

<b>Item No</b>	<b>Application No. and Parish</b>	<b>8 Week Date</b>	<b>Proposal, Location and Applicant</b>
(11)	04/02977/FUL Aldermaston	2 <sup>nd</sup> February 2005	Circular 18/84 Notice of Proposed Development for the Erection of a Modular Office Building. Ministry of Defence AWE, Aldermaston, Reading. Ministry of Defence.

**Recommendation Summary:**      **That the Head of Planning and Transport Strategy be authorised to raise no objections.**

**Ward Member(s):**                      Councillor Irene Neill

**Reason for Committee determination:**                      Level of objection

**Committee Site Visit:**                      N/A

<b>Contact Officer Details</b>	
<b>Name:</b>	Clive Inwards
<b>Job Title:</b>	Senior Planning Officer
<b>Tel No:</b>	(01635) 519111
<b>E-mail Address:</b>	Cinwards@westberks.gov.uk

## Site History

The site has a long and complex planning history – see site number 101084.

## Publicity of Application

Site Notice Expired: 28<sup>th</sup> January 2005

Press Notice Expired: 31<sup>st</sup> December 2004

No neighbour notification necessary.

## Consultations and Representations

**Parish Council:** No objections.

### Highways and Transport Policy:

Whilst the B1 use applied for does not fall into the major development category as set out in PPG13, the additional trips created, especially in conjunction with existing movements to and from the site, are significant and should be addressed through the development of a Travel Plan. It is recommended that AWE should take this opportunity and work with the Local Authority to develop a Travel Plan for the whole site.

### Environment

Comments awaited.

### Agency:

### Correspondence:

As at 8/2/05, 64 letters of objection received. Objections are mainly on grounds of nature/use of the site, the site is not compliant with EC regulations to report any developments at a nuclear site, health and safety and that a public inquiry should be held as this is not a local issue, rather than planning considerations relating to the potential impact of the proposed building.

However, a number of letters of representation raise objections on grounds of:

- Increase in nuisance traffic, noise and light pollution;
- Proposed building is unsightly;
- Environmental impact and possible pollution caused during the construction period;
- Proximity of new building to public roads;
- Expansion of building works rather than replacement of out-dated buildings;
- Increase in road hazards due to more heavy vehicle movements on already crowded roads;
- There is a risk of disturbance of contaminated land at the site;
- Full Environmental Impact Assessment required;
- Insufficient information provided; and

- An independent chemical and radiation assessment of the site by the Environment Agency should be carried out.

A separate letter has been received from the Nuclear Information Service (NIS) objecting on the following grounds:

- Results of soil investigations should be provided before a planning decision is made;
- The schedule of work described infers that work will commence before the planning committee has publicly addressed the matter;
- There is incomplete modelling of the groundwater results;
- An increase of 150 cars approaching or leaving the site in the rush hours is more than a 'minor' increase and the additional safety risk and congestion is not acceptable;
- Safety issues need to be addressed;
- Both developments should not be considered separately and the Deputy Prime Minister should be approached with regard to a full or partial public inquiry.

## **Policy Considerations**

Planning Policy Statement 1 2005 – Delivering Sustainable Development.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 1994 – Transport.

Berkshire Structure Plan 1991-2006 – Policy LD3 (Environmental Impact of Development), Policy C2 (Development Outside Built Up Areas and Settlements).

West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 – Policy ENV.18 (Control of Development in the Countryside); ENV.25 (Defence and Government Establishments in the Countryside); Policy OVS.2 (Core Policy).

## **Description of Development**

This application is a Notification of Proposed Development submitted under Circular 18/84. This form of application is specifically for applications on Crown Land and Government establishments. Government Circular 18/84 sets out the background and procedures to be followed in this type of application. Essentially, it is processed in the same way as a normal planning application and should be determined within the usual 8 week statutory period.

The Notification includes additional environmental information (AEI), however, this is not intended to represent a formal statutory Environmental Statement (ES) as required under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 1999, since the development falls outside the descriptions of development referred to in Schedules 1 and 2 of the Regulation and therefore a Statutory Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

The Notification has been submitted for the proposed erection of a modular office building for up to 150 staff who would be a combination of AWE plc staff and contractors. The proposed office accommodation would be 25 metres long by 25 metres wide and would comprise three storeys, with a maximum height to the eaves of 11 metres. The new

building would be sited adjacent to existing offices of a similar height and would be finished to be in keeping with existing buildings in the vicinity. The building would be located approximately 75 metres from the site boundary, near to the main entrance. The development would comprise a proprietary volumetric modular building system with standard modules being assembled on site onto pre-prepared foundations. The building would include open plan offices, meeting rooms, toilet facilities and various other rooms to accommodate services.

## **Consideration of the Proposal**

Paragraph 2.52 of the WBDLP 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 the other policies in the Plan”*.

The Site Development Strategy Plan published by AWE advises that the Ministry of Defence has stated the need for the Aldermaston site to continue its operation and therefore the principle of further development to allow the continuation of operational activities is acceptable, subject to compliance with other policies of the Development Plan.

The main issue in this case is the impact of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

### Impact of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

The building is proposed to be located to the south of the site complex, approximately 75 metres from the southern boundary. It would be located between two existing 3-storey buildings and consequently would appear as part of the site complex. Fleeting glimpses of the proposal may be available from the road outside the site, however there is also a small copse to the south east that would provide partial screening of the building. Accordingly it is considered that the visual impact of the building would not be unduly harmful.

Whilst the design of the building is functional, it is considered that it is keeping with the character of the existing buildings in close proximity and as such is acceptable.

### Other issues raised.

The NOPD has generated significant concern among interested parties, however, the majority of objections are in respect of the nature of the site, which is not a material planning consideration for this Authority.

## **Conclusion**

It is concluded that the building proposed is in character with the existing development on the site, is not considered to have a significant visual impact given that it would be partially screened by a small copse from the road and would be seen against the backdrop of existing buildings on the site. Accordingly the visual impact is considered to be minimal and it is therefore recommended that no objection be raised.

## **Full Recommendation**

That the Head of Planning and Transport Strategy be authorised to raise no objections to the Notice of Proposed Development for the erection of modular office accommodation.

Informative: The applicant is advised, in conjunction with the Local Authority, to commence work on a Green Travel Plan for the whole site.