such as: urban design and layout (in terms of practicality, location aesthetics, energy conservation and safety); nature conservation and protection; preservation and minimisation of pollution; optimising land use and transportation considerations in designing proposals.

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.

The Regional Strategy takes these objectives further by advocating the concentration of development in and around urban areas throughout the South East, ensuring that new developments are well designed and consistent with the overall strategy for urban renaissance and sustainable development. The development proposed at AWE would meet these objectives.

The HEFF proposals have been designed to comply with Government guidance, and to meet policy, strategic and local requirements. The proposed development conforms with their overriding objectives of serving the employment and other needs of the locality, whilst fulfilling the principles of sustainability.

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