



COUNCILS AND
COMMUNITIES
IN PARTNERSHIP

Gary Lugg
Head of Planning & Trading Standards
West Berkshire Council
Council Offices, Market Street
Newbury, Berkshire
RG14 5LD



7 January 2009

Dear Mr Lugg,

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990
CONSULTATION UNDER SCHEDULE 1, PARAGRAPH 7(3)**

**RE: PLANNING APPLICATION LOCAL AUTHORITY REFERENCE –
08/02287/COMIND - AWE, BURGFIELD, READING, BERKSHIRE**

OUR REFERENCE: A/08/111

Thank you for your consultation on the above planning application.

Members of the Regional Planning Committee have considered the application proposals against the current adopted regional spatial strategy (RPG9 and Alterations) and the emerging RSS (the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to the draft South East Plan as published on 17 July 2008) and agreed the following response.

The South East England Regional Assembly makes the following observations:

- On the basis of the information provided, it is considered that the proposed development would not materially conflict with or prejudice the implementation of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RPG9 and Alterations) or the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to the draft South East Plan (July 2008).
- If the council is minded to grant planning permission, it should secure the following through appropriately worded conditions and/or legal agreements:
 - The phasing and delivery of new or improved infrastructure to meet the needs of the development including an appropriate package of transport infrastructure and an agreed travel plan to promote alternatives to the car in accordance with Policies T1, T10 and T13 (RPG9 as altered) and Policies CC7, T1, T2 and T5 of the Proposed Changes to the draft South East Plan;

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- An appropriate level of car and cycle parking to comply with Policy T12 of RPG9 (as altered) and Policy T4 of the Proposed Changes to the draft South East Plan;
- A design relevant to context that promotes a high quality of environment consistent with Policy Q2 of RPG9 and Policy CC6 of the Proposed Changes to the draft South East Plan;
- The incorporation of water and energy efficiency measures and the promotion of renewable energy and sustainable construction in accordance with Policies INF2, INF4 and INF5 of RPG9 and Policies CC2, CC3, CC4, NRM11, NRM12, W2 and M1 of the Proposed Changes to the draft South East Plan;
- Appropriate mitigation measures in relation to flood risk, air quality, noise and impacts on groundwater and rivers and measures to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the site and surrounding area in accordance with Policies E2, E7 and INF2 of RPG9 and Policies NRM1, NRM2, NRM4, NRM5, NRM9 and NRM10 of the Proposed Changes to the draft South East Plan.

I attach a copy of the report presented to members of the Regional Planning Committee for your information. If you wish to discuss any aspect of our response, please contact Sue Janota on 01483 555224 or suejanota@southeast-ra.gov.uk.

I would be grateful if I could be informed of the decision in due course and receive copies of the Decision Notice and Committee Report.

Yours sincerely,



Catriona Riddell
Director of Planning

Cc John Cheston, Government Office South East

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE**

RPC SUB-GROUP – STATUTORY CONSULTATIONS



Date: 6 January 2009

Subject Planning application consultation reference: A/08/111

Site Address:	AWE Burghfield, Reading, Berkshire
Proposal:	Full planning application for construction of a main process facility and support building with 16 x lightning protector towers, associated plant building, gate houses, vehicle inspection bays, substation buildings, hardstanding, SuDs infrastructure and landscaping.
Local Planning Authority	West Berkshire Council
Applicant:	Ministry of Defence
Date consultation issued:	22 December 2008

Report of: **Regional Planner**

Recommendation:

The South East England Regional Assembly makes the following observations:

