

Item No	Application No. and Parish	13 Week Date	Proposal, Location and Applicant
(1)	09/02396/COMIND Aldermaston	1 <sup>st</sup> March 2010	Replacement facility for the storage and handling of enriched uranium covering 18,489m <sup>2</sup> gross floor space on a 10,496m <sup>2</sup> footprint, including office accommodation, storage facilities, material handling areas and ancillary support services. Construction related infrastructure is also proposed including access roads, construction compound, fencing, gates and ancillary facilities. AWE Aldermaston, Aldermaston, 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 I Neill

**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 Aldermaston site has a long and complex history under the previous Circular 18/84 Notification procedures – see site number 101084. However Crown Immunity ceased to exist from the 7<sup>th</sup> June 2006 and this is the fourth major planning application at this site. The most recent and relevant site history is:

- 04/00945/OUT: Circular 18/84 Notice of Proposed Development for a laser research facility (outline). No objections raised by Thatcham Area Planning Sub-Committee on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2004.
- 05/02003/RESMAJ: DoE Circular 18/84 Notice of Proposed Development for a replacement laser research facilities (ORION). Reserved matters to the above outline. No objection raised by the Eastern Area Planning Committee on the 25<sup>th</sup> January 2006.
- 06/02423/RESMAJ: Approval of reserved matters for planning permission 05/01646/OUT - Erection of two modular buildings for office accommodation. Approved under Officer Delegated Powers 18<sup>th</sup> December 2006.
- 06/02326/COMIND Proposed new office accommodation (circa 21,000m<sup>2</sup>) 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 (NOA). Planning permission resolved to be granted by the Eastern Area Planning Committee on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2007. Planning permission issued 14<sup>th</sup> February 2007.
- 07/02438/COMIND Replacement High Explosives Fabrication Facility building, associated outbuildings and access roads, vehicle turning areas, hard standings, blast protection, 8 x lightning conductor, security fencing, landscaping and temporary construction enclave. Planning permission resolved to be granted by the Eastern Area Planning Committee on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2008. Planning permission issued 7<sup>th</sup> February 2008.

## 2. Publicity of Application

Site Notice Expired: 28<sup>th</sup> December 2009.

Press Notice Expired: 24<sup>th</sup> December 2009.

Neighbour Notification Expired: 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2009.

Expiry Date for Consultations (as on website) 15<sup>th</sup> January 2010.

## 3. Consultations and Representations

**Parish Council:** No objections subject to two conditions. These are that this development will not lead to an increase in the quantity of enriched uranium handled or stored on the site and that the existing buildings are identified and a time limit for their demolition to be specified.

<b>Adjacent Parish (Mortimer):</b>	No objection based on the assumption that the new building will incorporate better safety measures than the existing facility.
<b>Adjacent Parish (Padworth):</b>	No objections.
<b>Tadley Town Council:</b>	Would like the s106 money from this development to be used to extend the cycle paths in Tadley.
<b>Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council:</b>	Whilst the Council accepts that there is a need to discontinue the operations within the existing outdated facilities, there has not been a review, involving proper public consultation to question if Aldermaston is the best suited location for the new facility. Safety and security of the site is a primary concern.
<b>Hampshire County Council:</b>	Clarification sought on construction routes to site. *NB This information has since been provided.
<b>Slough Borough Council:</b>	Objects on the grounds that the environmental information provided by the MoD for this development should be assessed by independent experts; the Council is advised that under Euratom Directive 96/29, Article 6, all new radiological risks have to be justified before approval is given; the proposed building requires full consultation with the HSE, West Berkshire District Council's Emergency Planning Officer and a proper review of AWE's Off-Site Emergency Plan based on independent advice; and objects on the grounds of unacceptable visual and local environmental impacts and also the potential for increased fear and dread which may be engendered in the local population.
<b>Highways Agency:</b>	No response received as of 01.02.10.
<b>South East England Partnership Board:</b>	The application seeks the redevelopment of a previously developed site within the existing boundary of AWE Aldermaston, identified in the adopted Local Plan as one of the MoD sites located in West Berkshire's rural areas that is extremely important to the local economy, and is consistent with regional and sub-regional policy objectives relating to the location of development and the economy. Conditions to be attached.
<b>Thames Water:</b>	Conditions and an informative to be attached.
<b>Highways:</b>	No financial contribution required and construction traffic levels have been higher in recent years than that which would be generated by this proposal. Therefore these lower levels of construction traffic can be accommodated on the network.
<b>Libraries:</b>	No request for a contribution.
<b>Health and Safety Executive:</b>	There is no objection on nuclear safety grounds to this development.
<b>Natural England:</b>	No objection.
<b>Open Space:</b>	No contribution requested.

