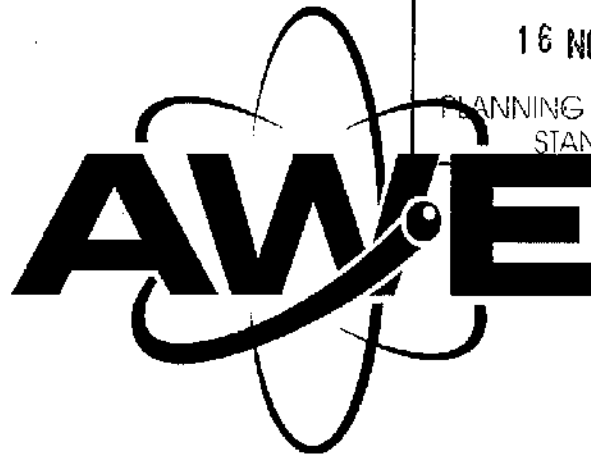


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WEST BERKSHIRE DISTRICT
COUNCIL

16 NOV 2007

PLANNING AND TRADING
STANDARDS

Application No.

800 - 67553

BASINGSTOKE & DEANE
BOROUGH COUNCIL

21 NOV 2007

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

PLANNING SUPPORTING STATEMENT

Application for a replacement High Explosives Fabrication Facility (HEFF) building, associated outbuildings and access roads, vehicle turning areas, hard standings, blast protection, 8 x lightning conductor towers, security fencing, landscaping and temporary construction enclave

AWE Aldermaston, Berkshire

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1. SUMMARY

1.1 This document and appendices support a planning application for a replacement High Explosives and Fabrication Facility building and associated development at AWE Aldermaston.

1.2 The application is part of an ongoing programme of improvements to the AWE estate identified to West Berkshire Council and other stakeholders in November 2005.

1.3 This specific proposal will reinforce the status of AWE as a world class scientific facility and improve the overall presentation of the site.

1.4 The application is accompanied by a Defence Exempt Environmental Appraisal, a Transport Assessment, Design and Access Statement and other supporting information.

1.5 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.

1.6 Other key issues identified at this stage including, access and transportation, construction activity and management and the visual impact of the buildings.

1.7 The application proposals will involve high quality building design and associated landscaping.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 This statement supports a planning application for a replacement High Explosives Fabrication Facility (HEFF) associated buildings, infrastructure and related landscaping at AWE Aldermaston in the administrative area of West Berkshire. It has been prepared having regard to the advice in West Berkshire's major planning applications developer's pack. The planning application also includes the temporary construction related infrastructure required to ensure the safe, secure and efficient arrangements necessary to implement the proposals.

2.2 The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has considered the proposals for HEFF and under direction of Regulation 4 (4) (a) (ii) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999, determined the requirements of those Regulations shall not apply. The Direction is attached at Annexe D. The application is therefore accompanied by a Defence Exempt Environmental Appraisal. This addresses the principal environmental issues that are relevant to the consideration of the proposals and, where appropriate, puts forward mitigation measures in response to its findings. A Transport Assessment (Appendix C to the Appraisal) also accompanies the application which deals with the full range of transportation issues arising from the proposed development.

2.3 Against this background the primary purpose of this document is to briefly describe the proposal and the reasoning behind it and explain how the proposals relate to the approved development plan and other material considerations. In this latter regard the Appraisal deals in detail with policy analysis. The purpose of this document is thus to identify the key considerations in planning policy terms which are wholly supportive of the principle of this development.

2.4 This document 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 Design and Access Statement (DAS) which is required to be submitted with the planning application itself.

2.5 As a supporting document, this statement (including the annexes) does not form part of the planning application itself.

2.6 The following sections begin by describing the general features of the planning application and setting it in a wider context. They then go 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 document summarises the main design principles that have been applied in the formulation of the scheme.

Summary of pre-application contact with West Berkshire Council and other consultation

2.8 Several informal pre-application meetings have been held with West Berkshire Council (WBC) prior to the submission of the application. Officers of WBC have also visited the site to view existing facilities and the location of the proposed development. Discussions have focussed largely on the information requirements to support the applications as advised in the Council's major applications developer's pack. Whilst draft proposals have been tabled at these meetings, officers have not been asked to respond formally.

2.9 Shortly before the submission of the application a meeting was held with officers to go through the material to be provided to facilitate prompt registration. This also follows the advice set out in the developer's pack.

2.10 As far as wider consultation is concerned meetings to explain the overall programme have been held with elected members, the Local Liaison Committee (LLC), Cross Border Working Party and a number of local parish councils. In relation to the application itself the LLC have been informed as to its likely nature and contents prior to submission. The Eastern Area Planning Committee has also been briefed about the application.

2.11 Meetings have also been held with the Environment Agency.

3 THE PLANNING APPLICATION

Background

3.1 The new facility will form part of a phased programme of refurbishment and improvement of the AWE estate. The broad nature of this programme is set out in the Site Development Context Plan (SDCP – Annexe A) which was published in November 2005 and circulated widely. At the same time a Strategic Sustainability Appraisal (SSA – Annexe B) was also provided which describes the overall environmental 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.

Operational principles

3.3 In 2002 AWE produced a Site Development Strategy Plan (SDSP) which set out proposals for the future of AWE's sites at Aldermaston and Burghfield. The SDSP proposed that all conventional explosives-related activity, currently split between the two sites, should be consolidated on the Aldermaston site. This principle was reiterated in the SDCP.

3.4 The consolidation of these related activities will bring about a number of benefits to AWE's operation as follows:

- Consolidating operations within a single facility will reduce the number of explosive material movements between buildings, thus reducing risk and enhancing the efficiency of the current fabrication processes.
- Energy savings will be realised in the long term by providing a modern, energy efficient replacement facility.
- Facility operative's safety and working conditions will be improved.
- Operational waste will be reduced through consolidation and improved processes.
- The capability provided by AWE will be maintained in a sustainable way for the foreseeable future.
- Collocation will result in a reduction in the number of traffic movements between two sites.

3.5 The replacement facility will replace existing operational fabrication facilities and will employ similar, but generally improved processes using modern, efficient equipment. Currently high explosives and fabrication is carried out in approximately 24 buildings at both Burghfield and Aldermaston. The replacement facility will have a net floor area of 5880m². This compares to about 6400m² within the existing 24 buildings. There will therefore be no net

increase in floor space as a result of this development. Further information regarding the background to the proposal is contained in Chapter 4 of the Environmental Appraisal. The main processes to be conducted at HEFF involve shaping and manipulation of explosives material. Manufacture of explosive material itself does not form part of the process. Limited intermediate explosives storage will be provided within the facility for holding work in progress. The use of materials within the operational facility is strictly controlled by established AWE procedures in accordance with the regulatory requirements of the Health and Safety Executive, the Defence Ordnance Safety Group and Environmental Agency. Appropriate consents will be required from those bodies to be obtained separately from the planning process.

