

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

Date: 10 December 2007
Subject Planning application consultation reference: A/07/121

Site Address:	AWE Aldermaston, Aldermaston, Reading, Berkshire
Proposal:	Replacement high explosives fabrication facility buildings, associated outbuildings and access roads, vehicle turning areas, hard standings, blast protection, 8 x lighting conductor towers, security fencing, landscaping and temporary construction enclave.
Local Planning Authority	West Berkshire Council
Applicant:	Ministry of Defence
Date consultation issued:	19 November 2007

Report of: **Regional Planner**

Recommendation:

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 draft South East Plan (March 2006).

If West Berkshire 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 in accordance with Policy CC5 and Policy WCBV6 of the draft South East Plan (a definition of 'infrastructure' is set out in the draft South East Plan Implementation Plan);
- The incorporation of energy efficiency measures and renewable energy sources, in accordance with Policy INF4 and INF5 of RPG9 (as altered); and Policies CC2, CC3, EN1 and EN2 of the draft South East Plan;
- Secure the incorporation of measures to achieve high levels of water efficiency and the incorporation of sustainable drainage systems and other measures where appropriate in accordance with Policy INF2 of RPG9; and Policies CC2, CC3 and NRM3 and of the draft South East Plan;
- Secure the use of sustainable construction methods in accordance with Policies CC4, H5, W2 and MI of the draft South East Plan;

- An appropriate package of measures to prevent and mitigate against air and/or noise pollution in accordance with Policy E7 of RPG9; and Policies NRM7 and NRM8 of the draft South East Plan;
- Secure an appropriate package of measures to prevent and mitigate against air and/ or noise pollution in accordance with Policy E7 of RPG9; and Policies NRM7 and NRM8 of the draft South East Plan; and
- An appropriate package of transport infrastructure and other measures including an agreed travel plan to promote alternatives to the car and encourage walking cycling and the use of public transport, reflecting the principles set out in Policies T1, T10 and T13 of RPG9 (as altered); and Policies T1, T5 and T10 of the draft South East Plan.

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To advise the sub-group of the compliance of the proposed development with Regional Spatial Strategy (RPG9 plus Alterations) and the draft South East Plan and set out the recommended consultation response for consideration and agreement.

2. Site Description and Background

- 2.1 The application site has an area of approximately 14.3 hectares and is located within the Aldermaston Explosives Area in the eastern sector of the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) site at Aldermaston, Berkshire. The AWE site abuts the northern settlement boundary of Heath End and is 10 miles (15km) to the south west of Reading.
- 2.2 The AWE site was originally requisitioned in 1939 by the Ministry of Supply, operating as a base for the US Army Air Force Troop Carrier Groups. However, in 1951 the site was selected to support the UK Atomic Weapons Programme. In 2005 the Secretary of State announced an investment programme to modernise existing facilities. The application forms part of this modernisation programme.

3. Details of the proposal

- 3.1 The proposal is a full application comprising:
- A High Explosives Fabrication Facility (HEFF) 5,880m² (B1 use)
 - Temporary construction enclave, including construction sites, contractors compounds, overflow compound and car parking
 - Access road

- 3.2 The HEFF consists of two buildings, the first being a process block, for explosives processing with an adjoining support block; the second building being a mechanical and electrical services building.
- 3.3 The application is accompanied by a planning statement, an environmental statement, design and access statement, strategic sustainability appraisal, transport assessment, a Green Travel Plan, a BREEAM assessment, surface water drainage report, a code of construction practice and an energy strategy.

4. Relevant policy consideration

- 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 CC8a of the draft South East Plan – urban focus
 - Policy WCBV2 of the draft South East Plan – Western Corridor Blackwater Valley – Development and Environmental Protection
 - The level of employment proposed, with the following policies being relevant:
 - Policies RE1, RE4 and RE5 RPG9 and Policy RE2 of the draft South East Plan – employment land
 - Policy WCBV4: of the draft South East Plan – Western Corridor economy
- 4.2 Other material considerations are:
- i Aldermaston is identified within of the West Berkshire District Local Plan (Saved Policies Amended September 2007) as one of the MoD sites located in West Berkshire’s rural areas, which are extremely important to the local economy. Policy ECON.2A supports employment schemes on sites such as the application site, subject to a number of criteria.

