



**PLANNING SUPPORTING STATEMENT
PROJECT PEGASUS**

REPLACEMENT FACILITY

Application for Planning Permission for a replacement facility for the storage and handling of enriched uranium in support of the UK Nuclear Weapons Programme. The proposed facility will provide approximately 18500 square metres gross floor space and will incorporate 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, Berkshire

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1. SUMMARY

1.1 This statement and appendices support a planning application for a replacement facility for the storage and handling of enriched uranium in support of the UK Nuclear Weapons Programme. The proposed facility will provide approximately 18489 square metres gross floor space on a 10496 m² footprint, and will incorporate office accommodation, storage facilities, material handling areas and ancillary support services. Construction related infrastructure is also proposed including access road, construction compound, fencing, gates and ancillary facilities, at the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) site at Aldermaston, Berkshire. The proposed building is required to provide suitable workspace in a secure environment to support continued operations when existing facilities reach the end of their lives. The scheme has been called project PEGASUS.

1.2 The PEGASUS development seeks to replace and consolidate existing operations into a single customised building. These are presently undertaken in separate buildings with footprints amounting to a similar floor area located at AWE Aldermaston. Certain site enabling works comprising permitted development, including the installation of services and utilities into the main construction site and the erection of the temporary project security fence has already been completed. The development site is presently free from topsoil, vegetation and void of existing buildings.

1.3 The provision of replacement facilities meeting modern standards presents the opportunity to:

- 1) rationalise existing floor space;
- 2) improve working conditions and efficiency;
- 3) improve environmental performance compared to the existing facilities; and
- 4) remove the historic legacy [including decommissioning and clearance of redundant buildings together with remediation of any land contamination] from a significant part of the AWE Aldermaston site.

1.4 The application is part of an ongoing programme of improvements to the AWE estate as outlined in the long term Site Development Context Plan (SDCP 08) submitted to West Berkshire Council and other stakeholders, (Appendix B). This identified the application site as being within the Nuclear Storage and Processing Area (NSPA) and programmed to accommodate a replacement handling facility – reference 2 in the SDCP05 and SDCP08.

1.5 This specific proposal will also improve the overall presentation of the site.

1.6 The Applicant is required to seek planning permission for the proposed development under the Town & Country Planning Act. A direction has however been issued by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government under Regulation 4(4) a (ii) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England & Wales) Regulations 1999 (as Amended) which directs that the requirements of the EIA Regulations will not apply to the PEGASUS proposal (see Appendix A). In order to ensure that sufficient information is put before the LPA a “Defence Exempt Environmental Appraisal” (DEEA), is submitted instead of a formal Environmental Statement [ES]. This provides a comprehensive analysis of the likely impacts of development and mitigation measures. The environmental impacts arising from these operations have been reported in the DEEA. The operations which take place within the facility are regulated by and subject to operating licences issued by HSE & EA.

1.7 The application is thus accompanied by a Defence Exempt Environmental Appraisal (DEEA), a Transportation Assessment, Flood Risk Assessment and a Design and Access Statement together with other supporting documentation included as appendices to this planning supporting statement.

1.8 In accordance with Government Circular 05/2005 and West Berkshire Council’s supplementary planning guidance there is no requirement for the Ministry of Defence [MOD] to enter into any planning obligations in relation to this planning application.

1.9 The application is fully compliant with the development plan in relation to the support it provides for economic development generally and the specific operational needs of AWE.

1.10 The application proposals will involve high quality design in relation to the proposed building and the associated landscape proposals and sustainable drainage scheme.