- On the basis of the information provided, it is considered that the proposed development would not materially conflict with or prejudice the implementation of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RPG9 and Alterations) or the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to the draft South East Plan (July 2008).
- If the council is minded to grant planning permission, it should secure the following through appropriately worded conditions and/or legal agreements:
 - The phasing and delivery of new or improved infrastructure to meet the needs of the development including an appropriate package of transport infrastructure and an agreed travel plan to promote alternatives to the car in accordance with Policies T1, T10 and T13 (RPG9 as altered) and Policies CC7, T1, T2 and T5 of the Proposed Changes to the draft South East Plan;
 - An appropriate level of car and cycle parking to comply with Policy T12 of RPG9 (as altered) and Policy T4 of the Proposed Changes to the draft South East Plan;
 - A design relevant to context that promotes a high quality of environment consistent with Policy Q2 of RPG9 and Policy CC6 of the Proposed Changes to the draft South East Plan;

- The incorporation of water and energy efficiency measures and the promotion of renewable energy and sustainable construction in accordance with Policies INF2, INF4 and INF5 of RPG9 and Policies CC2, CC3, CC4, NRM11, NRM12, W2 and M1 of the Proposed Changes to the draft South East Plan;
 - Appropriate mitigation measures in relation to flood risk, air quality, noise and impacts on groundwater and rivers and measures to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the site and surrounding area in accordance with Policies E2, E7 and INF2 of RPG9 and Policies NRM1, NRM2, NRM4, NRM5, NRM9 and NRM10 of the Proposed Changes to the draft South East Plan.
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1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the recommended consultation response to the above application for consideration and agreement.

2. Site Description and Background

- 2.1 The application site covers an area of approximately 21.21 hectares and is located fairly centrally within the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) site at Burghfield in an area that has been used for explosives processing since the Second World War. It is a cleared site with no buildings. The AWE Burghfield site is located approximately 0.5 km east of Burghfield village and 6 km to the south of Reading. It extends to approximately 87 hectares and is surrounded mainly by open fields and woodland areas.
- 2.2 The AWE site has been used by the Government since the 1950s to support the UK Atomic Weapons Programme and many of the existing buildings and facilities dating predominantly from the 1950s and 1960s are nearing the end of their lives. In July 2005, the Government announced an investment programme to secure the replacement and refurbishment of the facilities at AWE Burghfield. This application to replace existing operational warhead and assembly and disassembly facilities forms part of the modernisation programme and larger overall scheme of works proposed at AWE Burghfield and nearby AWE Aldermaston.

3. Details of the proposal

3.1 The proposal is a full application comprising:

- A main process facility, support building, associated plant building, gate houses, electrical sub-stations, vehicle inspection bays and an intake sub-station with a total gross floorspace of about 26,573 sq m (Use Class B1);
- Lightning protector towers;
- Two SuDs lagoons;
- Temporary construction enclave
- Access roads and an area of hardstanding.

There will be no increase in employment levels as a result of the proposal.

3.2 The planning application is accompanied by several supporting documents including a supporting Planning Statement, a 'Defence Exempt Environmental Appraisal', Design and Access Statement, Transport Assessment and Flood Risk Assessment.

4. Main Issues and Relevant Policy Considerations

4.1 The following are the main regional issues associated with the application, along with the relevant Regional Spatial Strategy policies that need to be considered:

- The location of the proposal, with the following policies being relevant:
 - Policy Q1 of RPG9 and Policy SP3 of the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to the draft South East Plan – urban focus;
- The economy, with the following policies being relevant:
 - Policies RE1, RE4 and RE5 of RPG9 and Policies RE3, WCBV1 and WCBV2 of the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to the draft South East Plan – supporting the economy and employment land.

4.2 Other material considerations are:

- i) AWE Burghfield is identified as one of a number of MoD sites located in West Berkshire's rural areas considered to be extremely important to the local economy in the West Berkshire District Local Plan (Saved Policies Amended September 2007). Policy ECON.2A supports proposals to redevelop, re-use or extend sites such as the application site for employment schemes, subject to a number of criteria.

5. Policy Assessment

Location of Development

- 5.1 Policy Q1 of RPG9 and Policy SP3 of the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to the draft South East Plan seek to direct new development and redevelopment to urban areas and to achieve at least 60% of all new development in the South East on previously developed land. Although the application site does not constitute an urban area, given that it involves redevelopment within the existing boundary of AWE Burghfield, which is identified in the West Berkshire District Local Plan (Saved Policies Amended September 2007) as being extremely important to the local economy and is required for the continued operation of existing activities, it is not considered that the proposal would materially conflict with regional and sub-regional policy objectives relating to the location of development in either RPG9 or emerging RSS.