<b>Archaeology:</b>	No significant impact on the archaeological resource.
<b>Environment Agency:</b>	No objection, conditions and informatives to be attached.
<b>Tree Officer:</b>	No objection.
<b>Landscape Consultant:</b>	No adverse significant landscape or visual impact.
<b>Ecology:</b>	Further information required regarding renewable energy.
<b>Public Protection:</b>	Condition to be attached.
<b>Transport Policy:</b>	No comments to make other than it is expected that both staff and construction movements to this development will be subject to the current Travel Plan developed for AWE.
<b>Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service:</b>	The applicant to provide suitable private fire hydrants.
<b>Principal Civil Contingencies Officer</b>	No objections as this development will not have any effect on the off-site planning arrangements.
<b>Minerals and Waste:</b>	No objection.
<b>Ministry of Defence:</b>	No safeguarding objections.
<b>Correspondence:</b>	<p>1468 letters of objection have been received including letters from the Nuclear Information Service (NIS), Nuclear Awareness Group (NAG), Exeter Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Reading Peace Group, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Women Against the Nuclear Threat &amp; Menwith Hill Women's Peace Campaign, Kingston Peace Council and the Public Interest Lawyers.</p> <p>Grounds of objection can be summarised as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Information about the risks to public safety and the environment posed by the new facility has not been disclosed to the public or the Council;</li><li>• No consultation with the general public took place before the planning application was submitted;</li><li>• The new facility is unsustainable and will produce radioactive wastes for which there is as yet no safe disposal route;</li><li>• Construction will lead to noise, disturbance and increased traffic volumes;</li><li>• The correct procedures for gaining an exemption from the EIA regulations have not been followed ;</li><li>• The Environmental Appraisal does not give safety issues adequate attention;</li></ul>

- There would be safety hazards resulting from this proposal;
- Enriched uranium poses potential fire and radiation hazards. There is also a risk of a criticality accident which can start a nuclear chain reaction;
- The proposal does not include a decommissioning strategy;
- Any decision on this application should not be taken by West Berkshire Council and there should be a full public inquiry;
- No indication that the applicant has given thought to renewable energy generation;
- The facility would not be necessary if the MoD complies with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty;
- Large, unattractive building proposed and the proposal with its associated infrastructure would only exacerbate an existing planning catastrophe;
- The proposal is a waste of public money;
- Construction traffic would have a large impact on local roads and the local roads are inadequate for construction traffic. There is a specific concern with the implications of the construction traffic on cyclists using the A340. This development would put the local population at increased risk of harm as well as imposing noise and stress from increases in HGV traffic;
- The development would increase traffic;
- The application is contrary to Planning Policy and is not supported by the Local Plan; and
- The proposed development would have a detrimental impact on the archaeological relic.

Additionally a number of non-land use planning issues have been raised stating that the application should be refused on moral, ethical and religious grounds and that development on this site contravenes International law. The above has attempted to summarise the points that have been raised by the numerous objectors to the application. However, all objection letters 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 Statement 4 (2009) – Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth.

Planning Policy Statement 7 (2004) (The relevant sections that have not been cancelled by PPS4) – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas.

South East Plan Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East of England (2009).