1.11 While it is normal practice to place a time limit on planning consents, currently 3 years, AWE would like the Council to consider extending this limit to a period of 5-7 years to reflect the current economic situation and the particular operational constraints within which AWE have to function.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 This statement supports a planning application for a replacement facility for the storage and handling of enriched uranium in support of the UK Nuclear Weapons Programme. The Facility will be located within the administrative area of West Berkshire. It has been prepared having regard to the advice in West Berkshire Council's Major Planning Applications Developer's pack. The application submission and the Design and Access Statement (DAS) also identifies the temporary construction related infrastructure required to ensure the safe, secure and efficient arrangements necessary to implement the proposals, although planning permission is not required for these works.
- 2.2 The application is accompanied by a Defence Exempt Environmental Appraisal [DEEA]. This addresses the principal environmental issues that are relevant to the consideration of the proposals, and where appropriate, puts forward suggested mitigation measures in response to its findings. A Transport Assessment (Appendix C to the DEEA) also accompanies the application, which deals with the full range of transportation issues arising from the proposed development. A Flood Risk Assessment also accompanies the application and is included within the DEEA, which assesses risks to people and the environment for a variety of flood events.
- 2.3 Against this background the primary purpose of this document is to briefly describe the proposal, the reasoning behind it and explain how the proposals relate to the Site Development Context Plan (SDCP 08) and other material considerations. In this latter regard the DEEA deals in detail with policy analysis together with the anticipated effects of the construction and operation of the proposed facility upon the environment and those who live and work around the site. The purpose of this document is thus to identify only the key considerations in planning policy terms, which are wholly supportive of the principle of this development.
- 2.4 This statement also includes a summary of the overall design approach in relation to both the buildings themselves and the associated landscape principles. This issue is also addressed in the DAS, which is required to be submitted with the planning application itself.
- 2.5 As a supporting document, this statement (including the appendices) does not form part of the planning application itself.
- 2.6 The following section of this supporting statement describes the general features of the planning application and its setting in a wider context. It then goes on to identify the principal aspects of the approved Development Plan that support the principle of development and then sets out some of the key material considerations that are likely to be relevant when it is determined. In this latter respect it is not the intention to attempt to identify all relevant matters but simply to highlight those, which have been most frequently raised by stakeholders.
- 2.7 Finally, as indicated above, this statement summarises the main design principles that have been applied in the formulation of the scheme.

Pre-Application Discussions

- 2.8 This planning application has been prepared following liaison with Planning Officers at West Berkshire Council (WBC) in line with the requirements of the Council's Major Planning Applications Developers Pack.
- 2.9 A meeting was held with West Berkshire Council on 29th July 2009 to outline the proposal and to go through the planning submission documents. The principal issues discussed were the areas to be included in floor space calculations and the form and content and level of detail to be included on the application plans. It was also agreed that it would be unlikely to be a need for the applicant to enter into a planning obligation given that there will be no overall change in either employment or floor space as a result of this development.
- 2.10 A further meeting was held with officers on 13th October 2009 to go through the material to be provided to facilitate prompt registration. This also follows the advice set out in WBC Developer's Pack, and the established verification provisions in respect of the local and national lists. A site meeting was held on 13th November 2009 to enable the Council's officers to fully appreciate the site and its surroundings.
- 2.11 The proposal has been discussed with officers at the Environment Agency to establish the requirement for and the scope of a Flood Risk Assessment together with proposed methods for dealing with surface water through Sustainable Drainage [SuDs] techniques.
- 2.12 Discussions and agreements have been reached with the highways officers at WBC.

2.13 Due to the complex nature of the application discussions have taken place and agreements reached with WBC in order to ensure that the correct fee is submitted with the application.

2.14 Other meetings have taken place with WBC's Landscape Advisor, its Archaeological Officer and Natural England. A summary of the Consultations is included as Table 2-1 in the DEEA.

Public Consultation

2.15 Public consultation has been a key aspect in the preparation of this planning application and is an important element of the planning process. The Site Development Strategy Plan public information leaflet was published to provide the general public and West Berkshire Planning Authority with an explanation of the plans and reasoning behind the future development of AWE Burghfield and Aldermaston. Subsequent updates to this strategy were published in 2003 and 2005 to report on progress on the sites to date and to outline future plans as they take shape. A Site Development Context Plan (SDCP 08) has also been published which sets out the phased programme of development between 2005 & 2015. The Pegasus development is identified as reference 2 within the SDCP05 and SDCP08.