3.6 As a result of the proposed development, a number of buildings on both the Burghfield and Aldermaston sites will be decommissioned on a phased basis. As a consequence the external appearance of the site will be improved.

3.7 The development site includes land identified for use as a contractor's compound, car parking for HEFF construction workers' private vehicles all of which will be located alongside existing and proposed internal access roads serving the Aldermaston site. Additional temporary, construction access roads will be provided. The environmental appraisal provides more information on each aspect of the proposal.

3.8 Because access to and within AWE Aldermaston is very closely controlled, the potential to manage travel and transport is significant. In this regard, the situation is different to many conventional commercial development where the provision of car parking can, of itself, have a major influence on travel patterns.

3.9 The main operational principles underpinning the construction aspects of the proposals are:

- To transfer construction traffic from the public highway in to the site as quickly and as efficiently as possible, and
- To manage construction activity safely and securely within the site with the minimum impact on business activity and the community beyond the fence.

3.10 AWE is fully aware that the construction related issues arising from this application, and indeed the programme as a whole, are significant. Whilst these are temporary, construction could be for extended periods. Very careful consideration has thus been given to this matter in the planning application and associated material.

3.11 The composite plan at Annexe C shows the location of the proposed HEFF development and the temporary construction – related facilities. The plan also indicates that the land on which the construction – related activities will be restored to their previous use. In the case of the two construction compounds the sites will be restored to grassland and the temporary car park at Rec Soc will revert to playing field use.

The Proposals

3.12 The Aldermaston site lies to the south of the Kennet Valley on the 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.

3.13 The application site lies within the heart of the Aldermaston Explosives Area in the eastern sector of the AWE Site. The site is characterised by extensive grassed areas and groups of trees interspersed with industrial buildings, access ways and related infrastructure. The area within the "red line" application site on which the replacement buildings are to be built is currently an area of grass with small groups of trees in. It lies approximately 500 metres from the eastern AWE site boundary, 650 metres from the southern boundary and 850 metres from the northern boundary.

3.14 The development will comprise 2 buildings:

- **HEFF building** – A two storey building with a mezzanine floor housing a plant room. The building will be split into two distinct areas – the process block for explosives processing and an adjoining single storey support block which provides office space, control rooms, welfare and messing facilities, as well as stores and a workshop. The total gross floor area of the HEFF building including the porch will be 5398 sq metres. Associated blast protection structures and erection of 8 lattice lightning conductor towers (4 each along the northern and southern elevations of the HEFF building) are proposed.
- **Mechanical and Electrical Services building.** This building will be situated approximately 45 metres to the south of HEFF. It will have a floor area of 482 sq metres and be of similar external appearance to the HEFF building. It will house large items of equipment such as chillers, compressors and transformers.

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

Planning Obligations

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

3.16 Government Circular 05/2005 sets out the fundamental tests which must be met by all local planning authorities in seeking planning obligations namely they must be:

- (i) relevant to planning;
- (ii) necessary to make the proposed development acceptable in planning terms;
- (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 respects

3.17 The MoD is fully prepared to enter into planning obligations that meet these tests.

3.18 WBC's SPG indicates that obligations in the form of facilities and/or financial contributions will be sought from commercial development on the following general basis:-

Transport -	based on the scale and impacts of the proposal.
Public Libraries -	contribution per employee
Open Space -	contribution per employee
Re-cycling Facilities -	negotiated in relation to the specific proposal
Archaeology/Conservation/Heritage -	negotiated in relation to the specific proposal
Fire and Rescue -	determined on the basis of a risk assessment
Crime and Disorder -	negotiated in relation to the specific proposal
Legal and Admin Costs -	dependent on time and complexity

3.19 The SPG also refers to the potential for contributions towards skills training, child care and other services to mitigate impact on the demand for housing, labour and skills. In addition there is general qualification to the effect that other obligations may be sought where particular circumstances give rise to specific impacts not identified in the SPG.

3.20 It is readily apparent that the self contained nature of AWE Aldermaston makes it difficult to relate these headings to the advice in Government Circular 05/2005. For example the site has its own fire service and is policed by the MoD. Other issues such as re-cycling, open space and library provision may also be difficult to relate directly to the proposed development.

3.21 The development is proposed on the basis that existing employees, already engaged in processes across the Aldermaston and Burghfield sites, will be co-located on the HEFF site. There will be no net increase in the number of employees nor will there be a net increase in floorspace. A total of 24 buildings on the Burghfield and Aldermaston site, amounting to 6,400 sq m will be rendered redundant by the proposal, and these buildings will ultimately be demolished. It is not considered that, in view of the substance and nature of the HEFF proposal, the need for a planning obligation will be triggered.

Playing Field

3.22 The proposal involves the use of one senior football pitch at the AWE Recreation Society (Rec Soc), adjacent to Westgate entrance, as a construction workers car park for a temporary period during construction work.

3.23 This has already been approved by the local planning authority in January 2007 in relation to the new office development (NOA) application. The principle of the use of the playing field as a construction workers car park, for a temporary period has therefore been established.

4 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Planning Policy

4.1 As with all planning applications, and in the context of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, this proposal should be reviewed against the development plan and in the light of all other material considerations.

4.2 The development plan in this case comprises Regional Guidance for the South East (RPG 9), The Joint Structure Plan for Berkshire of July 2005 and the adopted West Berkshire Local Plan. The overall approach in these documents is positive in relation to this planning application in so far as it involves safeguarding employment-generating activity in respect of an already significant employment use.

4.3 The application site is located within the existing AWE industrial complex and falls within open countryside as defined by the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006. Accordingly Policies OVS2, ENV18 and ECON2A of the WBDLP are material. Although policy ENV18 is generally restrictive of new development in the countryside it does allow for development when the other policies of the local plan are met.

4.4 Policy ECON2A of the WBDLP relates to employment schemes on non-protected sites (i.e. sites that are not designated as potential employment areas) and states that the proposals to redevelop, re-use or extend existing employment generating sites will be permitted subject to meeting a number of criteria.