West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 Saved Policies 2007 – Policy OVS2 (Core Policy), 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 replacement facility for the storage and handling of enriched uranium covering 18,489m<sup>2</sup> on a 10,496m<sup>2</sup> footprint, including office accommodation, storage facilities, material handling areas and ancillary support services. Construction related infrastructure is also proposed including access roads, construction compound, fencing, gates and ancillary facilities. The applicant has called this project Pegasus. The Pegasus building is categorised as B2 General Industrial Use. The proposed development seeks to replace and consolidate existing operations into a single customised building. The existing operations are currently undertaken in separate buildings at AWE Aldermaston with footprints amounting to a similar floor area to that now proposed. The main operations to be undertaken include the safe storage, surveillance and handling of enriched uranium components. These operations are currently undertaken at the Aldermaston site and the proposal would employ similar, but generally improved processes using modern, efficient equipment. Manufacture of enriched uranium itself does not form part of the process. The existing facilities are housed in a number of buildings, most of which were constructed in the late 1950s or early 1960s. The current facilities operate safely and comply with all environmental requirements but safe and environmentally sustainable operations cannot continue indefinitely in the buildings as they currently exist. The applicant has undertaken various option studies which have concluded that extensive refurbishment of the existing buildings is not viable. Therefore a new facility, located towards the centre of the AWE Aldermaston site, is required.
- 5.2. The design of the proposed replacement facility is one large structure, predominantly rectangular but with some areas projecting north and south of the building. The facility would consist of storage/handling, receipt and dispatch areas that are enclosed within the main seismically qualified building, the walls of which are made from reinforced concrete with a clad barrel roof. Once fully operational it is anticipated that the facility would employ 46 operatives and 78 maintenance staff which is the same as the number of staff employed at the existing facilities. As such there would be no net increase in staff numbers at the site.
- 5.3. The footprint of the proposed building is 10,496m<sup>2</sup> with a maximum roof height of 16.2m. A flue stack projecting through the roof at the northern end of the facility extends to 19.5m. The proposed facility has been designed as a two storey building and would have a total floor area of 18,489m<sup>2</sup>. The building measures some 135 metres x 75 metres at the maximum dimensions.

## **6. Consideration of the Proposal**

### **6.1. The Principle of Development**

- 6.1.1 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 Aldermaston there are three broad functional areas. These comprise the eastern area of the site which is principally devoted to activity associated with conventional explosives, the Nuclear Storage and Processing Area (NSPA) and the Aldermaston Business Support Zone

to the south west of the site. This proposal falls within the Aldermaston NSPA where it states that the most appropriate location for new buildings in this area is in its southern section. The application site is located in the southern section of the NSPA. Within the 'Illustrative Framework Plan' the application site falls into Zone 2 which is categorised as a new build manufacturing/production area. The Site Development Context Plan 2005-2015 set out that there would be significant investment by Central Government into the AWE sites. 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 Aldermaston 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.*" The Pegasus building proposed is evidently a large building with maximum dimensions of 135 metres x 75 metres and a maximum roof height of 16.2 metres, with the flue stack extending to 19.5 metres. Given the size of the building the siting of it is crucial to ensure it complies with criterion (a) above. The siting of the proposed building is towards the centre of the AWE Aldermaston site and due to this location, the impact on the rural character of the area surrounding the site is considered to be minimised. Specifically the building would be sited approximately 500 metres from the northern boundary of the site, 1,250 metres from the eastern boundary, 400 metres from the southern boundary and 1,000 metres from the Aldermaston Gate at the western boundary. The Landscape Consultant has confirmed that the development would not have an adverse landscape impact of any significance on either the character areas within the site or surrounding it and rather the better quality building and higher standard of landscaping would improve the site itself and the setting of the adjoining areas. It is considered that the location of the development towards the centre of the site, coupled with additional landscaping that can be secured through a condition, minimises the impact of this proposal to an acceptable level.
- 6.2.4 It is also noted that the existing buildings for the storage and handling of enriched uranium are in close proximity to AWE Aldermaston's northern boundary and thus also to the public realm on the A340 Paices Hill. The development of the current proposal would allow for the existing industrial buildings to be demolished which

would assist in improving the visual appearance of the site. The demolition of the existing facilities can also be achieved through a condition.