2.16 Pre application discussions have been held with the AWE Local Liaison Committee and Local Parish Councils.

3. BACKGROUND TO THE SCHEME

3.1 This planning application is part of a phased programme of refurbishment and improvement of the AWE Estate. The broad nature of this programme is set out in the SDCP 08 (Appendix B). A Strategic Sustainability Appraisal (SSA – Appendix C) has also been prepared which describes the overall sustainability context for the programme and identifies the range of issues that will be relevant to its implementation.

3.2 Whilst these proposals are put forward as a component of this programme they are nevertheless “free standing” and can thus be considered on their own individual planning merits. Approval of this planning application will not, therefore, pre-judge or prejudice the consideration of any other component of the programme and future applications will be formulated on a similar basis. The objective has been to provide an overall context for individual applications. As the programme is a dynamic one, its detailed nature and timing may change but this will not affect the ability to consider proposals such as this on an individual basis.

The AWE Site

3.3 The site is the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) at Aldermaston, West Berkshire. The Aldermaston site has been owned by the MOD for over 50 years and used for UK for defence purposes.

3.4 AWE Aldermaston is located immediately to the north of the settlement of Tadley. The site covers approximately 285 hectares and the topography of the site is generally flat being a former airfield.

3.5 The Aldermaston site lies to the south of the Kennet Valley on a flat gravel plateau, between 100 to 105m AOD, sloping to 85m in its far north-eastern corner. Some of the landform within the site has been modified by human intervention to create both individual and groups of mounds. It is surrounded by gravel plateau heathland and woodland with some heathland pastures.

Context for Development

3.6 In July 2005 the UK Government reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining the effectiveness and safety of the country's nuclear deterrent. An investment program was announced for the replacement and refurbishment of ageing facilities at Aldermaston and Burghfield.

3.7 The AWE Aldermaston and Burghfield Site Development Context Plan (SDCP 08) 2005 – 2015 identifies the principal physical components of the programme and the way in which it is proposed to be accommodated at the sites. The SDCP defines the broad parameters of the Government's investment programme in land-use terms. The overall approach to the modernisation of the site is based on the refurbishment and replacement of facilities constructed principally in the 1950s and 1960s. This specific proposal is referenced No. 2 within the SDCP 08.

3.8 General issues of importance to the programme have been identified within the SDCP, these are acknowledged as:

- Traffic and Transport – A Travel Plan is already in place covering both AWE sites (Appendix E). It is fully recognised that transportation, including access, is a significant and important issue, particularly during the construction period. As a consequence Transport Assessments should be carried out for each development proposal which forms part of the wider programme, to assess its individual and cumulative impacts;
- Landscape – The programme provides an opportunity to maintain and improve the landscape and vegetation. Landscaping assessments and proposals should be included for the sites;
- Sustainability – The development proposals for the sites will provide opportunities, to increase sustainability on the sites;
- Demolition and Decommissioning – During the programme there will be opportunities to continue decommissioning and demolition to improve the appearance of the sites. Care should be taken to minimise the environmental impact of demolition and avoid disruption to neighbours;
- Community – AWE has a close relationship with the local community. Liaison arrangements should be established to maximise the benefits arising from the programme and to assist with the management of potential impacts of the development proposals.

Aims and Objectives of the Scheme

3.9 The key aims and objectives of the overall programme are:

- To meet AWE's future operational needs safely, securely and affordably;
- To increase operational efficiency;
- To achieve environmental improvements;
- To improve working conditions;
- To improve the aesthetic appearance of the site and move from the existing industrial estate appearance towards the concept of a science and technology centre concept;
- Demolition of unwanted or outdated buildings and construction of modern replacements incorporating the latest safety and energy features;
- Improved traffic management and improved facilities for cyclists and pedestrians.

3.10 Aldermaston can be divided into three broad functional areas. The eastern part of the site is principally devoted to activity associated with conventional explosives. To the west of Griffin Road the site splits into two areas. To the north, within which this application is located, the site is devoted mainly to the nuclear aspects of the sites activities and is subject to additional levels of security. To the south the area is principally business support activities. For a variety of operational and practical reasons there is little scope or need to depart from this overall land use pattern. Indeed there is merit in seeking to accentuate and reinforce these distinctions.

