

| Item No | Application No. and Parish | 13 Week Date | Proposal, Location and Applicant |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| (1) | 08/02287/COMIND Wokefield | 18 th March 2009 | Construction of main process facility (MPF) and support building with 16 lightning protector towers, associated plant building, gate houses, vehicles inspection bays, sub-station buildings, security fence, access roads, hardstanding and sustainable drainage system (SuDS) infrastructure. AWE Burghfield, Reading, Berkshire. Ministry Of Defence c/o Defence Estates. |

Recommendation Summary: **The Head of Planning and Trading Standards be authorised to grant conditional planning permission.**

Ward Members: Councillor M Lock
Councillor K H Lock

Reason for Committee determination: Due to the level of objection.

Committee Site Visit: No site visit.

| Contact Officer Details | |
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1. Site History

The AWE Burghfield site has a long planning history under the previous Circular 18/84 Notification procedures – see site number 105623. However, Crown Immunity ceased to exist from the 7th June 2006 and this is the third major planning application at this site. The most recent and relevant site history is:

- 06/01932/FUL: Construction of dog handlers' facility to include office, communal areas and car parking.
Approved under Officer Delegated Powers 19th October 2006.
- 07/01856/FUL: Replacement staff restaurant and conference room.
Approved under Officer Delegated Powers on 11th October 2007.
- 07/01686/COMIND: New small scale components manufacturing facility, associated plant and landscaping. Approved by the Eastern Area Planning Committee on 14th November 2007.
- 08/00954/COMIND: New conventional manufacturing rationalisation facility plus associated landscaping including sustainable drainage features. Disabled car parking, plus 20 cycle parking spaces, plus associated construction related infrastructure. Approved by the Eastern Area Planning Committee on 13th August 2008.

2. Publicity of Application

- Site Notice Expired: 30th January 2009.
Press Notice Expired: 15th January 2009.
Neighbour Notification Expired: 9th January 2009.
Expiry Date for Consultations (as on website) 13th February 2009.

3. Consultations and Representations

- Parish Council:** No objections but detailed comments regarding flooding set out.
- Adjacent Parish (Burghfield):** No objections as the new facility will provide greater protection for parishioners and additional local work will be available on the site.
- Wokingham Borough Council:** No objections.
- Reading Borough Council:** Interim conclusion from Officers that they are unlikely to have planning objections to the planning application in terms of its health and safety impacts on Reading but a holding objection received pending confirmation that adequate measures and mitigation will be put in place to limit disruption.
- Highways:** No concerns regarding the proposed site layout. Some further information required and conditions to be attached.
- Highways Agency:** Informative to be attached and to be kept informed of any construction logistics.
- Libraries:** Contribution request received but not justified in this instance.

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| Health and Safety Executive: | There is no objection on nuclear safety grounds to this development. Additionally the Explosives Inspectorate has no objection to it proceeding. |
| British Waterways: | No comments. |
| Open Space: | Contribution request received but not justified in this instance. |
| Archaeology: | No further archaeological works necessary. |
| Natural England: | No objections, conditions to be attached. |
| Environment Agency: | No objections, conditions to be attached. |
| Tree Officer: | No objections subject to conditions. |
| Landscape Consultant: | The proposed development does not adversely affect the landscape character of the site itself. Due to local topography and vegetation the number of views where the Mensa development would be visible from are few. As long as existing catenary towers are removed, the additional height of these towers would not result in a significant impact on the rural setting. Conditions to be attached. |
| South East England Regional Assembly: | Not materially in conflict with or prejudicial to the RSS or South East Plan. |
| Ecology: | No objection, conditions to be attached. |
| Rights of Way: | No objections providing nothing connected with the development encroaches upon the footpath. |
| Ministry of Defence: | No safeguarding objections. |
| Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service: | The applicant should provide suitable private fire hydrants. |
| Thames Water: | No objections, informative to be attached. |
| Public Protection: | Conditions and informatives required. |
| Minerals and Waste: | No comments. |

Correspondence:

943 letters of objection have been received including letters from the Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp, the Nuclear Information Service, the Scottish CND, the Nuclear Awareness Group, Reading Green Party and Slough Borough Councillors.

Grounds of objection can be summarised as:

- There is confusion over the different names of the proposal;
- This project should be the subject of a Public Inquiry as West Berkshire Council does not have the authority to approve the plan without accepting its share of liability for any outcome;
- A condition should be attached that only allows for disassembly to take place and not the assembly of warheads;
- The plans do not make clear any measures to address the serious risks of more flooding;
- A proper Environmental Impact Assessment has not been completed and the Defence Exempt Environmental Appraisal is inadequate as no acceptable justification test has been applied;
- The proposal would adversely impact the local environment;
- The proposal would result in a large building in a beautiful rural area;
- Concern over building a nuclear facility in a heavily populated area;
- The proposal is contrary to the Local Plan as it is not necessary;
- There would be a number of issues associated with the construction including noise and traffic congestion;
- The application site is on land within the vulnerable Burghfield flood plain, which is a disastrous site for a facility where critically sensitive operations are to take place. The efforts to protect the buildings from flood water may prove inadequate in the years to come when increasing flooding is predicted as a result of climate change;
- Alternative sites should be found;
- Construction traffic would have a large impact on local roads;
- The consultation took place over the Christmas period in a deliberate attempt to avoid proper scrutiny and media attention.

Additionally a number of non-land use planning issues have been raised stating that the application should be refused on moral grounds and that the site presents a target for terrorists. It has also been stated that Committee Members should be made aware that they could withdraw from voting on this application as a matter of conscience. Finally further questions over control and risk are raised due to the sale of part of AWE to a US company.

It should be noted that the above has attempted to summarise the points that have been raised by the numerous objectors to the application. However, all letters of objection received are available on the Council's website and will also be available to view prior to the Committee meeting.