- 6.2.5 The Pegasus development would evidently comprise a large building, however it is considered that given its location towards the centre of the AWE Aldermaston complex, it would be appropriate in scale and character to this part of the site and would not materially harm the surrounding environment. The proposal thus complies with criterion (a) of Policy ECON2A.
- 6.2.6 Criterion (b) requires that “*landscape proposals are included as an integral part of the scheme to help blend the development into the wider environment.*” The application includes a number of landscape proposals such as the sustainable drainage (SUDS) pond, significant native planting and additionally the retention of woodland edges, tree avenues and the existing copse of pine trees to the south east of the site. The proposal has also been designed to fit in with the comprehensive landscaping strategy for the whole Aldermaston site. Accordingly the Council’s Landscape Consultant has raised no landscape or visual objections to the proposal but requires some modification to the detailed species proposed. A detailed landscaping scheme can be provided through a condition.
- 6.2.7 Criterion (c) states that “*proposals should make provision for employment opportunities important to the local economy.*” Although 46 existing operational staff and 78 maintenance staff would be transferred to this new facility and no new staff would be required to work in this building, the construction of the development would take approximately 36 months to complete and would generate local employment for approximately 136 workers plus an additional 130 new jobs in the wider South East region and 58 jobs further afield. Given this it is considered that the development would generate a significant number of local employment opportunities and thus accords with criterion (c).
- 6.2.8 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.
- 6.2.9 Given that the proposed facility is a replacement for existing facilities at the Aldermaston site, there would be no net increase in floor area as the existing buildings that house these operations are to be demolished in a phased programme of clearance. Additionally as no new staff would be generated, traffic movements are not considered to be an issue. The proposal does not include any car parking but does provide for cycle parking. Consequently staff parking provision is made elsewhere within the general car parking areas on the AWE complex. The details of the cycle storage can be covered by condition. The Highway Authority has raised no objection to this proposal and has not requested any developer contributions. It should be noted that AWE has an ongoing commitment to their Travel Plan which includes the Aldermaston, Burghfield, Portland House and Blacknest sites. Criteria (d) and (e) of Policy ECON2A are not considered to be compromised.
- 6.2.10 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 other than for a temporary period during construction.

### 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...*"

6.3.2 Earlier in this report, the scale and size of the building has been considered to be appropriate in this central location on the AWE Aldermaston site. Additionally the design of the building itself is considered to be appropriate and coupled with the proposed landscaping would result in a more attractive environment in which to work. The building has been designed as one large structure which consists of the main storage, handling, receipt and dispatch areas that are enclosed within the main seismically qualified building with a clad barrel roof. The rest of the building would comprise a steel framed structure with weatherproof cladding. The office to the south of the main part of the building would have a flat roof with a glazed foyer link. The building is of a modern and distinctive design and is considered to be in accordance with the applicant's stated aim of improving the overall quality of the public realm and creating an increasingly distinctive and legible working environment. The building has also been designed to be sustainable and has achieved a Bespoke BREEAM 'Excellent' rating. This can be conditioned in the usual way. Whilst primarily a functional, industrial building, the design is considered to represent an improvement in the appearance of built form on this site, particularly when compared with the current large, utilitarian buildings that are prevalent in this part of the site. With a condition imposed to ensure that appropriate materials are used in construction, the design of the buildings is 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 Issues Arising During Construction:

6.4.1 Given the extended period of construction of three years, it is imperative that issues surrounding the construction are addressed. The applicant has recognised this and accordingly has submitted a Code of Construction Practice to accompany the application (Appendix G of the supporting statement). 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.

6.4.2 It is considered that the Code of Construction Practice is 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. The Code of Construction practice has worked well for the construction of other major projects at both the Aldermaston and Burghfield sites.