3.11 The proposed redevelopment of the site has several wider benefits. These are identified as:

- Improved wider visual appearance and lessening of the physical and visual impact of the site on the local area;
- Improved community and staff safety;
- Improved traffic safety and management and reduced vehicle movements.

4. SITE CONTEXT

4.1 The principal access to AWE Aldermaston is at the main gate. There are however a number of other accesses around the site which have been improved and upgraded as part of the Gemini (formally known as NOA – WBC planning reference 06/02326/COMIND) application.

4.2 The application site is centrally located and has been the subject of site enabling works. This includes the installation of services and utilities, the removal of upfill [a by-product from a previous construction activity] and the erection of a security fence. These constitute developments which are permitted by the Act.

4.3 The site is thus currently free from topsoil and vegetation and prepared to enable development to proceed at an appropriate time should planning permission be granted.

5. THE PROPOSED SCHEME

5.1 This planning application is just one stage of a larger overall scheme of works proposed at the AWE Burghfield and AWE Aldermaston sites. Although forming part of a more extensive scheme, this application stands alone and should be assessed on its individual merits in line with the policies contained within the Development Plan and other material planning considerations. Approval of this planning application would not prejudice or predetermine any future planning applications on this site and future applications will be formulated on a similar basis.

The Proposed Development

5.2 The proposed development will replace existing operational storage and handling facilities for enriched uranium and will employ similar, but generally improved processes using modern, efficient equipment.

5.3 The design of the replacement facility incorporates all of the required facilities in a single building with a footprint of some 10,496 m². The existing facility has 46 operatives and 78 maintenance staff. Once fully operational it is anticipated that PEGASUS will employ a similar number of staff as the existing facilities.

5.4 The proposed layout of the replacement buildings and structures is highly constrained by the existing facilities on-site and is also shaped by the requirement to retain the existing functions whilst the development works are being undertaken. The development is therefore located centrally within the AWE site, which has historically been used as a nuclear storage and processing area. The development site is approximately 500 metres from the northern boundary, 1300 metres from the western boundary, 500 metres from the southern boundary, and 1200 metres from the eastern boundary.

5.5 The application site area defined by the red line boundary covers an area of 12.3 hectares and comprises:

- 1) Construction Establishment Area (CEA) – this is a temporary area which is set aside for construction equipment and materials lying between Sixth Street and the Nuclear Storage and Processing (NSPA) fence. It is currently a surfaced area used as a car park for existing employees on the site. It includes a new (pedestrian plus vehicular) NSPA gate area. The area is approximately 0.6 ha excluding the Sixth Street road crossing. Once the PEGASUS project is completed this area will be returned to its original use;
- 2) Construction Support Area (CSA) – The Project will make use of an additional area currently used in part by another project (New Office Accommodation, known as NOA or Gemini) on the AWE Aldermaston site as a construction Support Area and therefore has already been ‘approved’ through the planning permission for NOA – 06/02326/COMIND. The area within the existing West End Construction Enclave (WECE) will be utilised for construction worker offices, car parking and welfare facilities, for equipment laydown and lorry search. The area extends to 8.9ha; and
- 3) Primary Construction Area (PCA) – The PCA is the part of the project where the PEGASUS facility will be built. The area covers the main building works associated with the proposed PEGASUS facility and sits inside the existing NSPA fence. This includes the building, landscaping and delivery access areas and pedestrian access routes. The main building consists of a series of reinforced concrete structures which are seismically qualified for safety reasons. The main parts built out of reinforced concrete are the storage, handling receipt and dispatch areas. The building will also include areas to be used for conventional materials and designs such as the changing facilities and services, the entrance area and office accommodation. The overall surface area of the PCA is approximately 2.8 ha.

5.6 Consequently, planning approval is sought only for a replacement building within 2.8 ha of the 12.3 ha of land contained within the planning application red line. The remaining land will be used to facilitate construction in a similar manner to its use to support the construction of NOA [aka Gemini] and Orion.