5. Policy Assessment

- Location of Development
- 5.1 The proposal is for the redevelopment of a major previously developed site abutting the urban area of Heath End. Policy Q1 of RPG9 and Policy CC8a of the draft South East Plan look to urban areas as the prime focus for new development and redevelopment.

Although the site lies outside the defined urban area of Heath End, the principle of the location of the proposed development is already established as the proposal is for replacement B1 Business Use in the form of the HEFF building.

- 5.2 Furthermore the adopted Local Plan also identifies AWE Aldermaston as one of the MoD sites located in West Berkshire's rural areas, which are extremely important to the local economy. Paragraph 2.521 also states that 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. The proposed development forms part of the MoD's committed programme of existing facilities modernisation at the AWE Aldermaston site. As such the proposed development is acceptable in principle under Policy Q1 of RPG9 and Policies CC8a and WCBV2 of the draft South East Plan.

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 RE2 of the draft South East Plan seek to encourage industrial and commercial development in urban areas, but also to encourage the re-use of developed land and intensification of use on existing sites.
- 5.3 Policy WCBV4 of the draft Plan states priority should be given to the retention of existing employment land in employment use. The proposed development is for a replacement high explosives fabrication facility which forms part of the MoD's committed facilities modernisation programme. Furthermore AWE Aldermaston is identified within the adopted Local Plan as an employment site extremely important to the local economy. Policy ECON.2a of the Local Plan supports employment schemes on sites such as AWE Aldermaston, subject to a number of assessment criteria.
- 5.4 The business use element of the proposals is considered to be consistent with regional policy objectives for the economy.

Other Matters

- 5.5 In addition to the above, there are a number of priorities arising out of RPG9 and the draft South East Plan which can be dealt with by way of condition or legal agreement if West Berkshire Council is minded to grant planning permission. These relate to the following policy areas:
- Transport
 - Infrastructure
 - Water
 - Air and Noise
 - Natural Environment
 - Sustainable Construction and Energy Efficiency

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 The application site is identified in the adopted Local Plan as one of the MoD sites located in West Berkshire's rural areas, which are extremely important to the local economy. Furthermore, the Local Plan supports Crown development relating to existing establishments. The draft South East Plan supports the retention of existing employment land in employment use within the Western Corridor Blackwater Valley sub-region. The proposed development would not materially conflict with or prejudice the implementation of the draft South East Plan.

7. Recommendations

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

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 draft South East Plan (March 2006).

If West Berkshire 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 in accordance with Policy CC5 and Policy WCBV6 of the draft South East Plan (a definition of 'infrastructure' is set out in the draft South East Plan Implementation Plan);
- The incorporation of energy efficiency measures and renewable energy sources, in accordance with Policy INF4 and INF5 of RPG9 (as altered); and Policies CC2, CC3 EN1 and EN2 of the draft South East Plan;
- Secure the incorporation of measures to achieve high levels of water efficiency and the incorporation of sustainable drainage systems and other measures where appropriate in accordance with Policy INF2 of RPG9; and Policies CC2, CC3 and NRM3 and of the draft South East Plan;
- Secure the use of sustainable construction methods in accordance with Policies CC4, H5, W2 and M1 of the draft South East Plan;
- An appropriate package of measures to prevent and mitigate against air and/or noise pollution in accordance with Policy E7 of RPG9; and Policies NRM7 and NRM8 of the draft South East Plan; and

- Secure an appropriate package of measures to prevent and mitigate against air and/ or noise pollution in accordance with Policy E7 of RPG9; and Policies NRM7 and NRM8 of the draft South East Plan;
- An appropriate package of transport infrastructure and other measures including an agreed travel plan to promote alternatives to the car and encourage walking cycling and the use of public transport, reflecting the principles set out in Policies T1, T10 and T13 of RPG9 (as altered); and Policies T1, T5 and T10 of the draft South East Plan.

Dominick Veasey
Regional Planner

10 December 2007

Contact: Dominick Veasey, Regional Planner
T: 01483 555 201 E: dominickveasey@southeast-ra.gov.uk