6.5 Other Issues Raised:

- 6.5.1 Many of the representation letters received have stated that they object on the grounds that the applicant has not provided the Local Planning Authority with essential information and thus that a determination of this application cannot be made. It is correct to state that 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 application. 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. 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. The only information which has actually been withheld is information relating to the nature and quantities of enriched uranium components and waste arising. This information has been withheld on the grounds of national security. It is not necessary for the Local Planning Authority to know this information when determining the application. Whilst risks are material to the determination of this planning application, the expert authorities for considering these issues are the Environment Agency and the Health and Safety Executive. Both organisations have regulatory control over the proposed use and have raised no objection to the planning application. Should the application be refused, the applicant would have the right of appeal.
- 6.5.2 Other issues raised by objectors relate to the generating of nuclear waste when no national geological repository currently exists. Firstly it has to be reiterated that this proposal does not seek to generate enriched uranium, rather it would provide a modern replacement facility for the storage and handling of enriched uranium but with generally improved systems and processes using modern and efficient equipment. Secondly, the proposal would not generate any more waste than is currently produced through the existing facilities. The approval of this proposal would not lead to any greater amount of nuclear waste being produced. If the proposal were not to go ahead nuclear waste would still be produced through the existing facilities on this site. The approval of the current proposal is therefore no way reliant on the Government's long term strategy for the disposal of nuclear waste. Finally it should be noted that both the Environment Agency and the Health and Safety Executive have not objected to the proposals, nor has the Local Planning Authority's Minerals and Waste team. The fact that this development would not lead to an increase in the quantity of enriched uranium handled or stored on the site addresses the first condition raised by Aldermaston Parish Council.
- 6.5.3 As the proposal would not result in any additional staff or any increase in floorspace as existing buildings are to be demolished (which addresses the second issue raised by Aldermaston Parish Council), the Libraries, Open Space and Highways services have not requested any developer contributions. 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 open spaces or library service from additional staff and given that there would be no increase in traffic impact, developer contributions are not required to make the proposal acceptable and are not justified in this instance. Therefore in this instance there are no s106 contributions from this development to put towards cycle path improvements in Tadley, as requested by the Town Council.

- 6.5.4 As the proposed development would not have a direct impact on trees, the Council's Senior Tree Officer has raised no objection to the application. Additionally the Council's Archaeology Officer has stated that there would be no significant impact on the archaeological resource and therefore no archaeological assessment or programme of investigation and recording is necessary in relation to the current proposal. In relation to biodiversity issues there are no significant direct impacts from this proposal and Natural England has raised no objection to the scheme. The Council's Principal Ecologist has raised wider issues regarding renewable energy. These issues are recognised and need to be addressed but would not warrant refusing the current application, particularly when it has been demonstrated that the building can reach BREEAM Excellent. Wider renewable energy issues will be discussed with the applicant for the whole site.
- 6.5.5 Finally, the applicant has requested a longer time period for implementation of the development. There are not considered to be any good planning reasons not to allow this, in this case. Therefore it is considered that the standard three year time limit for implementation can be increased to five years in this instance.

## **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 has been shown to comply with the six criteria of Policy ECON2A of the Local Plan.
- 7.2 Given the building's location on the site towards the centre of the AWE Aldermaston site, the backdrop of the wider developed areas that the proposal would be read in context with and the distance to the site boundary and public vantage points, the size and scale of the building is considered to be acceptable. The Council's Landscape Consultant is satisfied with both the visual and landscape impact. Additionally it is considered that the proposal represents a well designed scheme that would provide a more attractive environment in which to work than the existing buildings and over time would improve the appearance of the site as it would allow the older buildings on the site to be demolished.
- 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 five years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to review the desirability of the development against Policies 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 and mortar materials. 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 details of the cycle parking proposed have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These areas shall, thereafter, be kept available for the parking of cycles at all times.

Reason: To ensure the development reduces reliance on private motor vehicles and assists with the parking, storage and security of cycles in accordance with Policy OVS3 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 Saved Policies 2007.