Proposed Facility

5.7 The replacement facility will consist of five distinct areas under a common weather envelope. Three of the main areas will be the Handling / Receipt, Dispatch, and Storage which will be constructed within a seismically qualified reinforced concrete structure. The remaining facility area and the general office area are linked by a central corridor with an internal loading bay provided for material transfer. A stack will be located at the northern end of the

facility as the discharge point from the main HVAC systems, the height of the Barrel Roof from the ground is 16.2m, with the top of the stack at 19.5 above the ground, and 3.3m above the roof.

5.8 The proposed facility has been designed as a two storey building, with a clad barrel roof, which will be in keeping with the AWE Site and Architectural Design Principles. The office area of the building will be a 2-storey block constructed in curtain walling with glazing to provide daylight for the occupants, separated from the main part of the building by the entrance atrium.

Landscaping

5.9 The external arrangement of roads, SuDs ponds and landscaping features have been selected to complement the Proposed Facility arrangement with the south and west sides presenting a visually attractive appearance and providing a leisurely breakout, with associated ecological features for staff to enjoy. The landscaping to the north and east sides of the Proposed Facility are defined by the functional needs of the Proposed Facility in these areas. The landscaping proposals have utilised the materials and guidance from AWE to ensure a consistent landscaping appearance across AWE Aldermaston.

5.10 At the south side of the Proposed Facility a paved area with regular tree planting is provided for staff breakout but also functions as a circulation route for emergency and security vehicles. The breakout area will overlook the proposed SuDs pond which will be landscaped to encourage biodiversity. Grassed areas are provided around the majority of the Proposed Facility and will be complimented by formal tree planting where appropriate. There is also an area of informal tree and shrub planting to the south-east of the Proposed Facility. These arrangements have been developed to assist with security needs and permit the Proposed Facility to function efficiently and safely at all times.

6. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Planning Obligations

6.1 The approach in respect of planning obligations should be set in the context of Government Circular 05/2005 and WBC's Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) "Delivering Investment from Sustainable Development" (September 2004).

6.2 As this proposed development will not result in any increase in employment or floor space and not require the use of any external services such as fire and police it is considered that there will be no need for the MOD to enter into any planning obligations in respect of this planning application.

Planning Policy

6.3 The purpose of this section is to provide the key planning policy issues relevant to the proposed development. A detailed review of the relevant planning policy issues pertinent to the proposal is included at Chapter 3 of the DEEA.

6.4 As with all planning applications and within the context of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, this proposal must be assessed against the Development Plan and in light of all other material considerations.

6.5 The Government guidance pertaining to planning is contained within Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) and more recently the Planning Policy Statements (PPSs). PPGs and PPSs represent national strategic policy on different aspects of planning and outline how local policies should conform to the wider planning process. The Regional Planning Guidance relevant to the site is set out in Regional Spatial Strategy 9: The South East Plan (SEP) and The Berkshire Structure Plan (saved policies). The site is located within West Berkshire District and as such the policies contained within the Adopted West Berkshire District Local Plan (saved policies) are also relevant to consideration of this proposal

Policy ECON2A – Principle of Development

6.6 The principle of the redevelopment of an existing non-protected employment site is addressed under policy ECON2A of the West Berkshire District Local Plan (i.e. sites that are not designated as potential employment areas). The policy allows for the redevelopment, reuse or extension of existing employment generating sites provided that a number of criteria are met.

6.7 Firstly, criterion (a) states that the proposed buildings and structures should be of a scale appropriate to the nature of the site and sympathetic to the surrounding environment.

6.8 The proposed development replaces a number of existing buildings with a purpose-built facility. The proposed buildings have been designed to fit within the existing built environment of the site and will sit in context with the other buildings on the AWE site. A landscape and visual assessment has been undertaken as part of the DEEA which acknowledges that the proposed development will introduce a series of new buildings into the existing AWE Aldermaston landscape. The proposed buildings would have a limited impact on the surrounding landscape, however as the proposed buildings are centrally located and enclosed by existing built development. It is considered that the proposed buildings and structures are of an appropriate scale and are sympathetic to the surrounding environment, the proposal thus ensuring compliance with criterion (a).