4. Policy Considerations

Planning Policy Statement 1 (2005) – Delivering Sustainable Development.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 4 (1992) – Industrial, Commercial Development and Small Firms.

Planning Policy Statement 7 (2004) – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas.

Planning Policy Statement 23 (2007) – Planning and Pollution Control.

Planning Policy Statement 25 (2006) – Development and Flood Risk.

Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG 9) March 2001.

Berkshire Structure Plan 2001-2016 Saved Policies 2008 – Policy DP1 (Spatial Strategy), DP6 (Land Outside Settlements) and DP8 (Rural Communities).

West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 Saved Policies 2007 – Policy OVS2 (Core Policy), OVS3 (Planning and Community Benefits), ENV18 (Control of Development in the Countryside) and ECON2A (Employment Schemes on Non-Protected Sites).

5. Description of Development

5.1. This proposal seeks planning permission for a new Main Processing Facility (MPF) and support building with 16 lightning protector towers, associated plant building, gatehouses, vehicle inspection bays, sub-station buildings, security fence, access roads, hard standing and sustainable drainage system infrastructure. The proposed development would provide a replacement warhead assembly, maintenance and disassembly facility and is categorised as B1 (c) Light Industrial use. The proposed development is required to provide suitable workspace in a secure environment to support continued operations when existing facilities reach the end of their lives and it seeks to consolidate existing operations into a single customised building. Current assembly, maintenance and disassembly operations are presently undertaken in separate buildings amounting to approximately 30,000m² gross floor area located at the Burghfield site. The proposal thus seeks to rationalise existing floor space, improve working conditions and efficiency, improve environmental performance compared to the existing facilities and to remove the legacy of outdated buildings from a significant part of the AWE Burghfield site.

5.2. As the proposal has a number of different elements, for clarity these are set out below:

- Main Processing Facility (MPF) building – measures 131m length x 113m width and 12.6m in height. The total gross floor area proposed is 14,760m² at ground floor level and 4,843m² at first floor level;
- Support Building – measures 58.9m length x 57.4m width and 8.5m in height. This building would have a gross floor area of 3,271m²;
- 16 lightning protector towers. 14 of these would be 44.6m in height and would surround the MPF building. The remaining two towers would be 13m in height and would be located at the plant building;
- Plant Building – measures 58m x 36.1m with a height of 6.7m. The gross floor area would be 2,095m²;
- Two Gate Houses – the northern gatehouse would measure 16.4m x 10.1m with a gross floor area of 145m². The southern gatehouse measures 12m x 6.25m with a gross floor area of 74m²;
- Two Vehicle Inspection Bays – each measuring 17.7m x 8.79m with a gross floor area of 155m²;

- Two electrical sub stations – each measuring 22.6m x 12m and with a gross floor area of 269m²;
- Associated access roads and hard standings;
- An intake sub-station located adjacent to the Pingewood Gate with a gross floor area of 533m²;
- Security fencing; and
- Two SuDS lagoons – the north storage pond would be approximately 850m² and the east storage pond approximately 1,129m².

As well as these permanent features the application also proposes a temporary construction enclave which is proposed to be implemented to isolate construction activities away from the main AWE Burghfield site entrance. This would include temporary construction features such as lay down areas and a concrete batching plant. Additionally a construction workers car park and Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) marshalling area is proposed in the north east of the application site by the Pingewood Gate.

- 5.3 The project as a total provides for 26,574m² of gross floor area which compares to approximately 30,000m² of operational space within the existing buildings at the AWE Burghfield site which would be vacated and then form part of a phased programme of demolition and clearance. The exception to this would be the existing northern pair of Gravel Gertie structures which are recommended to be scheduled as Scheduled Monuments by English Heritage. The proposed facility therefore represents a reduction of approximately 4,400m² in gross floor space. The facility would support 160 operative staff that would be transferred from existing manufacturing facilities at AWE Burghfield. No new jobs would be created.
- 5.4. To clarify an issue that has been raised by a number of objectors with regard to the various names of the proposal, the applicant has entitled the whole proposal 'Project Mensa'. The main building within this proposal is the Main Process Facility building (MPF) within which assembly, maintenance and disassembly of warheads is undertaken. It is considered that the description of the application is accurate and the proposal is now considered below on the basis of this description set out on the front page of this report.

6. Consideration of the Proposal

- 6.1. The main issues in consideration of this application relate to the principle of development, assessment against Development Plan Policy including a detailed analysis of the landscape impact, the detailed design of the proposal, highways issues, flooding and other issues raised by third parties.

6.1.1 The Principle of Development

- 6.1.2 The Site Development Context Plan 2005-2015, issued by AWE in November 2005 and updated in April 2008 in response to calls for an overview of future development proposals at the site, sets out the principal land-use proposals and strategies at both the Aldermaston and Burghfield sites. This current proposal is in accordance with this document which sets out that at Burghfield the general approach will involve consolidation of operational uses in the northern part of the site and the progressive rationalisation and subsequent clearance and decontamination of the remainder of the site generally working from north to south.

This remediation work is anticipated to extend beyond 2015. Within the 'Illustrative Framework Plan' the application site falls into Zone 7 which is categorised as a new manufacturing/production area. This document also sets out that in July 2005 the Secretary of State for Defence announced a three year investment programme amounting to an additional £350 million per year for AWE. The proposal represents part of this investment in the site and as such is considered to be required for the continuation, rationalisation and improvement of operational activities related to the use of the establishment. Although the principle of investment to rationalise and improve facilities at the AWE site has been set at Central Government level it is also necessary to assess the proposal against Development Plan Policy.