4.5 Criterion (a) states that the proposed buildings and structures are to be of a scale and character appropriate to the nature of the site and sympathetic to the surrounding environment. As explained elsewhere in this statement and in the Design and Access Statement, the HEFF development comprises two structures with gross floorspace of 5398 sq m and 482 sq m. The maximum heights of the two buildings will be 11.975 m and 7.8m respectively. Whilst the buildings will be large, they will be seen in the context of other built development on the AWE site and will, as the Landscape and Visual Assessment chapter of the Defence Exempt Environmental Appraisal indicates, have only limited impact on their surroundings. The implementation of proposed landscaping will 'contain' the visual impact of the buildings. It is considered that the proposal will not offend criterion (a).

4.6 Criterion (b) requires that "landscape proposals are included as an integral part of the scheme to help blend the development into the wider environment". As the Landscape and Visual Assessment chapter of the Environmental Appraisal indicates, AWE Aldermaston is generally well contained in the local landscape by extensive and successive layers of vegetation. The landscape quality of eastern part of the AWE within which HEFF will be located is "ordinary" to "good" and of "medium" landscape value and "moderate" sensitivity to change. The proposed development, including landscape proposals seeks to improve the quality of the built environment and, through the adoption of an overall landscape strategy, to enhance the setting of this part of AWE Aldermaston, in compliance with criterion (b).

4.7 Criterion (c) states that "proposals should make provision for employment opportunities important to the local economy". The HEFF proposals will accommodate 36 staff who will transfer from other locations at Aldermaston and Burghfield. It is estimate that approximately 70 – 75 workers will be employed during the 24 month construction period of the project. It is considered that the proposal does not contravene criterion (c).

4.8 Criterion (d) states that there should be no material intensification of use leading to increased traffic activity as other forms of environmental intrusion and criterion (e) states that there should be "no transport/highways objections and adequate provision should be made for access and parking". The replacement HEFF facility will bring together on a single site a number of related operations currently located across the Aldermaston and Burghfield sites and as a result will rationalise activities and movements into a single operational site. No specific car parking is provided on the HEFF site, other car parks being available within AWE Aldermaston. AWE also has an on-going commitment to the implementation of a Travel Plan, a copy of which is attached at Annexe D. There is therefore no conflict with either criteria (d) or (e).

4.9 Criterion (f) states that the proposed development should not give rise to pressure for housing development additional to the provision made in the Local Plan. No additional staff will be employed as a result of this development since existing staff will be transferred from existing facilities at Aldermaston and Burghfield. No pressure for additional housing will be created as a result of this proposal. Criterion (f) is not therefore offended.

4.10 This overall approach is most clearly reflected in the West Berkshire Local Plan. Paragraph 4.5.2A in the plan, for example, states that:

"A number of MoD sites are located in West Berkshire rural area, which are extremely important to the local economy. The sites concerned are AWE Burghfield and Aldermaston and RAF Welford and the Army establishment at Hermitage".

4.11 Paragraph 2.521 also includes the following reference:

"applications submitted for Crown development relating to existing establishments would be supported where required for the continuation of operational activities related to the use of the establishment within the context of other policies in the Plan".

4.12 Given that this application is wholly justified on the basis of the continuation of operational activities at an existing establishment there is thus a large measure of support that can be drawn from the development plan in relation to these proposals.

4.13 There are numerous other development plan policies of relevance to the application that are reviewed in the Environmental Appraisal. These generally concern issues related to more detailed matters such as visual and landscape impact, design, access and transport that are, in themselves, material considerations in any event.

Other Considerations

4.14 As already noted above there are likely to be a wide range of considerations that will be relevant to the determination of this planning application. The environmental appraisal, for example, addresses all pertinent environmental issues as well as socio-economic implications and the full scope of planning policies. The weight and significance attributed to these issues will vary. However, during the period leading up to the submission of the application the following issues featured frequently in general discussions with local communities, councils and other stakeholders.

(i) Local Employment

4.15 New investment in the Aldermaston and Burghfield sites overall will result in the creation of employment. However the HEFF proposal itself will not directly involve the creation of new jobs. A total of 36 people will be based at HEFF; these are already employees of AWE based elsewhere at Aldermaston and Burghfield. Their confirmed employment will be safeguarded by this proposal.

(ii) Access and Transportation

4.16 The operation of HEFF will have minimal impact on access and transportation issues as employees who will be based at the new facility are already working elsewhere on the Aldermaston and Burghfield sites.

4.17 For information a copy of the overall transport implication of the SDCP is attached at Annexe E. The AWE Travel Plan is attached at Annexe F.

(iii) Construction Activity

4.18 Again, this is an inevitable consequence of increased economic activity that also gives rise to its own transportation issues, albeit temporary ones. This planning application includes a detailed and specific response to this issue in relation to the proposals themselves and it is fully acknowledged in the Transport Assessment. On the basis of these proposals and other controls which can if necessary be the subject of appropriate planning conditions and/or incorporated in a legal agreement, the effects of the construction processes can be minimised and appropriately mitigated.

(iv) Visual effects

4.19 The proposals are set within an existing developed area which has an industrial appearance and it can already be clearly seen from surrounding areas to varying degrees.

Supporting Studies

4.20 In addition to the information provided with the application itself, there are a number of studies, strategies and guidance documents that have informed the proposal but which also serve a wider purpose and/or area.

4.21 These documents are appended to this statement. They include the SDCP and SSA which provide the land-use and environmental context for the application. Other matters covered include construction, energy, surface water, design and site wide transport issues. These are all issues that have been and continued to be progressed by AWE in any event but represent relevant background material to this specific proposal.

5 DESIGN PRINCIPLES

5.1 The proposal has been designed to provide two attractive modern buildings offering the best environment for the staff who work there and which reflects the purpose to which the development will be put.

5.2 The HEFF building has been designed to a maximum two storey for operational reasons. The overhanging roof system contrasts with the angular flow throughout the main body of the elevation to give the building a distinguished appearance. The proposed building is intended as setting a standard towards meeting the long-term vision of establishing a world-class science park at Aldermaston and Burghfield.

5.3 In order to meet explosives safety requirements, the facility will be of reinforced concrete construction with external lightweight cladding. Internally the process block within HEFF will have reinforced concrete walls to segregate the various process operations with mezzanine floors within the process itself to support plant for ventilation and temperature control. The ground floor slab will be a reinforced concrete raft foundation and slab bearing directly on the ground. There will be no glazed windows in either the process block or the support building. Within the support block, standard blockwork or metal clad partition walls will divide the rooms and the building will be clad externally to match the process block.

5.4 A copy of the Site and Architectural Design Principles for Buildings, to which all new buildings at AWE must comply is attached at Annexe G.

5.5 HEFF has been designed in accordance with the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment method (BREEAM). The development will achieve an 'Excellent' BREEAM rating. A copy of the BREEAM Assessment is attached at Annex H.