6.9 Criterion (b) requires that landscape proposals are included as an integral part of the scheme to assist the development in blending into the wider environment.

6.10 The Landscape and Visual Assessment indicates that AWE Aldermaston is well contained within the local landscape by layers of vegetation. The proposed development includes landscaping proposals which are an integral part of the scheme. Landscaping proposals are part of an overall landscape strategy for AWE Aldermaston, which seeks to improve the visual quality of the environment and to enhance the setting of the building and the AWE site in general. The proposal therefore complies with criterion (b).

6.11 Criterion (c) requires that proposals make provision for employment opportunities important to the local economy.

6.12 The proposed facility, once operational, will not employ additional staff over and above the number employed at present. Although there is no long-term employment creation proposed on-site, the construction phase will create significant temporary local employment opportunities. The proposal will ensure the retention of existing employment facilities which is important to the local economy. Chapter 12 of the DEEA contains a detailed analysis of the socio-economic impacts of the development. The proposal therefore complies with criterion (c).

6.13 Criterion (d) states that there should be no material intensification of use leading to increased traffic activity and other forms of environmental intrusion. Criterion (e) stipulates that there should be no transport / highways objections to the scheme and that adequate provision should be made for access and parking.

6.14 The proposed buildings and structures will consolidate the operations currently taking place in a number of buildings into a purpose-built development. There will be no additional staff or car parking provided with the proposal and due to the high security levels on-site, the numbers of vehicles entering and leaving the site can be strictly controlled. As such there will be no impact on local highways from the proposed development. In addition, AWE has an on-going commitment to the implementation of a Travel Plan at both the Aldermaston and Burghfield sites. The Travel Plan aims to reduce the reliance on the private motor vehicle for journeys to and from the sites. There is therefore no conflict with either criterion (d) or (e).

6.15 Criterion (f) states that the proposed development should not give rise to additional pressure for housing development.

6.16 No additional permanent staff will be employed as a result of this development and therefore no additional housing pressure will be added. There is, therefore, no conflict with Criterion (f).

6.17 The development is required for the continued operation of existing activities on this existing employment site and the proposal complies with all of the requirements of policy ECON2A of the West Berkshire Council Local Plan and as such the development is acceptable in principle.

Development in rural areas

6.18 The foremost guidance governing development in rural areas is contained within Planning Policy Statement 7 and Local Plan policies OVS1 and ENV18. These policies require that development in rural areas is focussed on brownfield sites and that development on greenfield sites is avoided. The proposal is for the redevelopment of part of an existing brownfield site for the same use. The proposal therefore complies with rural policy.

Sustainable development and sustainable construction

6.19 Sustainable development is the core principle underpinning the entire planning process. PPS 1, The South East Plan, Berkshire Structure Plan policy EN8 and Local Plan policy OVS10 require sustainability to be incorporated into

all development proposals. Sustainability can be integrated into every aspect of development, from the location of a proposal in terms of its proximity to town centres, to sustainability incorporated into construction methods and design.

6.20 The location of the development is an existing brownfield site. The proposal is for the replacement of the existing built facility with the new facility on a similar footprint. The proposal represents a sustainable reuse of this brownfield site.

6.21 There will be no increase in employment levels as a result of the proposal and therefore no additional pressure will be exerted on the transportation energy requirements of the site. The development includes the provision of an additional 20 cycle parking spaces to encourage bicycle usage and the Site Travel Plan will further aid the reduction in the current reliance on the private motor vehicle as a mode for accessing the site.

6.22 Energy use throughout the lifecycle of the facility has been considered from design, construction, operation and finally decommissioning. Building elements include double glazing and thermally efficient roofing, floors, walls and doors. The buildings are designed to monitor energy consumption throughout. Localised temperature and light controls are available to all occupants of office areas and where appropriate motion activated lighting will be employed. Effective use of natural lighting is also incorporated into the scheme.