4. 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 scheme should accord with the Illustrative Framework 2005. The development shall thereafter be landscaped in accordance with the approved scheme which 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 scheme should also provide details of the marginal planting in the SUDS ponds.

Reason: To ensure the implementation of a satisfactory scheme of landscaping which will in due course improve the environmental quality of the development in accordance with the objectives of Policies OVS2 (a & b) and OVS 3 (b) of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991 – 2006 Saved Policies 2007.

5. No development shall commence until details of the maintenance of the proposed landscaping scheme including an implementation programme and details of written specifications including cultivation and other operations involving tree, shrub and grass establishment have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be landscaped in accordance with the approved details which shall ensure;

(a) Details of soil preparation, plant protection, watering and weeding.

(b) Any trees shrubs or plants that die, or become seriously damaged within five years of this development shall be replaced in the following year by plants of a similar size and species to those originally required to be planted.

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

6. 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. The building hereby approved shall not be occupied until a post construction review, carried out by a licensed assessor, has been 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".

7. 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.

8. The AWE Code of Construction Practice (Annex G 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.

9. No development shall commence until details of the external lighting to be used in the areas around the proposed buildings 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 by the Local Planning Authority on a planning application made for that purpose.

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

10. No development shall commence until a drainage strategy detailing any on and/or off site drainage works, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the sewerage undertaker. No discharge of foul or surface water from the site shall be accepted into the public system until the drainage works referred to in the strategy have been completed.

Reason: To ensure that sufficient capacity is made available to cope with the new development and in order to avoid adverse environmental impact in accordance with Policy OVS5 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 Saved Policies 2007.

11. No development shall commence until details of the programme for the phased demolition and clearance of the existing enriched uranium facility buildings 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 these existing explosive facility 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.

12. No development shall commence until a surface water drainage system, 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:

1. The scheme shall be designed to manage surface water run-off for a 1 in 100 year rainfall event with a suitable allowance for climate change incorporated.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. A management plan to ensure the function of the balancing ponds to manage surface water run-off 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 water quality and to provide ecological habitat in accordance with Policies OVS2, OVS5 and ENV8 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 Saved Policies 2007.

13. If during development, contamination not previously identified is found to be present at the site then no further development (unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority) shall be carried out until the applicant has submitted and obtained written approval from the Local Planning Authority for an amendment to the remediation strategy set out in Chapter 7 and Appendix A of the Defence Exempt Environmental Appraisal November 2009, detailing how this unsuspected contamination shall be dealt with.

Reason: In order to protect controlled waters from pollution in accordance with Policy OVS5 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 Saved Policies 2007.

14. No development shall commence until impact studies of the existing water supply infrastructure have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, in consultation with Thames Water. The studies should determine the magnitude of any new additional capacity required in the system and a suitable connection point.

Reason: To ensure that the water supply infrastructure has sufficient capacity to cope with this additional demand in accordance with Policy OVS3 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 Saved Policies 2007.





<b>Item No</b>	<b>Application No. and Parish</b>	<b>8/13 week date</b>	<b>Proposal, Location and Applicant</b>
(2)	09/02406/HOUSE Thatcham	18 <sup>th</sup> January 2010	Retrospective - Loft conversion incorporating rear dormer and velux windows. 14 Larkspur Gardens, Thatcham  Mrs B Eeles

**Recommendation Summary:** To **DELEGATE** to the Head of Planning and Trading Standards to **REFUSE PLANNING PERMISSION**

**Ward Member(s):** Cllr. L Dillon  
Cllr. D Rendel

**Reason for Committee determination:** Permitted Development (PD) rights not in place but work carried out as the Applicant was told he had PD rights.

**Committee Site Visit:** n/a

**Contact Officer Details**

**Name:** Helen Robertson  
**Job Title:** Assistant Planning Officer  
**Tel No:** (01635) 519111  
**E-mail Address:** hrobertson@westberks.gov.uk

## 1. Site History

**03/00848/HOUSE** Conservatory on the rear of house  
**06/00168/HOUSE** Two storey side extension

## 2. Publicity of Application

Site Notice expired: 25<sup>th</sup> December 2009  
Neighbour notification also undertaken

## 3. Consultations and Representations

**Town Council:** OBJECT – Flat roof dormer is of a form and scale which is over dominant and incongruous and results in an unacceptable precedent.