Economy

- 5.2 Policies RE1 and RE4 of RPG9 aim to ensure the regional economy is supported and further developed so as to fully contribute to national growth and that it follows the principles of sustainable development. Policy RE5 of RPG 9 and Policy RE3 of the Proposed Changes to the draft South East Plan seek to meet the future needs of business with a focus on urban areas, but also to encourage the re-use of developed land and to make efficient use of existing sites. Policy WCBV2 of the Proposed Changes states priority should be given to the retention of existing employment land in employment use.
- 5.3 The proposed development is for the replacement of existing operational warhead assembly and disassembly facilities on the site and forms part of the MoD's larger overall modernisation programme for AWE Burghfield and AWE Aldermaston. These are identified as being extremely important to the local economy and saved Policy ECON.2a of the adopted Local Plan supports employment schemes on such sites subject to a number of criteria.
- 5.4 However, the application site is in a relatively isolated location and economic development policies in both RPG9 and the emerging RSS confirm that employment sites should be accessible by public transport. Although there will be no increase in employment levels, a travel plan, cycle storage facilities and improvements to facilities for pedestrians and cyclists in the vicinity of the site are proposed and it is important that these are secured by condition or legal agreement.
- 5.5 The proposals are therefore considered to be consistent with regional policy objectives for the economy.

Other Matters

5.6 In addition to the above, there are a number of other priorities arising out of RPG9 and the Proposed Changes to the draft South East Plan which can be dealt with by way of condition or legal agreement if the council is minded to grant planning permission. These relate to the following policy areas:

- Transport
- Infrastructure
- Built Environment
- Sustainable Construction and Energy Efficiency
- Water resources
- Air and Noise
- Natural Environment

6. Conclusions

6.1 The application seeks the redevelopment of a previously developed site within the existing boundary of AWE Burghfield, which is identified in the adopted Local Plan as one of the MoD sites located in West Berkshire's rural areas that is extremely important to the local economy. The proposed development would not materially conflict with or prejudice the implementation of RPG9 or the emerging RSS. If the council is minded to grant planning permission, it should secure measures to promote more sustainable forms of transport and address the other matters identified in this report through the imposition of appropriately worded conditions and/or legal agreements.

7. Recommendations

7.1 Members are requested to agree the following recommendation to the local authority:

The South East England Regional Assembly makes the following observations:

- On the basis of the information provided, it is considered that the proposed development would not materially conflict with or prejudice the implementation of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RPG9 and Alterations) or the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to the draft South East Plan (July 2008).
- If the council is minded to grant planning permission, it should secure the following through appropriately worded conditions and/or legal agreements:
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- Policies CC7, T1, T2 and T5 of the Proposed Changes to the draft South East Plan;
- An appropriate level of car and cycle parking to comply with Policy T12 of RPG9 (as altered) and Policy T4 of the Proposed Changes to the draft South East Plan;
 - A design relevant to context that promotes a high quality of environment consistent with Policy Q2 of RPG9 and Policy CC6 of the Proposed Changes to the draft South East Plan;
 - The incorporation of water and energy efficiency measures and the promotion of renewable energy and sustainable construction in accordance with Policies INF2, INF4 and INF5 of RPG9 and Policies CC2, CC3, CC4, NRM11, NRM12, W2 and M1 of the Proposed Changes to the draft South East Plan;
 - Appropriate mitigation measures in relation to flood risk, air quality, noise and impacts on groundwater and rivers and measures to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the site and surrounding area in accordance with Policies E2, E7 and INF2 of RPG9 and Policies NRM1, NRM2, NRM4, NRM5, NRM9 and NRM10 of the Proposed Changes to the draft South East Plan.

Sue Janota
Regional Planner

Date: 6 January 2009

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