6.2 Assessment against Development Plan Policy

- 6.2.1 The application site is located within the existing AWE Burghfield complex and is located within open countryside as defined by the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 Saved Policies 2007. Accordingly the proposal falls to be assessed primarily against Policies OVS2, ENV18 and ECON2A of the WBDLP. Although Policy ENV18 is generally restrictive of new development in the countryside, it does allow for development where other policies of the Local Plan are met.
- 6.2.2 Policy ECON2A of the WBDLP relates to employment schemes on non-protected sites (i.e. sites that are not designated as Protected Employment Areas) and states that proposals to redevelop, re-use or extend other existing employment generating sites will be permitted subject to meeting a number of criteria.
- 6.2.3 Criterion (a) states "*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 criterion (b) requires that "*landscape proposals are included as an integral part of the scheme to help blend the development into the wider environment.*" These two issues are interlinked and are thus considered together first.
- 6.2.4 The Main Process Facility (MPF) building and the attached support building are evidently large buildings. The MPF has dimensions of 131m in length by 113m width and is 12.6m in height. The support building is 58.9m in length by 57.4m width and is 8.5m in height. The Energy building to the north is also a large building itself, measuring 58m by 36m with a height of 6.7m. In addition to being large buildings themselves, the MPF includes 4 ventilation stacks at 18.8m in height and has 14 lattice tapered catenary towers which measure 44.6m high surrounding the building. The Energy building includes 2 catenary towers measuring 13m in height. The other buildings proposed i.e. the substations, gatehouses and inspection bays would primarily be set amongst existing buildings and structures at the site and are not considered to have any significant material visual impact.
- 6.2.5 As the proposal includes large buildings and tall structures, if and how the application meets criteria (a) and (b) has to be considered in detail.
- 6.2.6 The MPF/Support building and Energy building are located towards the centre of the AWE Burghfield site. The MPF building is approximately 230 metres from the northern boundary, 280 metres from the western boundary, 500 metres from the eastern boundary and 550 metres from the southern boundary. These distances to the boundaries ensure that the buildings themselves do not have a significant visual

impact from outside of the site. The buildings would be most visible from a northerly direction and as such the applicant has given a significant amount of attention to the landscaping on the northern boundary which is assessed in detail in the next landscaping section.

- 6.2.7 It is recognised that AWE Burghfield has, to date, a relatively limited impact on the landscape character of the area due to the lack of buildings of a significant mass and due to the open swathes through the existing buildings and structures giving a high degree of visual permeability. Notwithstanding the location of the buildings towards the centre of the site, it is appreciated that the large buildings now proposed differ from the existing smaller scale buildings on site and have the potential to upset the existing visual impact of the site which currently conserves the agricultural rural character of the surrounding area, south of the M4. As such a detailed visual analysis of the site was undertaken together with the Council's Landscape Consultant. This analysis concluded that because of the topography, the layering effect of existing trees and hedgerows and the distances to public vantage points, in actual fact the buildings and structures would not be widely visible from surrounding areas. Where the buildings would be visible, further landscaping treatment would be effective in mitigating the impact of the development, providing it includes hedgerow trees.
- 6.2.8 Additionally it is recognised that the existing operational buildings would be demolished and cleared in a phased programme, with the exception of the northern pair of 'Gravel Gertie' buildings that are proposed to be scheduled by English Heritage. The material impact of the new buildings would be offset by the demolition and clearance of the existing operational buildings in a phased programme of demolition. This would assist in improving the physical appearance of the site and this can be controlled through the use of a condition.
- 6.2.9 As well as the mass and form of the actual buildings, the proposal also includes 16 lattice catenary towers, 14 of which would be 44.6m high and thus it is also important to assess this specific impact. Firstly it is recognised that the catenary towers themselves are a necessary part of the proposal to protect the MPF building from lightning strikes. Additionally, given the size of the MPF building it is also recognised that the height of the towers is necessary to ensure the network of cables effectively protect the building. Whilst it is appreciated that the towers are necessary for operational reasons, it still has to be assessed if the impact of the towers is acceptable in visual terms and if they avoid material harm to the landscape character of the area.
- 6.2.10 The specific design and height of the catenary towers was first raised as an issue at pre-application stage and the design of the towers was subsequently amended to include the tapering effect at the top of the mast that is now found in the application drawings. This has assisted in reducing the mass of the individual towers and also gives a more aesthetic design. As with the assessment of the buildings above, a detailed visual analysis was also undertaken for the catenary towers to assess where they could be seen from. The Landscape Consultant's conclusion on this point was that these towers would be visible over trees and hedgerows but as long as the existing catenary towers and structures are removed, the extra height would not result in a significant impact on the rural setting. Again the removal of the existing towers and structures is crucial in ensuring this proposal avoids a

proliferation of towers at this site and this can be controlled by the use of a condition.

- 6.2.11 A site wide landscape strategy for the AWE Burghfield site was prepared in 2007/2008 which encompasses the whole of the Burghfield site. The objective of the strategy sets out to provide a landscape framework to reinforce the site in its rural context. The landscape scheme that has been submitted to accompany this application proposes to bring forward a significant proportion of the landscape strategy and which seeks to mitigate the landscape and visual effects of the large scale site redevelopment works. The landscape proposals submitted with this application have been informed by and are in accordance with the overall landscape strategy.
- 6.2.12 Given the size of the buildings proposed significant new structural landscaping is proposed to be implemented which would improve the landscaping of the site by reinforcing the layering effect of the rural landscape elements found in the local area and which would assist in screening and absorbing the whole AWE Burghfield site into the landscape. The Council's Landscape Consultant has commented that the proposed landscape strategy would achieve as much as physically possible on the site and around the AWE complex. Given this advice it is considered that the landscape proposals have been included as an integral part of the scheme and assists in blending the proposed development into the wider environment. Criterion (b) is thus satisfied. Additionally the landscaping proposals also include sustainable urban drainage techniques such as swales, holding ponds and wetland coppice planting. As well as providing the necessary mitigation in terms of visual impact and drainage, the landscaping proposed also makes an important contribution to creating an attractive working environment for employees.
- 6.2.13 Whilst the buildings and towers within the proposal are large and tall structures respectively, the siting within the centre of the AWE Burghfield site, coupled with the removal of the existing buildings and structures and the significant and structural landscaping planting is considered to be sufficient to ensure the scale and character of the buildings and towers would not adversely affect the surrounding environment and would thus not compromise criterion (a) of Policy ECON2A.
- 6.2.14 Criterion (c) states that "*proposals should make provision for employment opportunities important to the local economy.*" Although existing staff will be transferred to this new facility and no new staff will be required to work in this building, the construction of the building would take approximately 6½ years to complete. It is anticipated to generate 174 new jobs each year of the construction period which would be approximately 3½ years (the rest of the time is given over to commissioning). Given this it is considered that the development would generate a significant number of local employment opportunities and thus accords with criterion (c) of Policy ECON2A.
- 6.2.15 Criterion (d) states that "*there should be no material intensification of use leading to increased traffic activity or other forms of environmental intrusion*" and criterion (e) states that "*there should be no transport/highway objections and adequate parking should be made for access and parking.*" These issues are considered together below.

