

Application BDB/67553

Details of Application:	Consultation on out of borough developmt Replacement high explosives fabrication facility building, associated outbuildings and access roads, vehicle turning areas, hard standings, blast protection, 8 x lightning conductor towers, security fencing, landscaping and temporary construction enclave West Berkshire contact: Clive Inwards Ref: 07/02438/COMIND Please be advised this application is decided by West Berkshire Council Date Registered 19/11/2007 (Subject to three year condition)
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Location:	Address: Awe Aldermaston, Paices Hill, Aldermaston, RG7 4PR
	Ward:
	Parish:
	OS:

Applicant:	Ministry of Defence
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Case Officer:	Katherine Miles 01256 845249
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General Comments

Officer Visit Date: 06/12/2007

The site notice is the responsibility of West Berkshire Council

Description of Site

The site is occupied by the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE). It is located to the north of A340 which divides the Boroughs of West Berkshire and Basingstoke and Deane. The A340 feeds into the A339 that runs through Tadley , a settlement within Basingstoke and Deanes Borough boundary.

The application site is 14.3ha in size and is located within the heart of the Aldermaston explosives are in the eastern sector of the AWE campus. The A340 lies to the south of the site. there are numerous access points to the site from this road. The site lies to the north of Tadley and has security fencing along its southern and western boundaries with mature a tree belt in parts. The immediate area beyond the security fencing comprises a mixture of hardsurfacing for car parking, old storage buildings, air craft hangers, and compounds.

Despite its industrial and defence type use, the site lies in a rural location. The site of the proposed development is characterised by an extensive grassed area with several groups of mature trees. This part of the site is interspersed with industrial buildings, access ways and associated infrastructure.

The area of the proposed building and associated works is currently a grassed area with small groups of trees within. It lies approximately 500m from the eastern AWE site boundary, 650m from the southern boundary and 850m from the northern boundary.

Proposal

This Out of Borough Consultation application concerns a replacement high explosives fabrication facility building, associated outbuildings and access roads, vehicle turning areas, hard standings, blast protection, 8 x lightning conductor towers, security fencing, landscaping and temporary construction enclave.

The two main buildings are as follows:

- The replacement High Explosives Fabrication Facility (HEFF) building - A two-storey building with a mezzanine floor housing a plant room. The building will be split into two distinct areas - the process block for explosives processing and an adjoining single storey support block which provides office space, control rooms, welfare and messing facilities, as well as stores and a workshop. The total gross floor area of the HEFF building is 5398m². Associated blast protection structures and 8 lattice lightning conductor towers (28m high) are also proposed. The building would be constructed of reinforced concrete with external cladding. The building will sit on a reinforced concrete raft foundation and slab. There are no glazed windows proposed in either building.
- Mechanical and Electrical Services Building - This building will be situated approximately 45m to the south of the HEFF. It will have a floor area of 482m² and be of similar external appearance to the HEFF building. It will house large items of equipment such as chillers, compressors and transformers. This block will also be of blockwork construction with metal clad partitions internally. Externally the building will be clad to match the HEFF building.

The buildings will be served by new access ways which will link to the existing internal roadways to the east and south west. The facility will accommodate 36 permanent personnel who will be drawn from both the existing Aldermaston and Burghfield sites.

The proposed development will result in the loss of approximately 50 mature trees. Tree protection schemes are proposed to protect remaining trees and vegetation during the construction process. New tree and shrub planting is proposed as part of the scheme. The proposal includes ponds for the Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS) which will also be landscaped. The applicant proposes to use the earth displaced by excavations to form mounds characteristic of the eastern sector of the site.

During construction it is proposed to use the West End construction enclave located at the West Gate entrance to AWE. This is the temporary compound approved under BDB/61865 and used for the construction of Project GEMINI.

Submitted with the application, is an Environmental Statement under the EIA regulations.

Relevant Planning History

AWE Aldermaston site has a long and complex history under the previous Circular 18/84

Notification procedures, however, Crown Immunity ceased to exist from 7 June 2006. The most recent proposals are:

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| BDB/58671 | DOE Circular 18/84 Erection of new gas RNO pressure reducing station | 03/08/2004 |
| BDB/61865 | DOE Circular 18/84 Replacement Laser DEL research facility (Orion) | |
| BDB/64636 | Proposed new office accommodation (circa RNO 21,000 square m) plus associated landscaping including water features. Car park for circa, 1,500 vehicles plus associated landscaping and access. Construction related infrastructure including access road, car parking, reception building, gate house, facilities management building, wheel washing facilities, use of land for construction compound, fencing gates and ancillary facilities | 21/06/2007 |

Consultations

Parish Council: Any comments are sent directly to West Berkshire Council.

Landscape: The proposals will have a limited effect on visual amenity within the Basingstoke Borough due to the wooded nature of the boundary to the site. Views of the proposals from vantage points within the Borough are also screened by tree belts and therefore I have no objections.

Hampshire Highway Authority: The proposed development replaces facilities that are currently based at both Aldermaston and Burghfield. The current uses are accommodated in 6400m² over 24 buildings. The planning application seeks permission for a replacement facility with a floor area of 5880m². The proposed development is unlikely to have any highway implications for Hampshire and as such I have no comments to make.

Public Observations

Any comments are sent directly to West Berkshire Council.

Planning Policy and Material Considerations

This is an Out of Borough consultation application with West Berkshire Council being the determining Authority. In assessing what impact the proposal will have on the Borough of Basingstoke and Deane and its residents, the areas for consideration relate to visual impact, traffic/highway impact, noise and general amenity issues.

Background

The Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) site is in 3 locations at Aldermaston, Burghfield

and Blacknest. The Aldermaston site is just outside of the Hampshire County boundary to the north of Tadley. The site is located in an out of town location which is not well served in terms of access by a range of alternative modes of transport.