**Defence Estates:** Has no safeguarding objections to this proposal.

**Tree Officer:** The proposed alterations at the site are all to the existing house which will not have an impact on trees, therefore I have no objection.

**Correspondence** 2 objections received relating to:  
- The dormer is out of character with the area  
- The size and design of the dormer are out of keeping with the existing property  
- Concerned about setting a precedent  
- Concerns regarding overlooking

A petition of 15 signatures has been received in support of the application. Included within a document that includes photographs submitted by the applicant and partner in support of the application.

## 4. Policy Considerations

Planning Policy Statement 1 - Delivering Sustainable Development (2005)  
West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 Saved Policies 2007- Policy OVS2 (Core Policy)  
The South East Plan May 2009 – Policy CC6 Sustainable Communities and Character  
Supplementary Planning Guidance – “House Extensions” (adopted July 2004)  
Supplementary Planning Document “Quality Design” (adopted June 2006)

## 5. Description of Development

- 5.1 Permission is sought for a loft conversion incorporating a rear flat roof dormer extension and 4 velux windows. At the time of site visit the rear dormer was under construction, 2 rooflights had been added to the rear elevation and 1 to the front elevation.
- 5.2 The rear dormer extension measures 3.2 metres in depth by 2.7 metres in height by 4.1 metres in width.
- 5.3 Planning permission is required for the dormer due to a Condition placed upon the Outline permission for Dunston Park (132403). That stated that ‘no additions or extensions to the dwellings shall be built or ancillary buildings or structures erected

within the curtilage, unless permission has been granted by the Local Planning Authority on an application made for the purpose'. Nothing contained in the Reserved Matters application (140989) affected or varied the Conditions imposed on that Outline planning permission.

The rooflights are not considered to represent 'an addition or extension to the dwelling' and would, therefore, represent Permitted Development, under the provisions of the current General Permitted Development Order. As they are included in the Description of Development they have however, been considered as part of the proposal.

## **6. Consideration of the Proposal**

The main issues raised by this proposal are:

### **6.1 The principle of the development**

### **6.2 The impact of the design on the character and appearance of the area**

### **6.3 The impact neighbouring amenity**

#### 6.1 The principle of the development

6.1.1 The site lies within the defined settlement boundary of Thatcham, as such the principle of development is considered acceptable.

#### 6.2 The impact of the design on the character and appearance of the area

6.2.1 The application site comprises a linked semi-detached dwelling situated at the end of a cul de sac which backs onto a vegetation strip at the rear with further residential dwellings beyond.

6.2.2 The rooflights to the front and rear of the dwelling are considered to be of appropriate dimensions and number and have no adverse impact on the surrounding area.

6.2.3 The dormer is of a large, flat roof design, which covers an area of the original roofslope from close to the eaves, to just below the ridgeline. The Councils Supplementary Planning Guidance "House Extensions" states that: 'Dormers should be seen as a means of providing light and ventilation and not as a means of increasing floorspace in the dwelling. They should be designed to keep their size to a minimum and their position as low as possible on the slope of the roof. The design should reflect the main roof. Flat roofed dormers should normally be avoided.' The design of this dormer is considered contrary to that guidance as it appears as a large, prominent feature that dominates the building, is of excessive height and of a flat roof design that does not reflect that of the main roof.

6.2.4 The dormer although sited at the rear of the property is visible from a footpath that runs between Harts Hill Road and Simmons Field and from a public viewpoint in Trefoil Drove. Some screening is provided by trees to the northern boundary of the application site and from the wooded area to the west, however, this screening is less effective in the winter months when foliage is sparse. No similar flat roofed dormers can be seen in the vicinity, it is therefore considered that the development is out of keeping with the character of this area of Dunston Park and if allowed may set a precedent for future unsuitable development.