- 6.2.16 Given that the proposed facility is a replacement for existing facilities at the Burghfield site and that there would be a net decrease in gross floor space as the existing buildings that house these operations are to be demolished (with the exception of the northern pair of 'Gravel Gertie' buildings), the generation of additional traffic movements from the operational side is not considered to be an issue. Additionally as the proposal would not generate any further operational worker vehicle movements over and above the existing facility, operational workers would continue to use existing car parking and it is not therefore necessary to provide any additional car parking. It does, however, include 25 cycle parking spaces and appropriate shower and changing facilities to encourage bicycle use.
- 6.2.17 The Highway Authority has commented that there are no concerns regarding the site layout. Again as there would be no net increase in employees at the site, the main highways issues are associated with the construction traffic. Some further information has been requested with regard to parking for construction workers and the progress of this issue can be reported in the update. Given the impact of the construction phase, the applicant is considering mitigation measures including a rural footway surface from Church Lane to the M4 with a further section south of the Cuning Man Public House and to complete the footways within the vicinity of the Cuning Man PH and the Kennet & Avon Canal linking the area to the canal towpath. These proposals are welcomed by the Highway Authority and can be achieved via a Grampian condition attached to any planning permission. A further condition is requested by Highways to ensure existing buildings are demolished and this is included in the conditions section. Additionally the Highways Agency has also raised no objection, subject to an informative requiring the applicant to advise the Highways Agency when abnormal loads would be programmed. It should be noted that AWE has an ongoing commitment to their Travel Plan which includes the Burghfield, Portland House and Blacknest sites. Criteria (d) and (e) of Policy ECON2A are not considered to be compromised.
- 6.2.18 Criterion (f) of Policy ECON2A states that the development should not give rise to pressures for housing development additional to the provision made in the Local Plan. As stated above, this proposal would not result in the generation of any additional staff. Accordingly the proposal is considered to comply with all the criteria of Policy ECON2A of the West Berkshire District Local Plan.

6.3 Design

- 6.3.1 PPS1 'Delivering Sustainable Development' states that "*Good design ensures attractive, usable, durable and adaptable places and is a key element in achieving sustainable development.*" It continues by stating that "*Planning Authorities should plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings...*" Additionally Policy OVS2 of the WBDLP 1991-2006 Saved Policies 2007 criterion (a) requires that proposals "*show a high standard of design including landscape treatment which respects the character and appearance of the area*".
- 6.3.2 Earlier in this report, the scale and size of the buildings has been considered to be appropriate in this central location on the site with the provision of the significant landscaping proposed and the demolition of the existing buildings and structures. Additionally the design of the buildings themselves is considered to be appropriate

and coupled with the proposed landscaping would result in a more attractive environment in which to work.

6.3.3 The size of the MPF building is dictated by the uses that are proposed to be undertaken within the building and the fact that these uses are to be consolidated into a single custom built building as opposed to taking place in a number of separate buildings. The height of the building is driven by the requirement to house internal machinery. It has been designed as one large rectangular structure with an arched metal roof with a raised seam. Whilst a functional, manufacturing facility the building has a contemporary design to give it a science park appearance. Additionally the support building, plant building and sub-stations all have the same architectural treatment to form a cohesive group contained by the perimeter fencing and this is considered to be appropriate.

6.3.4 The buildings have also been designed to be highly sustainable and the proposal includes buildings that have good daylight, ventilation and acoustics, are energy efficient and include the provision of water-efficient fittings for example. The application includes a BREEAM Bespoke Report which shows that the proposal can achieve a score of 72% and therefore an 'Excellent' rating and this can be conditioned in the usual way. Whilst functional, the design of these buildings is considered to represent an improvement in the appearance of built form on this site, particularly when compared with the current utilitarian buildings. A key factor in ensuring the buildings look appropriate will be the use of high quality materials. The colour of these materials is also of importance when considering the landscape impact. Accordingly a condition will need to be imposed to ensure that appropriate materials and colours are used in construction. With this condition imposed the design of the buildings are considered to accord with both PPS1 and Policy OVS2 of the Local Plan which requires all development proposals to show a high standard of design.

6.4 Flooding

6.4.1 Many of the objection letters have raised the issue of flooding on the Burghfield site as an issue and the proposed development contains areas in all three Flood Zones. Additionally Planning Policy Statement 25 'Development and Flood Risk' aims to ensure that flood risk is taken into account at all stages of the planning process to avoid inappropriate development in areas of flood risk. PPS25 requires a Sequential Test to be applied at all stages of planning. The aim of the Sequential Test is to steer new development to areas at the lowest probability of flooding.