6.23 The building and associated services will comply with Part L2A of Building Regulations and have therefore been designed to ensure maximum energy efficiency. A bespoke Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) has been undertaken for the proposed facility. BRE has issued a certificate (see DEEA) confirming that the design has achieved an 'Excellent' rating in line with the requirements of the 'Quality Design' SPD.

6.24 In terms of sustainable construction, the building is proposed to be sited in a location sensitive to the character of the existing built and natural environment. Construction techniques used will aim to reduce the use of water and energy and limit the waste produced during construction and operation. A high proportion of the construction materials can be recycled.

6.25 The landscaping scheme proposed incorporates Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) designed to attenuate surface water from the development. A lagoon will be used to retain surface water so that discharge from the site do not exceed those which would occur naturally i.e. equivalent to a green field run off rate. An additional benefit of this lagoon is that it will be planted with native flora to provide an attractive landscape and a valuable wildlife habitat.

6.26 The proposal is considered to be highly sustainable and fulfils all of the requirements of sustainability policy at national, regional and local level.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

7.1 This section provides a brief description of the main findings of the DEEA. A fuller version can also be found within the Non Technical Summary [NTS] to the DEEA

Ground Conditions

7.2 The Application Site is considered to exhibit forms and general levels of contamination that are broadly typical of sites that have been in long term "industrial" type use. The underlying geology and associated hydrological context of the site does not suggest that, in general terms, these levels of contamination raise any particular issues of concern in relation to mitigation of any potential health and environmental risks. It is therefore considered that the Proposed Development can be implemented without significant adverse impacts. As the Proposed Development offers the opportunity to better understand ground conditions and to deal with any individual cases of contamination, there are beneficial impacts for the ground conditions at the Application Site.

7.3 However, it is recognised that provision must be made for unforeseen situations and the fact that the inevitable disturbance of land associated with construction can lead to changes that may affect the way in which contaminants interact with the environment. Appropriate Safe Systems of Work (SSoW) will be in place to mitigate the risks of encountering previously unidentified contamination such as unexploded ordnance, soil contamination and asbestos contaminated soils.

Surface Water Quality

7.4 Potential impacts upon the water environment relate to the management of surface water run-off through the proposed SuDs. The SuDs will also mitigate any potential impacts upon water quality through both the construction and operational phases.

7.5 Overall, the proposed facility is not expected to have any significant impacts on surface water quality, either directly through surface water discharges or indirectly by discharges to the foul sewer.

Transport

7.6 As the proposed development will be a replacement of an existing facility, occupied by no more employees than the existing, it will not generate any additional personnel vehicle movements over and above those generated by the existing facility. Only in the construction phase will additional vehicular movements be generated, at their peak in 2012, and completed by 2017.

7.7 Overall, the impact of the construction and operation of the proposed development on pedestrians, cyclists, public transport users and car drivers has been assessed and is considered to be negligible for severance, road safety, amenity and delay.

Air Quality

7.8 During the construction and operation of the proposed facility the changes in pollutants, arising from vehicles, were found to be negligible at all residential locations throughout the local road network. Further, none of these negligible impacts are considered to be capable of altering the significance of the environmental impacts of any other future development nearby.

7.9 The AWE Code of Construction Practice (CoCP) incorporates a range of precautionary dust mitigation measures and working procedures which will be implemented to minimise any impacts during the construction phase.

7.10 Radiological emissions from the operational phases of the Facility have been assessed and considered to be insignificant.

7.11 In summary, the impacts of the proposed development on air quality are assessed as insignificant and therefore negligible.

Noise and Vibration

7.12 During construction, the impact of noise and vibration is considered to be negligible. The construction site and the nearest NSR (Noise Sensitive Receptor) are 330 metres apart.

7.13 Due to the distance of the development site and NNRs, it is considered that vibration will not be significant at the closest off-site residential property. No mitigation will therefore be required.

7.14 The impact of the operational phase of the proposed development was determined to be of negligible significance and only of local geographical importance for both noise and vibration.