Landscaping

5.6 The site on which the proposed buildings are to be erected comprises grassland with services, access tracks and scattered trees many of which are mature and reaching the end of their useful lives. Although the proposed development will result in the loss of approximately 50 mature and over mature trees, the retention of adjacent groups of trees and vegetation including those along the AWE site boundaries will ensure a mature natural framework within which the proposed development will sit. New replacement tree and native shrub planting is proposed as part of the scheme in order to reinforce this framework and this will assist in reducing the landscape and visual impact of the development both within and beyond the site boundary.

5.7 The proposed ponds, part of the Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS), in addition to their principal function of attenuating surface water drainage, will also be landscaped and will be planted with marginal vegetation to improve biodiversity. Earth displaced by excavations for foundations and the SUDS ponds will be used to form mounds characteristic of the eastern sector of AWE Aldermaston and which will also increase the containment of views of the proposed development. A copy of the Surface Water Drainage Report for the HEFF proposal is attached at Annexe I.

Tree Protection

5.8 All tree removals will wherever possible be undertaken outside the bird breeding and bat roosting season (March to September inclusive).

5.9 Prior to any felling or clearance operations, individual trees, sections of hedgerow and other vegetation to be removed will be identified and clearly marked on site. All retained vegetation will be protected from damage during clearance operations.

5.10 During construction operations all trees to be retained, together with hedgerows and any other shrubby vegetation will be fenced off and protected in accordance with BS5837:2005.

5.11 Existing groups of trees to be removed are illustrated on the Application Master Plan. (Figure 5.1 in the Environmental Appraisal).

Parking

5.12 Cars are not allowed to enter the explosives area. Consequently staff parking provision is made elsewhere within the general car parking areas on the AWE complex. Hard surfaced areas are located at the west and eastern ends of the HEFF building for operational purposes. These are linked to the network of roadways within the AWE complex.

Construction related facilities

5.13 The Construction phase is expected to last about 2 years. Construction related issues are therefore an important consideration as part of the proposals. The following construction related elements are proposed:-

- a) Car parking for HEFF Construction workers' private vehicles will be provided at the West End Construction Enclave located near the West Gate entrance to AWE. This forms part of the planning application for the new office accommodation (project GEMINI) but as it is related to temporary construction work, the Local Planning Authority will be aware that it does not require planning permission.

Construction workers will be transported to the HEFF site via shuttle buses on internal roadways:-

- b) The Contractors Compound and Contractors Compound (overflow) are located adjacent to the construction site on the east and western sides respectively of Griffin Road. The compounds will accommodate portable cabins, portable toilets, messing and some operational car parking together with bulk storage of fuels, oils and lubricants; and:-
- c) Existing roads within the AWE site will be used to gain access to the proposed new roadway.

5.14 The AWE Code of Construction Practice is attached at Annex J.

Water Resources

5.15 Reference to SUDS is made in paragraph 5.7 of this Planning Support Statement. Water Resources is covered in the Defence Exempt Environmental Appraisal. A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) in accordance with Planning Policy Statement 25: Development and Flood Risk, has been prepared and is attached at Appendix A within the Appraisal. The FRA provides information supporting the Water Resources chapter in the Environmental Appraisal and concludes that it will be necessary to provide additional storage in the HEFF development area and are met by the proposed SUDS scheme. The recommendations set out in the FRA have been addressed in the Environmental Appraisal.

Energy Efficiency

5.16 At Annex K is a copy of the Energy Strategy 2006 which sets out energy efficient measures for the whole of the Aldermaston and Burghfield estate.

6 CONCLUDING COMMENTS

6.1 The proposal is an essential component of AWE's long-term development programme which seeks to secure the replacement and refurbishment of ongoing facilities at Aldermaston and Burghfield. The proposal will result in the replacement of existing outdated buildings at both AWE sites and the construction of a modern replacement facility which will safeguard a number of existing jobs.

6.2 The replacement building will be located in the centre of the Aldermaston Explosives Area, to meet site operational requirements.

6.3 The replacement building will bring together a number of related operations located across the Aldermaston and Burghfield sites thus improving operational efficiency.

6.4 The building will be sustainable, incorporating for example a SUDS scheme to manage water run-off.

6.5 The replacement building has been designed to have minimum visual impact when viewed from a wide area through the careful use of materials and colours.

6.6 Furthermore, the building's design, which reflects its particular function, will result in a distinctive structure which will be set within an open, landscaped area.

6.7 Overall, the proposal will make a positive contribution to AWE's activities and will result in a development compliant with current planning, environmental and sustainability policies.



AWE ALDERMASTON & BURGHFIELD

**SITE DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT PLAN (SDCP)
2005-2015**

“

The Government made clear last year its commitment to maintaining the effectiveness and safety of the nuclear deterrent including making the necessary investment in the facilities at the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Aldermaston and Burghfield.

To that end agreement has been reached with AWE Management Limited (AWE ML) to take forward a programme of investment in sustaining key skills and facilities at the Atomic Weapons Establishment. This will include the provision of necessary extra supporting infrastructure. Local Planning Authorities will be consulted on this work in the normal way, under the provisions of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2005.

The purpose of this investment of some £350 million over each of the next three years is to ensure that we can maintain the existing Trident warhead stockpile throughout its intended in-service life. In the absence of the ability to undertake live nuclear testing given that the UK has signed and ratified the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, it is necessary to invest in the facilities at AWE which will provide assurance that the existing Trident warhead stockpile is reliable and safe.

”

John Reid
Secretary of State for Defence
19th July 2005

A large, thick black stylized 'C' shape that is open on the right side, framing the central text.

AWE ALDERMASTON & BURGHFIELD

SITE DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT PLAN (SDCP)
2005-2015

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1.introduction

background

- 1.1 The Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) is located at sites at Aldermaston, Burghfield and Blacknest in the administrative area of West Berkshire. AWE has played a central role in national defence for more than 50 years and is responsible for the entire life cycle of the United Kingdom's nuclear warheads, from initial research and design, through component manufacture and assembly, to in-service support and final decommissioning and disposal.
- 1.2 AWE Plc manages and operates the Atomic Weapons Establishment on behalf of the Secretary of State for Defence under a 25-year contract that commenced in April 2000.
- 1.3 AWE's core mission is to build and maintain the warheads for the submarine-launched Trident ballistic missile system that today forms the United Kingdom's sole nuclear deterrent. AWE is also required to maintain a capability to design a successor warhead to Trident should it ever be required in the future.
- 1.4 The Secretary of State for Defence informed Parliament in 2004 that the UK Government remains committed to maintaining the safety and effectiveness of the current nuclear deterrent, including making the necessary investment at AWE. The Government also remains committed to keeping open options for a successor to Trident.
- 1.5 In July 2005 the Secretary of State for Defence announced a three-year investment programme amounting to an additional £350m per year in order to:-

"... maintain the existing Trident warhead stockpile throughout its intended service life. In the absence of the ability to undertake live nuclear testing given that the UK has signed and ratified the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, it is necessary to invest in the facilities at AWE which will provide assurance that the existing Trident warhead stockpile is reliable and safe".
- 1.6 The Secretary of State also confirmed that the local planning authority would be consulted in the normal way on the land-use aspects of the programme in the context of current planning legislation.