6.4.2 The applicant has applied the Sequential Test in the amended Flood Risk Assessment Final Report dated 23rd December 2008. PPS25 advises that following application of the Sequential Test, if it is not possible for a development to be located in zones of lower likelihood of flooding while remaining consistent with wider sustainability objectives, the Exception Test can be passed.

6.4.3 In this instance, as part of the proposed development would fall with Flood Zone 3, the proposal has to pass the Exception Test. The Exception Test is set out in detail in PPS25 but broadly sets out three criteria. These are (a) that it must be demonstrated that the development provides wider sustainability benefits to the community that outweigh flood risk; (b) the development should be on developable previously-developed land and (c) a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) must

demonstrate that the development will be safe, without increasing flood risk elsewhere, and, where possible, will reduce flood risk overall.

6.4.4 Firstly with regard to criterion (b) above it is evident that the application site is on developable previously-developed land as it has been cleared of buildings prior to submission of the application. In relation to criterion (a) it is considered that the sustainability benefits of this proposal include the provision of a high quality environmental design, including good daylight, ventilation and acoustics, the provision of water efficient water fittings, the incorporation of pollution prevention measures such as oil interceptors, maximisation of recycling and the provision of a scheme that is economically sustainable in terms of job creation during the demolition and construction phase. Additionally it is accepted that it would not be feasible to locate a similar site of sufficient size with existing security arrangements and be sufficiently close to the existing AWE facilities. It is appreciated that the proposal should be located adjacent to the existing NSPA area and also within the existing secured site and given the sustainability benefits of the proposed buildings criterion (a) is considered to be satisfied.

6.4.5 With regard to criterion (c) of the Exception Test, the application includes an amended FRA dated 23rd December 2008. The Environment Agency has the technical expertise to assess the detail of the FRA and they have stated that they find it compliant with the requirements of PPS25. They have also commented that the Assessment demonstrates that the development will remain safe during the 1 in 100 year plus climate change flood event and will not increase risk elsewhere. The findings of the FRA are also accepted that confirms additional flood storage would be provided through this development in comparison to what was available prior to the demolition of existing buildings on site. Finally it is stated that a comprehensive sustainable surface water drainage scheme, which allows for a reduction in the rates at which surface water run-off leaves the site, would result in a further reduction in flood risk elsewhere. As the Environment Agency has confirmed that the FRA meets criterion (c) of the Exception Test, the Test is considered to be met and accordingly the proposal is acceptable in relation to the issue of flooding.

6.5 Issues Arising During Construction:

6.5.1 Many of the objection letters have raised issues of noise, disturbance and disruption during the construction period and from construction traffic in particular. The applicant has recognised this and accordingly has submitted a Code of Construction Practice to accompany the application. This document sets out site security arrangements, anticipated working hours, health and safety arrangements, access and traffic management arrangements, waste production, emissions and general nuisance arrangements. The document seeks to ensure that all these issues are effectively managed and has previously been submitted to accompany other individual applications.

6.5.2 It is considered that the Code of Construction Practice will be a useful tool in minimising any disturbance or disruption issues during construction. Rather than have individual conditions relating to noise, dust, odours etc, it is considered to be appropriate to attach a condition requiring the Code of Construction Practice to be implemented in full for the duration of the construction activity relating to this proposal. It is noted that this has worked well for the current construction activities

that are being undertaken at the Aldermaston site and the Local Planning Authority has not received any complaints with regard to construction issues.

6.6 Other Issues Raised:

- 6.6.1 Many of the objection letters received state that a public inquiry should be held to determine this application. It is Officer's opinion that sufficient information has been provided to enable this application to be determined by this Planning Authority on its planning merits and the recommendation is that approval should be given. Should the application be refused, the applicant would have the right of appeal.
- 6.6.2 Many objection letters state that the Council does not have the authority to approve the application without accepting its share of liability for any outcome. However, the Local Planning Authority has a statutory duty to determine this planning application on its planning merits. With regard to the health and safety issues raised, in this case the health and safety aspects of the development are controlled by the nuclear licensing regime. It is important to note that the AWE Aldermaston and Burghfield sites are regulated by a number of bodies including the Environment Agency and the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate. Any issues raised by these Regulators lie outside of the planning system and do not fall to be a material consideration in the assessment of the current application. As the proposed buildings seek to provide new, modern, replacement facilities for existing operations at the AWE Burghfield site and have addressed the landscaping, flooding, highways and design issues satisfactorily, the proposal is considered to be acceptable and this decision should not be influenced by any unrelated operational issues at the site. Additionally the Health and Safety Executive has raised no objection on nuclear safety grounds to this proposal or any objection from the Explosives Inspectorate. Should planning permission be granted, the facility will be subject to the regulatory requirements of the Health and Safety Executive and the Environment Agency. Where other regulatory controls exist it is not necessary to consider these issues further within the planning process.
- 6.6.3 Another issue raised by objectors is that the Planning Committee does not have sufficient information to determine the application because the application has a Defence Exemption Direction. The Secretary of State has issued a direction under regulation 4(4)a(ii) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999 (As Amended) which directs that the requirements of the EIA Regulations shall not apply to this Mensa proposal. However, it is considered that sufficient information has been provided in the planning application and the 'Defence Exempt Environmental Appraisal', which has been submitted instead of a formal Environmental Statement, to enable this application to be determined by this Planning Authority and the recommendation is that approval should be given. Again it is considered that together the planning application submission and the Environmental Appraisal have provided sufficient information for the Local Planning Authority and the statutory consultees in the planning process, to comprehensively assess the impacts of this proposal.
- 6.6.4 So far as developer contributions are concerned, as the proposal would not result in any additional staff or any increase in floor space (there would actually be a decrease in floor space) as existing buildings are to be demolished, the Libraries contribution request cannot be justified in this instance. Under Circular 05/2005 requests for planning obligations must meet five tests. They must be (i) relevant to

planning, (ii) necessary to make the proposed development acceptable, (iii) directly related to the proposed development, (iv) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development and (v) reasonable in all other aspects. As there would be no additional pressure on the Council's library service from additional staff developer contributions are not required to make the proposal acceptable and are not justified in this instance. With regard to the issue of the provision of fire hydrants as set out in the Fire Service's response, AWE has its own on site Fire Station and associated equipment at Burghfield and further hydrants are not necessary.