Socio Economics

7.15 The proposed development will have an overall positive socio economic impact on local, regional and national economies. It will help secure the long-term future and viability of AWE Aldermaston and contribute further to the world class high technology sector and economy that exists on the M4/M40 corridor. It will also have a minor beneficial impact during construction through the generation of about 350 temporary jobs.

Landscape and Visual Impacts

7.16 The proposed development is to be located within the central industrial zone of AWE Aldermaston. It would be on brownfield land and would be in keeping with the established character of the area. During construction there would be some temporary negligible effects on the landscape through the use of cranes and lighting. Once completed, the permanent visual effects of the building are considered negligible again, with no significant adverse effects. The proposed building would have a roofline of 16.2 metres and a stack at 19.5 metres, rising just above the adjacent tree canopy. Against the context of the adjacent buildings however, which are up to 28 metres in height with stacks up to 46 metres tall, the impact of the proposed building is considered negligible.

7.17 Comprehensive hard and soft landscape proposals would improve the appearance of the area, whilst the existing stand of pine trees would be retained to keep existing vegetation and cover.

Cultural Heritage

7.18 The archaeological assessment demonstrated a low potential for the removal and existence of any pre 20th century remains at the development site. The previous development at the site and the resultant level of disturbance, combined with the low potential for the discovery of any archaeological remains, means that the County Archaeologist has agreed that no further investigation work is required at the site, nor any mitigation.

Ecology

7.19 The ecological assessment concludes that there no negative impacts on any of the Valued Ecological Receptors are expected. Indeed the inclusion of a number of ecological enhancement measures means that a number of ecological receptors will benefit from the Proposed Development.

Sustainability

7.20 A sustainability appraisal has been completed for the proposed development in accordance with the MOD Sustainability and Environmental Tool Kit Handbook the results of which have fed into the proposed development design. In addition, a BREEAM assessment has been undertaken with a certificate issued by BRE (see DEEA) confirming achievement of an Excellent rating.

Cumulative Effects

7.21 The cumulative scenario assessed comprises of proposals detailed in the AWE Site Development Context Plan 2008 (SDCP 08). A review of major planning applications within the parish of Aldermaston, Tadley and adjacent parishes did not identify any schemes, proposed or permitted, likely to affect the assessment or contribute to cumulative effects.

7.22 When considering the combined impacts of the proposed development alongside those within the SDCP08, it is considered that the provision of the Pegasus facility, along with the improved landscaping, building design and infrastructure improvements will have positive impacts in respect of socio economics, as well as benefits to sustainability and travel. In addition, the associated improvements to drainage and the clean up of the area should remove or reduce any contamination. In contrast, the only minor and temporary adverse effects will be increased traffic on local roads during the construction phase.

8. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 There are a number of other issues which are pertinent to the operation of the site once development is complete; these are subject to the requirements and regulated by the Health and Safety Executive and Environment Agency. The operation of the facility will be subject to receiving the necessary approvals/licences from both the HSE and the Environment Agency.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 This proposed replacement facility for the storage and handling of enriched uranium, is an essential component of AWE's long-term development programme to secure the replacement and refurbishment of facilities at its Aldermaston and Burghfield sites. The development will result in the replacement of a number of the existing buildings and the construction of a modern purpose-built facility. The proposed buildings and their associated facilities are essential for the ongoing use of the site and will improve operational efficiency by consolidating specific operations in one facility.

9.2 The development has been designed to a high standard to meet the overall AWE aim of achieving a science and technology park image; this is accomplished through the use of simple design and modern materials and finishes. In terms of operation the facility will not employ any additional staff over the numbers currently employed and as such the development will not put any additional pressure on transport and community infrastructure.

9.3 The development will be highly sustainable, both in terms of its location on an existing employment site and by incorporation of sustainable methods of design and construction. The development has achieved a BREEAM rating of 'Excellent' and incorporates SuDS. The building will have a minimal visual impact when viewed from the wider area and will greatly enhance the appearance of the site.

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9.4 The operation of the replacement facility will be subject to the necessary approvals/consents from both the HSE and Environment Agency.

9.5 Overall the proposal will make a positive contribution to AWE's activities and will result in a development which is compliant with current planning policy.

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