1.introduction

aim

- 1.7 The primary purposes of this document are to define the broad parameters of the Government's July 2005 investment programme in land use terms and to facilitate early discussion with the relevant planning authorities and other stakeholders.
- 1.8 The Site Development Context Plan (SDCP) includes 10 year Illustrative Site Development Framework Plans for each of the two principal sites at Aldermaston and Burghfield. These plans set out the principal land-use proposals that are the subject of the investment programme at an end date of 2015. No specific, significant proposals are involved in respect of the much smaller AWE Blacknest site.
- 1.9 An accompanying Strategic Sustainability Appraisal (SSA) has also been prepared which describes the key areas of potential effects on the environment and those who live and work around the site. The SSA also identifies how these issues will be addressed and managed by AWE as the programme progresses.
- 1.10 The SDCP and SSA represent the first step in a continuous review process to ensure that the context for more detailed proposals is up to date and the likely overall impact of the investment programme can be assessed at all relevant stages.

historical development

- 1.11 Very briefly, the history of development at Aldermaston and Burghfield is as follows:
 - Pre 1939 – the Aldermaston site was a mediaeval deer park known as Aldermaston Common and Burghfield was predominantly farming land.
 - 1939-1950 – both sites were initially requisitioned by the Ministry of Supply, with Aldermaston ultimately operating as a base for the US Army Air Force Troop Carrier Groups and Burghfield becoming an Ordnance Factory.
 - 1951-2002 – both sites were selected to support the UK Atomic Weapons Programme with Aldermaston primarily involved in research and Burghfield producing various component parts and assembling the weapons. Direct employment at both sites is estimated to have peaked at around 6000 people.
 - 2002 – Site Development Strategy Plan (SDSP) published including transfer of all activity to AWE Aldermaston.
 - 2003 – decision to retain AWE Burghfield for operational reasons.
 - 2005 – Secretary of State announces investment programme to modernise existing facilities.

1.introduction

document format

- 1.12 Section 2 of this document briefly describes the nature of the overall programme and identifies its key components.
- 1.13 Section 3 sets out the key constraints and opportunities which have influenced the general approach to both sites and the specific proposals including those related to landscape, transport, legacy and sustainability considerations.
- 1.14 Section 4 addresses the land use principles that have been applied in formulating the illustrative framework plans.
- 1.15 Section 5 explains the intended sequencing of new development which will be the subject of submissions to West Berkshire Council, in consultation with neighbouring authorities, over the next few years.

2. the 2005-2015 programme

introduction

- 2.1 The overall approach to the modernisation of AWE Aldermaston and AWE Burghfield put forward in this programme is based on refurbishing and replacing facilities constructed principally in the 1950s and 60s.

The key elements of this approach are:

- improving standards of design
 - enhancing environmental performance
 - reducing environmental impact
 - managing traffic
 - maximising community benefits
- 2.2 The programme involves the re-use of previously developed or "brownfield" sites in accordance with one of the major themes of Government Policy.
- 2.3 This re-use needs to be achieved whilst maintaining continuity in relation to the activities and processes occurring on the sites and having regard to important issues such as decommissioning safety and security which are all carried out in the context of nuclear site licences and other stringent controls.
- 2.4 These factors support the view that there is no practical and sustainable alternative to AWE's continued presence at Aldermaston and Burghfield.
- 2.5 Both sites have a long history of positive co-existence with the local community and provide significant employment and other economic benefits.

the SDSP context

- 2.6 As indicated in the general introduction, against the background of the Aldermaston Site Development Strategy Plan (SDSP), this document and the associated plans seeks to set out a more specific land-use framework identifying individual proposals to be completed within the 10-year period 2005-2015 at both Aldermaston and Burghfield.

- 2.7 The components of the programme are very similar to those put forward in the SDSP. They are set in the context of the same safety, operational and environmental principles. In this regard they can be placed under the following five headings in relation to the broad types of development:-

- Manufacturing/production.
- Testing/research.
- Computing/communications.
- Offices and business support accommodation.
- Environmental proposals and programmes.

2. the 2005-2015 programme

2.8 In addition AWE will continue an on-going programme of modernisation of the service infrastructure within both sites. For example, the long-term aim remains to remove the majority of the above ground steam supply system.

principal programme components

2.9 The main elements of the programme have been split into those requiring new buildings and those involving significant in situ refurbishment of existing buildings and plant. As far as the latter are concerned, the framework plans only show the major examples to indicate where there will be significant construction and related activity. More minor refurbishments will take place at both sites over the period to 2015 and these will be taken into account in arriving at estimates of overall construction related activity and associated traffic movements.

2.10 Where refurbishment involves material changes to the appearance of any building or plant, individual applications will be submitted.

2.11 The principal "new build" elements in the programme are set out in the following tables (A – Aldermaston, B – Burghfield).

2.12 Their general, proposed locations are shown on the respective framework plans AWE1 (Aldermaston) and AWE2 (Burghfield) which accompany this document.

2. 2005-2015 programme

new build projects

Manufacturing/Production

Reference (See Illustrative Framework plans for site locations)	Location	Indicative floor space (m ²)	Indicative height (m) (building only)
1.	A	10,000	5-10
2.	A	20,000	10-15
3.	A	3,000	5-10
4.	A	1,500	5-10
5.	B	3,000	5-10
6.	B	2,000	5-10
7.	B	7,000	10-15

Testing/Research

Proposal	Location	Indicative floor space (m ²)	Indicative height (m) (building only)
8.	A	6,000	20-30
9.	A	3,000	5-10
10.	A	12,000	15-20
11.	A	500	5-10
12.	B	9,000	5-10

Computing/Communications

Proposal	Location	Indicative floorspace (m ²)	Indicative height (m) (building only)
13.	A	4,500	5-10
14.	A	100	5-10
15.	A	100	5-10

2. the 2005-2015 programme

Office & Business Support Accommodation

Proposal	Location	Indicative floorspace (m ²)	Indicative height m (building only)
16.	A	24,000	15-20
17.	A	12,000	15-20
18.	A	9,000	5-10
19.	A	2,000	5-10
20.	A	1500 spaces approx.	N/A
21.	A	500 spaces approx.	N/A

Environmental proposals and programmes

Proposal	Location	Indicative floorspace (m ²)	Indicative height m (building only)
22.	A	N/A	N/A
23.	A/B	N/A	N/A

2.13 Most of the additional employment will arise in the context of the proposed office accommodation at Aldermaston, the majority of which is programmed to be completed by 2009. For both Burghfield and Aldermaston, it is expected that the implementation of the programme will not lead to levels of employment greater than those associated with the sites in the past.