6.6.5 With regard to the issue of the principle of assembling and maintaining warheads, the Committee should note that this is a replacement facility which would provide a new building for undertaking operations that occur at present on the site and the proposal would not introduce any new operations onto the AWE Burghfield site. It should be noted that the Local Planning Authority is not making any decisions on the principle of the nuclear deterrent but is obliged to determine this current planning application in accordance with Development Plan Policy and relevant material planning considerations.

7. Conclusion:

7.1 It is concluded that this proposal complies with Development Plan Policy with regard to redeveloping, rationalising and improving an existing employment generating site. Specifically the proposal complies with the six criteria of Policy ECON2A of the West Berkshire District Local Plan.

7.2 The most significant impacts of this proposal relate to its visual impact, highways issues associated with the construction traffic and the issue of flooding. Following a thorough analysis of the visual impact of the proposal, it is considered that subject to conditions requiring the implementation of the detailed landscaping strategy, details of the specific materials to be used in construction and the removal of existing buildings and structures, the visual impacts of this proposal and thus its impact on the landscape character of the area are acceptable and accordingly no objection has been raised from the Council's Landscape Consultant.

7.3 With regard to highways issues, both the Highway Authority and Highways Agency have raised no objection to the proposal subject to conditions and informatives. Particularly in relation to the construction traffic, improvements to the existing highway network and rural footway network in the vicinity of the site are being sought and can be secured through a Grampian condition. In relation to flooding issues, the applicant has sequentially tested the proposal. It is considered that the proposal meets the criteria to fulfil the Exception Test and the Environment Agency has scrutinised the Flood Risk Assessment and has raised no objection. The FRA confirms additional flood storage to be provided through this development in comparison to what was available prior to the demolition of existing buildings on site and also the comprehensive sustainable surface water drainage scheme would result in a further reduction in flood risk elsewhere.

7.4 Finally it is considered that the buildings as a whole represent a well designed proposal that would be highly sustainable and would provide a more attractive and efficient environment in which to work than the existing buildings.

7.4 The proposal is considered to be acceptable and is thus recommended for conditional approval.

8. Full Recommendation

8.1. That the Head of Planning and Trading Standards be authorised to **GRANT** planning permission subject to the following conditions:

1. The development shall be started within three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to review the desirability of the development against Policies DP1, DP6 and DP8 of the Berkshire Structure Plan 2001-2016 Saved Policies 2008 and OVS2, ENV18 and ECON2A of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991 - 2006 Saved Policies 2007 should it not be started within a reasonable time.

2. No development shall commence until samples of the materials to be used in the proposed development have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This condition shall apply irrespective of any indications as to the details that may have been submitted with the application, and shall where necessary include the submission of samples of glass, plastic, mortar materials and details of the colour and finish to be used in construction of the external surfaces. The development shall be constructed in the materials approved unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity in accordance with Policy OVS2 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991 – 2006 Saved Policies 2007.

3. No development shall commence until a detailed scheme of landscaping for the site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details shall include schedules of plants noting species, plant sizes and proposed numbers/densities, an implementation programme and details of written specifications including cultivation and other operations involving tree, shrub and grass establishment. The scheme shall ensure;

a) The carrying out of any earth moving operations concurrently with the carrying out of the building and other works;

b) Completion of the scheme during the planting season next following completion of the buildings or such other date as may be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority;

c) The maintenance of the landscaped areas for a period of five years or until established, whichever may be longer. Any trees, shrubs or plants removed, or which in the opinion of the Local Planning Authority, are dying, being severely damaged or becoming diseased within five years of planting shall be replaced in the following year by plants of the same size and species to those originally required to be planted.

Reason: To ensure the implementation of a satisfactory scheme of landscaping in accordance with the objectives of Policy EN1 of the Berkshire Structure Plan 2001 – 2016 Saved Policies 2008 and Policies OVS2 (a & b) and OVS 3 (b) of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991 – 2006 Saved Policies 2007.

4. Protective fencing shall be implemented and retained intact for the duration of the development in accordance with the tree and landscape protection scheme identified on approved drawings numbered JSL/1669/701RevA, JSL/1669/702RevA, and JSL/1669/703RevA all dated 17th December 2008. Within the fenced areas, there shall be no excavations, storage of materials or machinery, parking of vehicles or fires.

Reason: To ensure the enhancement of the development by the retention of existing trees and natural features during the construction phase in accordance with Policy OVS 2 (b) of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 Saved Policies 2007.

5. No development shall commence until a full BREEAM or equivalent assessment demonstrating that the development will attain BREEAM EXCELLENT has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall then be carried out in accordance with the approved assessment. Prior to the first occupation of the buildings hereby approved, a post construction review, carried out by a licensed assessor, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In accordance with Policy OVS10 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 Saved Policies 2007 and the guidance contained within the Council's adopted Supplementary Planning Document: Quality Design - West Berkshire, Part 4 "Sustainable Design Techniques".

6. No development shall commence until details of floor levels in relation to existing and proposed ground levels have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved levels.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory relationship between the proposed buildings and the adjacent land in accordance with Policy OVS2 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 Saved Policies 2007.

7. The AWE Code of Construction Practice (Annex H of the Planning Supporting Statement) shall be implemented in full for the full duration of the construction activity relating to this permission at the site.

Reason: In the interests of the amenities of neighbours of this site in accordance with Policy OVS2 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 Saved Policies 2007.