It is acknowledged that in the wider locality of Thatcham, flat roof dormers can be seen, these may be unauthorised or have been allowed for a variety of reasons; either under Permitted Development, as part of the design of the original dwelling, constructed before the existence of current design guidance or in an area where the impact is not considered to be so out of keeping. Even if similarly harmful extensions exist, in the wider locality, they would not justify the current proposal.

### **6.3 The impact on the residential amenities**

**6.3.1** The application site consists of a linked semi-detached property, with detached residential dwellings sited beyond a vegetation strip at the rear in Trefoil Drive. Concern has been raised by a resident at the rear with regard to increased overlooking. There is a separation distance of over 25 metres between the application property and the nearest house in Trefoil Drive. Supplementary Planning Document "Quality Design" recommends a minimum rear to rear separation distance of 21 metres. Some screening is provided by trees between the properties, however, as stated this is less effective during the winter months.

A certain degree of overlooking is typical of such residential developments and the rear gardens in Trefoil Drive are already overlooked to some extent by existing first floor windows. However, from representations submitted, there is a perception of increased overlooking of rear bedroom windows, from residents in Trefoil Drive, even though minimum rear to rear distance standards exist. As the dormer is visually prominent and due to the height of the new window (2.5 metres higher than the bottom of the smaller bathroom and ensuite windows below) there is considered to be an increase in actual and perceived overlooking of rear gardens, in particular to no.15 Trefoil Drive.

It is considered that rooflights at the rear, given the orientation in the existing roofslope and the oblique angle, would not have such a harmful affect on amenity regarding perceived overlooking.

The rooflights to the front will afford views onto the frontage of properties in Larkspur Gardens, which is considered acceptable, given the public views available.

## **7. Conclusion**

7.1 Due to the height, bulk and design of the rear dormer, it is considered to have an unacceptable impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area and due its visual prominence and height, it is considered to increase actual and perceived overlooking of the rear garden of no.15 in Trefoil Drive, to the detriment of the amenity of occupiers. The application is therefore recommended for refusal.

## **8. Full Recommendation**

**DELEGATE** to the Head of Planning and Trading Standards to **REFUSE PLANNING PERMISSION** for the following reasons:

1. The dormer window extension to the rear of the property, due to its inappropriate design, size and siting fails to harmonise with the scale and character of the

existing dwelling. It appears as a prominent, intrusive and incongruous feature to the detriment of the appearance of the locality and the character of the surrounding area. As such, the proposal is contrary to the provisions of Policy OVS.2 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 Saved Policies 2007 and Policy CC6 of The South East Plan May 2009 and to guidance contained within Planning Policy Statement 1 and Supplementary Planning Guidance 'House Extensions' adopted July 2004, which seek to ensure development proposals achieve a high standard of design which respect the character and appearance of the area.

2. Due to its position in the roofslope and the height of the new window therein, the dormer would result in a significant reduction in the amenity of occupiers of the neighbouring property at 15 Trefoil Drove as a result of actual and perceived overlooking. As such, the proposal is contrary to the provisions of Policy OVS.2 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 Saved Policies 2007 and guidance contained within Planning Policy Statement 1 and Supplementary Planning Guidance 'House Extensions' adopted July 2004, which seek to ensure development proposals achieve a high standard of design which safeguard the amenities of neighbouring occupiers.



**Plans and drawings relevant to reports submitted to  
Eastern Area Planning Committee  
10 February 2010 at 6.30pm  
at the Calcot Centre, Highview (off Royal Avenue),  
Calcot**

**[to be read in conjunction with the main agenda]**

*Please note:*

- *All drawings are copied at A4 and consequently are not scalable*
- *Most relevant plans have been included – however, in some cases, it may be necessary for the case officer to make a selection*
- *All drawings are available to view at [www.westberks.gov.uk](http://www.westberks.gov.uk)*
- *The application files will be available for half an hour before the meeting*

09/02396/COMIND  
AWE Aldermaston  
Aldermaston