2.14 The construction process will involve employment levels over and above the operational workforce whilst building occurs. The impact of the construction process itself and the additional employment it involves will be assessed and managed in accordance with a co-ordinated strategy for both sites.

2.15 Increased employment and the activity associated with construction will also involve significant economic benefits particularly in respect of the local community.

2. 2005-2015 programme

further studies

2.16 In addition to the principal new build projects and the major refurbishments, further studies and assessments will be undertaken. For example in the early part of the programme there will be a focus on the western part of the Aldermaston site, including studies that deal primarily with the future use and operation of the West Gate and the area utilised by the Recreation Society. These are both related to the potential for creating a higher quality entrance to the Aldermaston site.

2.17 Specific studies to support the programme will also include:

- Transport Assessment
- Landscape and Visual Assessment
- Construction Logistics Strategy

a dynamic programme

2.18 Inevitably, with a project of this complexity, there are likely to be modifications and variations to the schedule of proposals and the associated framework plans as the programme develops. However, the overall context for the proposals represented in this document is not expected to change materially.

2.19 If other developments come forward outside the context of the programme set out in this document, the local planning authority and other key stakeholders will be involved at an early stage.

3. opportunities & constraints

introduction

- 3.1 The accompanying plans (AWE3 and AWE4) show the principal opportunities and constraints affecting both sites. Given their respective locations and characteristics Aldermaston and Burghfield give rise to different issues and challenges.
- 3.5 For a variety of operational and practical reasons there is little scope or need to depart from the overall land-use pattern at Aldermaston. Indeed, there is merit in seeking to accentuate and reinforce these distinctions.

site specific constraints & opportunities

Aldermaston

- 3.2 Aldermaston can be divided into three broad functional areas. The eastern part of the site to the east of the main north south access road (Griffin Road) is principally devoted to activity associated with conventional explosives and is currently licensed by the Ministry of Defence Ordnance Safety Group (DOSG).
- 3.3 To the west of Griffin Road the site splits generally into two areas. To the north is the Nuclear Storage and Processing Area (NSPA). This is devoted mainly to the nuclear aspects of the site's activities and is subject to additional levels of security.
- 3.4 To the south the area is principally characterised by business support activities including the majority of the existing office accommodation on the site. This is referred to below as the Business Support Zone. The area of this zone within which most redevelopment is proposed is referred to as West End.
- 3.6 For the Business Support Zone there is a significant opportunity to improve the presentation and image of the site without unduly compromising its historic layout. In this latter regard, Aldermaston is unique in land use terms. It has evolved in a particular historical context rooted in the 1950s and 60s and it is considered important to retain the overall character of the area whilst at the same time taking the opportunity to maintain and develop the world class status of its scientific and engineering community.

Aldermaston Business Support Zone

Aldermaston NSPA

- 3.7 The primary considerations relating to this area must be focussed on safety, operational efficiency and security with all other considerations wholly subservient to these fundamental factors. Inevitably, therefore, the area will continue to have a functional appearance.

3. opportunities & constraints

Aldermaston Eastern Area

- 3.8 Constraints in this part of the site are also dominated by safety, security and the need to maintain functional continuity during construction.
- 3.9 This creates a potentially complex picture related to the quantity distances (QDs) that must be maintained around buildings licensed to process and handle explosives. The amount and type of material involved and the nature of the buildings in which they are located defines the extent of the QD and the number of people permitted within it.
- 3.10 This means that during the project period, maximum flexibility must be maintained to move material and activities within the licensed area to minimise the restrictions associated with QDs. In addition, in the context of the current regulatory regime the licensed area could not be significantly reduced without prejudicing the implementation of the proposed new facilities and the overall operation of the area.
- 3.11 Restricted access to the eastern area does however have the benefit that, in nature conservation terms, it includes some valuable habitats.

- 3.12 With appropriate management there is the potential opportunity to protect and enhance these environmental resources, both now and in the long term, without affecting operational capability.

Burghfield

- 3.13 A significant site-specific constraint at Burghfield arises from its past history as a location for the processing and production of conventional explosives and munitions. This legacy will require a long-term programme of characterisation and subsequent clearance which is already under way.
- 3.14 In addition, any new buildings need to be in close proximity to the existing assembly facilities to ensure continuity of operations and appropriate levels of security at all stages.

3. opportunities & constraints

General Issues

traffic & transportation

3.15 A survey has been undertaken of the existing work force to assist in the formulation of a travel plan and inform development of the SDCP and the SSA.

3.16 For both Aldermaston and Burghfield it is fully recognised that transportation, including access, is a significant and important issue, particularly during the construction period. Whilst the latter involves temporary impacts, construction will occur over an extended period and will require careful management and control. A Transport Assessment (TA) is currently in preparation.

3.17 In the context of an overall travel plan for both sites there are significant opportunities to achieve:-

- Sustainable transport choices for staff, contractors and visitors.
- Improved accessibility to the development by walking, cycling, passenger transport and car sharing,
- A reduction in the need to travel, especially alone by car, and
- A reduction in vehicular movements within the sites.

3.18 These principles fully accord with national, regional and local planning policies aimed principally at reducing use of the private car.

landscape

3.19 A Landscape and Vegetation Appraisal has been undertaken for both sites. Further detailed assessment is being undertaken of the individual elements of the project.

3.20 Aldermaston is a large site which has few immediately recognisable reference points or landmarks. The industrial nature of many of the buildings and the homogeneity of much of the mid 20th century architecture can also be confusing for those trying to navigate the site and who do not already know it well. The site is evident in views from some public view points, visible within a well wooded landscape context.

3.21 In this regard there is an opportunity to enhance the legibility of the site through the design and treatment of the open space network and also improve the quality of the external environment through the introduction of additional structure planting and upgrading the hard landscape materials.

3. opportunities & constraints

3.22 Burghfield is smaller although it too lacks clear reference points. This will become less of an issue, however, as the current operational area contracts and the grid pattern of accessways which characterises the site becomes less dominant.

3.23 For operational and security reasons the boundary fences will remain clearly visible. However, if opportunities arise further internal boundary planting will be introduced.