8. No development shall commence until details of the external lighting to be used in the areas around the proposed buildings (including building-mounted lighting and lighting in the vicinity of the access road) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the buildings shall not be occupied until the external lighting has been installed in accordance with the

approved details and thereafter no material changes to the lighting scheme shall be made unless details have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Additionally no construction development shall commence until details of temporary lighting in and around the construction enclave has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The temporary lighting shall be implemented in accordance with these approved details for the period of construction unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: The Local Planning Authority wish to be satisfied that light spill from any external lighting is minimised in accordance with Policies EN5 of the Berkshire Structure Plan 2001-2016 Saved Policies 2008 and OVS5 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 Saved Policies 2007.

9. No development (other than investigative work) shall commence until two copies of a contaminated land assessment and associated remedial strategy, together with a timetable of works, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The contaminated land assessment shall include; a desk study, details of investigative works and sampling, risk assessment and remediation strategy.

(a) The desk study shall detail the history of the site uses and propose a site investigation strategy based on the relevant information discovered by the desk study.

(b) A suitably qualified Consultant shall be appointed to investigate the nature and extent of any contamination, if any, in, on or under all parts of the land to which this permission refers. All investigative works and sampling on site, together with the results of analysis must be submitted to the Local Planning Authority (and the Environment Agency as appropriate).

(c) If a hazard or hazards are identified from such investigations, a site specific risk assessment shall be undertaken to consider risks to the following: wildlife, livestock and ecosystems, building materials, water resources, the future users of the site, surrounding land and any other persons.

Reason: In order to protect the amenities of existing or proposed occupant/users of the application site or adjacent land in accordance with Policy OVS5 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 Saved Policies 2007.

10. Approved remediation works shall be carried out in full on site prior to that specific phase of development. If during any works any significant underground structures or contamination is discovered which has not previously been identified then the additional contamination shall be fully assessed. No further remediation works shall take place until a report detailing the nature and extent of the previously unidentified structures and contamination and the proposed remedial action plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, all further remediation works shall be undertaken in accordance with the most recent approved remediation action plan prior to that specific phase of development.

Reason: In order to protect the amenities of existing or proposed occupant/users of the application site or adjacent land in accordance with Policy OVS5 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 Saved Policies 2007.

11. On completion of all remediation works this condition shall not be discharged until a closure report has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The report shall make reference to all published information associated with the development and shall demonstrate compliance with the remediation strategy. It shall include the following: details of quality assurance certificates to show that all works have been carried out in full and according to best practice; consignment notes demonstrating the removal of contaminated materials; certification to show that new material brought to the site is uncontaminated; and details of any on-going post remediation monitoring and sampling, including a reporting procedure to the Local Planning Authority and Environment Agency.

Reason: In order to protect the amenities of existing or proposed occupant/users of the application site or adjacent land in accordance with Policy OVS5 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 Saved Policies 2007.

12. No development shall commence until details of the programme for the phased demolition and clearance of the existing buildings, towers and structures within the NSPA have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These buildings shall then be demolished and cleared in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the existing assembly/disassembly and associated buildings are removed which has been an important material consideration of this application in accordance with Policies OVS2, ENV18 and ECON2A of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 Saved Policies 2007.

13. No development shall commence until a surface water drainage scheme for the site, based on sustainable drainage principles and an assessment of the hydrological and hydrogeological context of the development, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall include;
 - Detailed plans in accordance with the principles outlined within the Flood Risk Assessment ref. 5057498 DG06 i6 dated 23 December 2008 and the SUDS detailed design report EDMS1/801457EC/B/ES/6005 Issue 1;
 - Confirmation that there will be no infiltration of surface water drainage into the ground, other than with the express written consent of the Local Planning Authority, which may be given for those parts of the site where it has been demonstrated that there is no resultant unacceptable risk to controlled waters;
 - Detailed plans to show a variation of water depths, variation in the width of the marginal shelves/aquatic bench to prevent uniformity and the use of native species of local provenance in all planting and seeding mixes around the ponds, planted in the appropriate locations relative to wetness/water level for each species. Cross sections shall be included to illustrate these points;
 - A management plan to ensure the function of the balancing ponds to manage surface water runoff and landscaping is maintained in the long term.

The scheme shall be fully implemented and subsequently maintained in accordance with the timing/phasing arrangements embodied within the scheme or within any other period as may subsequently be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To prevent the increased risk of flooding, to improve and protect water quality, improve habitat and amenity of the surface water drainage system in accordance with Planning Policy Statement 25 'Development and Flood Risk'.

14. The development permitted by this planning permission shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) 5057498 DG06 i6 dated 23 December 2008 and the following mitigation measures detailed within the FRA:

1. Finished Floor Levels to be set at 45.7m AOD as specified in section 6.3;
2. Flood risk mitigation during construction as outlined in section 6.7.3;
3. Reduction in surface water runoff from the development as outlined in section 6.8.

Reason: To manage flood risk and to reduce the future risk and impact of flooding by ensuring that storage of flood water is provided on site and the satisfactory storage of/disposal of surface water from the site in accordance with Planning Policy Statement 25 'Development and Flood Risk'.

15. No development shall commence until the following components of a scheme to deal with the risks associated with contamination of the site has each been submitted to and approved, in writing, by the Local Planning Authority:

1) A preliminary risk assessment which has identified:
all previous uses

- potential contaminants associated with those uses;
- a conceptual model of the site indicating sources, pathways and receptors;
- potentially unacceptable risks arising from contamination at the site.

2) A site investigation scheme, based on (1) to provide information for a detailed assessment of the risk to all receptors that may be affected, including those off site.

3) The site investigation results and the detailed risk assessment (2) and, based on these, an options appraisal and remediation strategy giving full details of the remediation measures required and how they are to be undertaken.

4) A verification plan providing details of the data that will be collected in order to demonstrate that the works set out in (3) are complete and identifying any requirements for longer-term monitoring of pollutant linkages, maintenance and arrangements for contingency action.

