
WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL

PLANNING APPLICATION NO. 08/02287

**AWE BURGFIELD, BURGFIELD, READING
PROJECT MENSA INCLUDING A MAIN PROCESS FACILITY, 16
LIGHTNING TOWERS AND ASSOCIATED FACILITIES AND STRUCTURES**

FINAL ADDITIONAL REPORT

Introduction

The proposals were reviewed in February 2009. Site visits were undertaken during 2006 to 2008 and in January 2009. My interim report was sent out on 19 January 2009. This report deals with the matters resulting from the Interim Report and includes my conclusions. Please refer to the Interim Report as only new information is included below.

New Submissions

RPS Letter dated 10 February 2009
 Dwgs 501/B; 502/B; 503/B; 504/B; 505/B; 506/B; 507/B

Key Landscape Issues

- Increase in built form in the rural area
- Visual impact on receptors to the west
- Contribution to the landscape strategy for AWE Burghfield

Assessment of the Scheme

Revised proposals for the landscape strategy have been submitted and points clarified in RPS letter 10/2/09. The visual impact of the development has been reviewed on site.

Conclusions

Strategy: I am happy with the proposed landscape strategy which achieves as much as physically possible on the site and around the AWE complex, given the many constraints on planting.

Phasing: I am also very pleased to see that the MENSA scheme will deliver a good part of the wider landscape strategy. In general I am happy with the phasing plan RPS 102/D and in addition the hedgerow south of Burnthouse Bridge Farm will be brought forward into Phase 1. The 3 woodlands west of Riders Lane (both in Phase

2) and 3 groups of parkland trees in the north east (in Phase 3) need to follow on from other works but should be implemented at the earliest possible time to mitigate the visual impact of the development.

Balancing ponds to MENSA and surface water attenuation in north-east: Seeding mix agreed.

Construction compound planting: Mix 1.6a is shown on the eastern boundary of the site where security cameras may be installed. Where it is not necessary to provide low ground cover, planting mix 1.3a must be used along this boundary. Most of the species in 1.6a are ornamental. Native species should be used in this location – amend in final landscape scheme under landscape condition.

Schedule 550/A: Amendments as proposed in letter dated 10/2/09 agreed.

Lighting: The applicant should specify that the lighting will be designed to meet the requirements of ILE's Environmental Zone E2 as a minimum to avoid unnecessary light pollution into the surrounding landscape. Include requirement in a condition if possible.

Catenary towers: The proliferation of towers both existing and proposed will be unacceptably intrusive but I understand that the existing towers can be removed. The MENSA towers on their own, although higher, are less in number and overall should maintain the status quo. I suggest a condition to this effect.

Impact on surrounding landscape and visual receptors

The proposed development does not adversely affect the landscape character of the site itself but there was a concern that it would have an impact on the rural character of the surrounding agricultural landscape. Up to now AWE Burghfield has been well integrated into its surroundings, belying its presence. The guidelines for the surrounding areas are to avoid large scale development which might impact on the rural character. MENSA is a very large development which has the potential to have an adverse impact and be contrary to these guidelines – see photomontage view 1.

However due to the local topography and vegetation, the number of views where the MENSA development would be very visible or appear incongruous, given the existing nature of AWE Burghfield, was surprisingly few. For the most part it will be the catenary towers that will be visible over trees and hedgerows but as long as they are designed as shown and the existing towers are removed, I do not think the extra height will result in a significant impact on the rural setting. The landscape scheme to the northern boundary, when submitted under condition, must include additional hedgerow trees to assist in screening views from the north.

The current colour (silver grey) of the building facades is likely to be intrusive when viewed from within this landscape dominated by greens and browns. It will draw the eye, particularly in winter, and increase the perception of large mass and scale. A muted colour to MENSA elevations would help to reduce the residual visual impact.