3.24 Overall, the programme will address opportunities within the sites to:-

- Respond to and enhance the existing local landscape settings.
- Maintain existing landscape character.
- Maintain existing landscape features.
- Reinforce landscape structure.
- Improve landscape structure through additional planting and upgrading the approach to hard surface treatment.
- Retain, where possible, all important and healthy trees.
- To provide additional boundary planting where appropriate.

- Ensure that all future planting, in the context of any future development or landscape management, is of a sufficient scale, to significantly enhance the landscape context of both sites.
- Achieve a more attractive and high quality external presentation whilst ensuring that security is maintained.

sustainability

3.25 There will be significant opportunities to meet wider sustainability objectives as the development programme for Aldermaston and Burghfield proceeds. The current building stock is generally inefficient in relation to energy consumption and other infrastructure such as the above ground steam distribution system which will require replacement.

3.26 The development programme will involve significant improvements to the ageing utility infrastructure. The following opportunities will be addressed in respect of all development and infrastructure proposals:-

- Maintaining the status of both sites as "good neighbours" within their host communities including maximising economic and social benefits.
- Providing employees with modern and attractive facilities that are safe, comfortable and an aid to recruiting and retaining high quality staff.

3. opportunities & constraints

- Continuing to minimise the impact on the environment of operational and construction activities.
- Continuing an on-going programme of de-commissioning, demolition and de-contamination consistent with the above principles.

demolition & decommissioning

- 3.27 There are few examples of contamination arising from the operation of either site in the context of their current or historical uses and none which significantly constrain the implementation of the investment programme.
- 3.28 Since the beginning of 2003, AWE has demolished more than 100 facilities on both sites. This leaves over 1100 buildings on the Aldermaston site and over 360 at Burghfield, many of which date back to the 1940s. Surveys continue to identify further buildings for demolition.

- 3.29 As the programme proceeds, and indeed beyond 2015, there will be significant opportunities where practical to continue the decommissioning and demolition which will improve the appearance of both sites as well as reducing maintenance and utility costs.

- 3.30 During demolition work great care will be taken to minimise the environmental impact and avoid disruption to neighbours. Wherever possible, material resulting from demolition will be re-used within the sites to avoid unnecessary traffic movements and consume natural resources.

the community

- 3.31 AWE already has a close relationship with the local community. Liason arrangements will be established to maximise the benefits arising from the project and to assist with the management of potential impacts.

4. land use principles&strategies

Aldermaston – General Approach

- 4.1 The overall approach to the Aldermaston site depicted on the accompanying framework plan (AWE1) is to recognise and reinforce the functional split already referred to.

Aldermaston - Business Support
Zone/West End

- 4.2 The bulk of new office accommodation is proposed to be located in the western part of the zone between the two main access roads in a high quality campus style format. The eastern section of the zone, developed principally in the 1950s and 60s, will be retained in its current form and any future redevelopment or refurbishment will preserve its basic layout.
- 4.3 An area including the new office campus and the area to the east is also proposed as a pedestrian priority zone with car parking provided to the north and south and associated strong pedestrian links.
- 4.4 As indicated in Section 2, work will also be undertaken to examine the feasibility of changing the principal, visitor entrance to the West Gate to improve the presentation of the site.
- 4.5 This could include moving the security fence as shown on the framework plan to maximise the positive impact of the new office accommodation from the main access road establishing a first class "gateway" to the Aldermaston facility. The design of improvements in this location will be considered in detail with all relevant stakeholders.
- 4.6 To the south of the main access road close to the West Gate a major new car parking area is proposed principally to serve the new and existing offices. This is currently a partially cleared area containing some of the older buildings on the site.
- 4.7 The aim is thus to seek to make the West End of the support zone the primary entrance to the Aldermaston site and to create a clear, high quality focus for the site including significant new hard and soft landscape works to reinforce the sites legibility.

4. land use principles&strategies

4.8 The western part of the Aldermaston site also includes recreation facilities including a building complex which requires significant expenditure to either refurbish existing provision or provide new facilities.

4.9 Again, as Section 2 of this document indicates, AWE are commissioning a comprehensive study on the usage and demand for various recreation facilities to inform the overall approach to this part of the site.

Aldermaston NSPA

4.10 The most appropriate location for new buildings in this area is in its southern section. Within the NSPA there are three major refurbishments proposed. The remainder of this part of the NSPA is affected by an on going decommissioning programme, which does not facilitate redevelopment within the programme timescale.

Aldermaston Eastern Area

4.11 As proposed in the SDSP all conventional explosive related activity is to be consolidated on the Aldermaston site. Overall, the aim is to concentrate facilities with the largest potential explosive inventories in the centre of the licensed area.

4.12 In the light of the current regulatory regime, uses that involve smaller or non existent QDs can be located on the periphery. The general principle must nevertheless be to maintain maximum dispersal and keep QDs contained within the licensed area boundary as much as possible.

4.13 Within the operational constraints in the eastern area, there is an opportunity for some additional tree planting in the context of an overall management plan. Large scale tree planting however would not be consistent with the heath land habitat that characterises most of the area.

4.14 An environmental management plan will be prepared for this eastern area to ensure that the existing environmental resources are protected and, wherever possible, that enhancement proposals are adopted. In particular, a grass cutting management regime will be explored which, taking into account the regulatory requirements, allows the original heath land habitat to be restored wherever possible.

land use principles strategies

Burghfield – General Approach

- 4.15 The overall approach to Burghfield (Plan AWE2) will involve consolidation of operational uses in the northern part of the site, progressive characterisation and subsequent clearance and decontamination of the remainder of the site generally working from north to south. This remediation work will extend beyond 2015.
- 4.16 Whilst the site is set within a well established landscape framework, and therefore limited in views from the wider landscape, opportunities have been identified for additional planting to reinforce the sites enclosure, especially along the western edge.
- 4.18 The framework plan identifies specific, longer term clearance areas at Aldermaston where the aim is to eventually remove existing buildings and structures. These proposals will be kept under review in the light of progress on the main construction and refurbishment programme.
- transport
- 4.19 The Transport Strategy will involve the adoption of demand management through more control of on-site parking, the implementation of a travel plan and by managing movements both on and off site.

common issues

demolition & clearance

- 4.17 A significant amount of demolition will be required to facilitate new building and the refurbishment of some facilities on both sites. Given the levels of construction activity that are likely over the project period, significant clearance work not directly related to the implementation of the investment programme will need to be carefully managed.
- 4.20 Development of the travel plan has already commenced and it will be progressed in parallel with the development programme.
- 4.21 Key elements of the strategy could include:-
- Introducing a gate and parking permit system that allocates drivers to a specific car park and a gate. This is most relevant at Aldermaston.
 - Consolidating car parking in specific locations as shown on the illustrative framework plans.