Any changes to these components require the written agreement of the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall be implemented as approved prior to that specific phase of development.

Reason: The site is located within an Inner Source Protection Zone for a potable

water supply and the Environmental Appraisal has identified a potential risk of groundwater contamination of the deep aquifer that requires further assessment in line with PPS23 'Planning and Pollution Control'. This is necessary to determine the source of the identified pesticides and to quantify the risk to identified receptors.

16. Piling or any other foundation designs using penetrative methods shall not be permitted other than with the express written consent of the Local Planning Authority, which may be given for those parts of the site where it has been demonstrated that there is no resultant unacceptable risk to groundwater. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To protect groundwater quality in line with PPS23 'Planning and Pollution Control'.

17. No development shall commence until a scheme for the provision of the mitigation measures set out in Table 15.6 of the Environmental Appraisal Volume 1 with regard to bats and birds has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall then be implemented in full and subsequently maintained in accordance with the timing/phasing arrangements embodied within the scheme or within any other period as may subsequently be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To protect the wildlife at this site in accordance with Policy ENV9 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 Saved Policies 2007.

18. No development shall commence until a scheme for the Highways mitigation measures has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall then be implemented in full in accordance with the timing/phasing arrangements embodied within the scheme or within any other period as may be subsequently agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: The proposal is only acceptable if the highways mitigation measures are provided in accordance with Policy OVS3 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 Saved Policies 2007.

19. No development shall commence until a plan showing the phasing of development has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The overall development shall thereafter proceed in accordance with the approved phasing plan unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. In relation to other conditions seeking approval of details prior to the commencement of development, such approval may relate to the commencement of individual phases in accordance with the provisions of the approved phasing plan.

Reason: To ensure that the overall development proceeds in a coordinated manner assessed against Policies DP1, DP6 and DP8 of the Berkshire Structure Plan 2001-2016 Saved Policies 2008 and OVS2, ENV18 and ECON2A of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 Saved Policies 2007.

INFORMATIVES

1. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with drawing title numbers ** all received 17th December 2008 unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
2. The attention of the applicant is drawn to the Berkshire Act, 1986, Part II, Clause 9, which enables the Highway Authority to recover the costs of repairing damage to the footway, cycleway or grass verge, arising during building operations.
3. The attention of the applicant is drawn to the Highways Act, 1980, which enables the Highway Authority to recover expenses due to extraordinary traffic.
4. The Highway Authority has the power, under Section 69 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act, 1984 and amended by the New Roads and Street Works Act, 1991, to enter land and remove any device giving guidance or direction to persons on the highway if, at any time, it should be considered detrimental to road safety.
5. Any temporary signing required as part of this development is to be agreed in writing with the Highway Authority, West Berkshire Council, Highways and Engineering, Council Offices, Faraday Road, Newbury, RG14 2AF.
6. The applicant is advised that this planning permission does not in any way allow the Public Rights of Way to be obstructed at any time during the course of the development.
7. Nothing connected with either the development or the construction must adversely affect or encroach upon the Public Rights of Way which must remain available for public use at all times.
8. The Applicant is advised to seek prior consent (section 61, Control of Pollution Act 1974) to ascertain the extent of additional construction noise conditions that may be imposed. For further information contact the Head of Environmental Health.
9. In England, it is a legal requirement to have a site waste management plan (SWMP) for all new construction projects worth more than £300,000. The level of detail that your SWMP should contain depends on the estimated build cost, excluding VAT. You must still comply with the duty of care for waste. Because you will need to record all waste movements in one document, having a SWMP will help you to ensure you comply with the duty of care. Further information can be found at <http://www.netregs-swmp.co.uk>
10. Due to the proximity of the site to Burghfield Brook and Sustainable Drainage Systems all works carried out in connection with this development should comply with Environment Agency pollution prevention guidelines (PPG5): 'Works and maintenance in or near water'. Copies and further information are available from your local Agency office or from www.environment-agency.gov.uk/ppg
11. The Control of Pollution (Oil Storage) (England) Regulations 2001 apply to all above ground commercial oil storage in tanks over 200 litres in volume. This means that tanks should be fit for purpose and have a secondary containment (or bund) sufficient to contain 110% of the tanks contents. The secondary containment must be impermeable to oil and water and not have any drainage valve. All the tanks ancillary equipment (valves, delivery hose, gauges, vent) must be within the

curtilage of the secondary containment or bund. The regulations have other stipulations and full information can be found at www.environment-agency.gov.uk/osr or from Pollution Prevention Guidance Note 2 for Above Ground Tanks or PPG26 for Drums and Intermediate Bulk Containers.

12. The Water Resources Act 1991, s85 makes it an offence to cause or knowingly permit poisonous, noxious or polluting matter to enter controlled waters unless you are in possession of a discharge consent or other relevant permit. Controlled waters include all water below the surface of the ground. This legislation is not restricted to any listed substances.
13. Discharge consents issued under the WRA1991 constitute authorisations for the purposes of the Groundwater Regulations provided the relevant conditions have been applied.
14. Erection of flow control structures or any culverting of a watercourse requires the prior written approval of the Environment Agency under s.23 of the Land Drainage Act 1991 or s.109 of the Water Resources Act 1991. The Environment Agency resists culverting on nature conservation and other grounds and consent for such works will not normally be granted except for access crossings.
15. Thames Water will aim to provide customers with a minimum pressure of 10m head (approx 1 bar) and a flow rate of 9 litres/minute at the point where it leaves Thames Waters' pipes. The developer should take account of this minimum pressure in the design of the proposed development.
16. The Highways Agency should be notified of any timings and movements of abnormal loads during the construction period, particularly those requiring escorts, route planning etc. The Agency should also be kept informed on any construction logistics issues/developments in due course.