The existing site researches, designs, manufactures, assembles, decommissions and disposes of the UK's nuclear warheads. There is substantial existing development on the site. Explosives related activities are currently split between two sites at Aldermaston and Burghfield. In 2002, AWE produced a Site Development Strategy Plan which proposed that the explosives activities be consolidated at the Aldermaston Site. The replacement facility will replace existing operation fabrication facilities. Currently, high explosives and fabrication is carried out in approximately 24 buildings with around 6400m² of floorspace in total. The replacement facility will have a net floor area of 5880m². Therefore there will be no net increase in floor area.

As a result of the proposal a number of buildings at both the Aldermaston and Burghfield sites will be decommissioned on a phased basis. Consequently the external appearance of the site would be improved through a general reduction in the built form.

Benefits of the proposal

The consolidation of explosives related activities will bring about a number of benefits to AWE's operation:

- Consolidating operations within a single facility will reduce the number of explosives material movements between buildings, therefore reducing risk and enhancing efficiency;
- Energy savings will be realised in the long term through providing a modern, energy efficient facility;
- Operative safety and working conditions would be improved;
- Operational waste would be reduced through consolidation and improved processes; and
- Collocation will result in a reduction in the number of traffic movements between the two sites.

Visual impact

The proposed buildings would be well contained within the centre of the site and, even though they have a substantial footprint and height, the proposal would not be noticeable from the main A340 or A340 Aldermaston Road.

Although the main HEFF building would have a height of 11.975m and a footprint of 61.3m x 37.7m, the buildings are in an isolated location. The buildings will be located within a largely open, grassed area and there are no other buildings nearby for the proposed buildings to be compared with in terms of scale. The lightning conductor towers at 28m high may be visible from a wider vantage point, however these would be viewed in the context of other tall structures within the AWE site. Where possible it is proposed to retain existing vegetation and additional planting is proposed to supplement that lost. Given the sites remote location and the proposed landscaping, it is considered that the building would integrate into its new environs and would not have a detrimental visual impact upon the landscape from the Borough of Basingstoke & Deane.

It is considered that the proposed building would be appropriate in terms of design and

materials and would be typical of contemporary designs that you would expect for such a high-tech development.

The temporary construction car park would be closest to the Borough boundary. This has been approved under a previous consent (ref: BDB/64636/West Berks 06/02326/FULMAJ) and will be returned to a playing field upon completion of the development.

In summary, it is considered that the proposal would have a limited effect on visual amenity within the Basingstoke Borough due to the wooded nature of the boundary to the site. Views of the proposals from vantage points within the Borough are also screened by tree belts and assisted by the additional landscaping forming part of the proposal. As a result, it is not envisaged that the development would be visually detrimental to the character of the neighbouring area.

Traffic implications and highway impact

Access to the application site is obtained via a network of roadways which connect into the main internal routes, several of which follow the alignment of former aircraft runways. A temporary site access road running alongside an existing elevated pipeline will be constructed from Griffin Road, which bisects the AWE Aldermaston site from northwest to south east, to the HEFF site itself.

The A340 will be used by the construction traffic to gain access to the site. The Hampshire Lorry Route network identifies the A340 as a Local Lorry Route and this is therefore acceptable.

It is considered that the operation of the HEFF will have minimal impact on access and transportation to the site, as employees who will be based at the new facility are already working elsewhere on the Aldermaston and Burghfield sites.

The County Highway Authority has therefore advised that the proposal is unlikely to have any highway implications for the Borough or for Hampshire.

Impact on Amenities

During the construction period, it is recognised that there would be some noise, disturbance and disruption for residents within the Borough. The applicant has recognised this and submitted a Code of Construction Practice which sets out on site security arrangement, working hours, health and safety arrangements, access and traffic management arrangements, waste production, emissions and general nuisance arrangements. Any contractors would have to adopt Best Practice Means and produce statements of Safe Systems of Work which includes method statements and environmental risk assessments.

General working hours will be between 7am and 7pm weekdays and from 7am to 4pm on Saturdays. For some stages of construction where activity is of a specialist nature, 24 hour working, seven days a week will be required. However any activities likely to generate noise that may affect sensitive areas will occur during normal working hours. In exceptional circumstances, where noise may occur outside of working hours, the Code of Practice would require notification in advance of the time of works and likely duration for occupiers of any nearby residential and other properties.

Deliveries will, where possible, be controlled and scheduled for off-peak hours Monday to Fridays 9am to 4pm and Saturdays from 7am to 1pm.

Given the level of detail in the Code of Construction Practice, it is considered that reasonable precautions to protect the amenity of residents within the Borough will be taken. As such it is considered that the amenities of residents within the Borough of Basingstoke & Deane will be preserved.

Conclusion

It is considered that the proposal would not have any adverse visual impacts on the Borough and that the amenity of residents would be protected. Furthermore, the proposal is unlikely to have any highway implications as a result of the development. Therefore it is recommended that no objection be raised to this proposal.

Reasons for Approval

- 1 The proposed development would not have a detrimental impact on the landscape character of the area and as such is considered to accord with Policy E6 of the Basingstoke & Deane Borough Local Plan 1996-2011.
- 2 The proposed development would be of an appropriate design and relates to surrounding development in a sympathetic manner and as such complies with PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development and Policy E1 of the Basingstoke and Deane Borough Local Plan 1996-2011.
- 3 The proposed development would not result in an undue loss of amenity for neighbouring residents and as such complies with Policy E1 of the Basingstoke and Deane Borough Local Plan 1996-2011.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is RECOMMENDED that NO OBJECTION BE RAISED

RB
23/1/08

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23/1/08