

# Nuclear Free Local Authorities Secretariat

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Clive Inwards  
Principal Planning Officer  
West Berkshire Council  
Market Street  
Newbury  
Berkshire, RG14 5DL

Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2008

Dear Mr Inwards,

## **PLANNING APPLICATION NO: 08 / 02287/ COMIND**

I am writing on behalf of the Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLAs) Steering Committee, who wish to object to the planning application submitted by the Ministry of Defence / Atomic Weapons Establishment plc for development of a Main Process Facility at AWE Burghfield.

A major concern of the NFLAs is the timing of the consultation period and the short time available to make a submission.

It is clear this planning application notes a significant new development at the Burghfield site and is part of the highly important and sensitive development of the new generation of nuclear weapons replacing the 'Trident' system. To issue this consultation period on the 17<sup>th</sup> December with a closing date of the 8<sup>th</sup> January prevents many organisations and individuals from having the opportunity to object in an effective and informative manner. The NFLA Steering Committee requests that West Berkshire District Council extend the consultation period to allow more time to consider the application.

The NFLA Steering Committee is also concerned that a thorough independent environmental impact assessment has not been undertaken, particularly around the issues of flooding. The AWE Burghfield site has a history of flooding and poor drainage and lies on the flood plain. Indeed, part of the site flooded as recently as July 2007, where 2 – 3 feet of water affected the warhead assembly site requiring the electrics to be shut off for over 10 days. The Government's Pitt Review on the flooding incidents of 2007 have suggested building new developments on the flood plain should be avoided wherever practical and building such an important development appears to be inconsistent with this process.

Flooding events in recent years have increased both in regularity and in severity, and are likely to worsen as the effects of climate change bite over the next two decades. The NFLA Steering Committee requests that a more thorough assessment of the flooding risk of this site is made, and that alternative sites to Burghfield be considered. This should be undertaken by an independent consultant, in reference with the Environment Agency.

An independent review of the environmental impact on this site and the surrounding area would also be preferable. This could include a transport survey, as such a site is likely to increase general traffic in an isolated, rural area with a generally poor road network.

The Steering Committee is also concerned that the planned site would increase the likelihood of a terrorist attack on the site. The Committee would like to see more information in the planning application on how such attacks will be mitigated. The Committee urges the Council to request its Emergency Planning Unit and the emergency services are consulted on the security measures and their comments duly published.

Finally, the Steering Committee urges the Council to recommend that a full public inquiry of this site is undertaken. This site will increase significantly the sensitive work undertaken at AWE Burghfield, which is a matter of public interest and concern. Only a public inquiry will provide the public acceptance, accountability and transparency of this important development.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bill Risby', written in a cursive style.

pp

**Councillor Bill Risby**  
**NFLA Chair**