4. land use principles&strategies

- An overall gate access strategy taking into account operational, movement and security considerations.
- Confirming dedicated gates for construction traffic and associated management.
- Reducing Single Occupancy Vehicles (through car sharing, bus travel, improved walking/cycling links and adoption of flexible working where possible).
- Staff and community consultation at an early stage of the process of implementing travel initiatives.

4.22 The local authority and all relevant stakeholders will be closely involved in the process of developing and implementing the strategy

Landscape Strategy

4.23 As indicated above, there is a clear need to improve the hard landscape materials and the soft landscape structure in key locations to reinforce the urban design principles, setting the development into a coherent and high quality landscape structure.

Construction

4.24 The framework plans have been prepared on the basis that construction activity would be contained within both sites in terms of compounds and lay-down areas. In this regard potential areas at both Aldermaston and Burghfield are identified on the respective plans.

4.25 In addition construction related traffic movements will require detailed management, both within and outside the site, having regard to impact on the relevant highway networks, security and operational continuity. This may involve temporarily defining self-contained construction areas which will be subject to specific arrangements.

5. development sequence

approach

- 5.1 The development programme will involve the submission of applications to West Berkshire Council over the next three years relating to the new development proposals. The details of this approach will be the subject of pre-application discussions with the Local Planning Authority. Some proposals may be the subject of individual applications, whilst others can be grouped together to some extent. In overall terms, the general sequence of development over the next 3 years is likely to be:
1. Proposals 14, 15, 18, 19 - late 2005
 2. Proposal 8 - early 2006
 3. Proposals 16 (part), 20 (part), 21 (part), 22 (part), 23 (part) - mid 2006
 4. Proposal 3 - mid 2006
 5. Proposal 6 - late 2006
 6. Proposal 2 - mid 2007
 7. Proposal 7 - late 2007
 8. Proposals 4, 5, 9 - 13, 17 - 2008
- 5.2 As already indicated, the SDCP provides the overall context for more detailed submissions. Inevitably, as individual components of the programme become more developed and strategies covering issues such as transport and construction evolve, there may well be a need to review the overall picture. However, the basic components of the programme are not expected to change materially and this document therefore represents a robust contextual basis for considering the overall development.
- 5.3 Any significant development outside the context of the SDCP will be the subject of further exercises such as this.



ILLUSTRATIVE FRAMEWORK PLAN

AWE 1-ALDERMASTON 2005-2015

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REV I



ILLUSTRATIVE FRAMEWORK PLAN AWE 2 - BURGHFIELD 2005-2015

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REV D



OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS PLAN AWE 3-ALDERMASTON

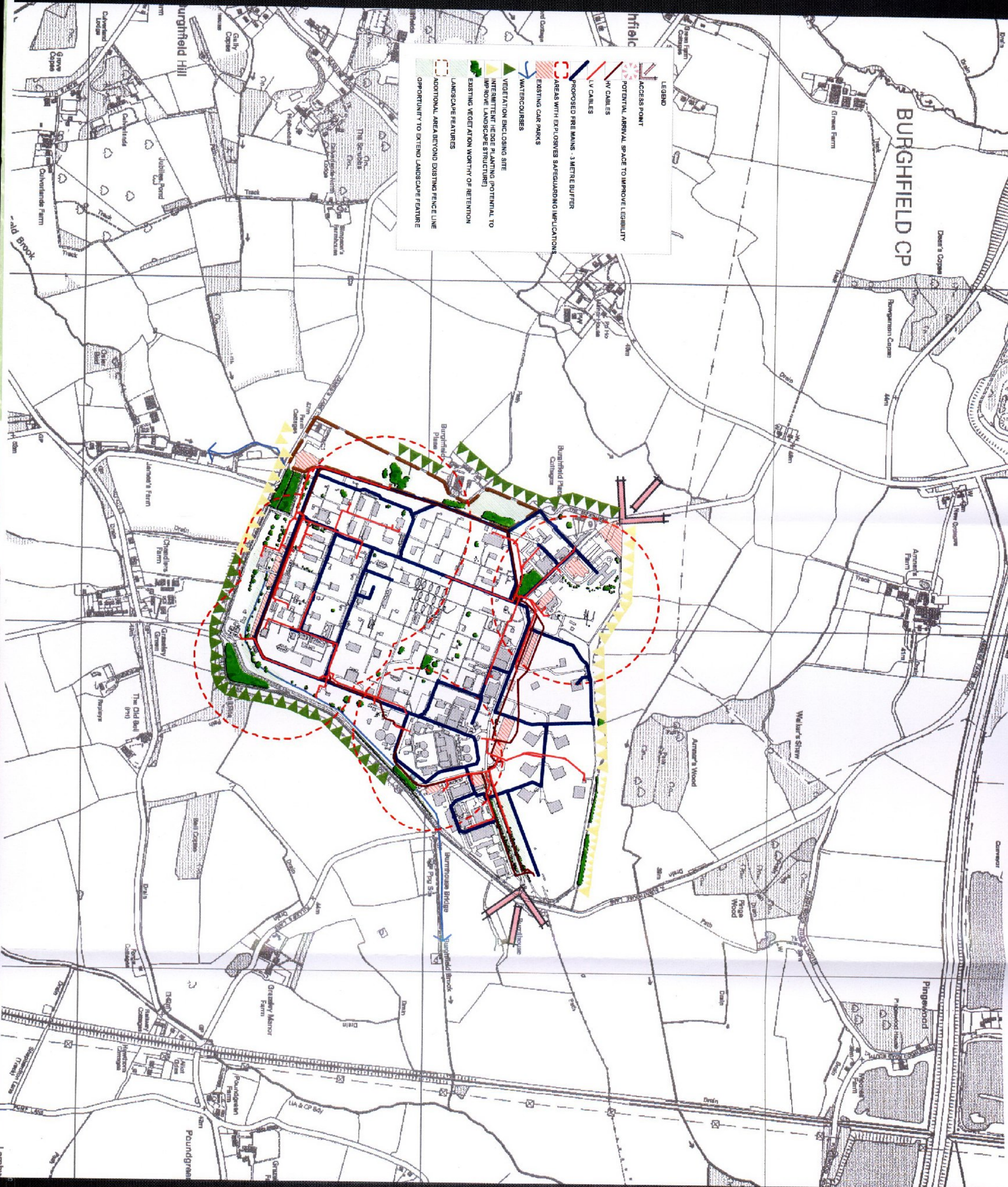
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REV A



OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS PLAN AWE 4-BURGHFIELD

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