

## **AWE Aldermaston – ORION Laser Facility – Call for a Public Inquiry**

### **Act Now to Stop the Next Generation of Nuclear Weapons**

**This is URGENT: please act now**

At its last planning meeting of 26th November, West Berkshire Council Planning Committee deferred its consideration of the Ministry of Defence's Notice of Proposed Development (NoPD) for the ORION laser facility. The Committee is due to consider it again on 26th January 2006.

We now have a real opportunity to stop this application - and with it the building at AWE Aldermaston of facilities to build the next generation of nuclear weapons.

The developments at AWE Aldermaston are more than a local matter, and that's why we want you to write to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, and ask him to call in the laser application, and establish a public inquiry. An inquiry would stop the developments for now and would give us more time to build a real opposition to any replacement for the Trident weapons system.

The letter below is fairly detailed, but it is useful at this stage to use the appropriate grounds set out in planning legislation and guidelines rather than make objections on political, legal or moral grounds.

Please just cut and paste the attached letter, sign it and send it to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister as soon as possible.

Copies should be sent to:  
**Office of the Deputy Prime Minister**  
**Eland House**  
**Bressenden Place**  
**London**  
**SW1E 5DU**

Also:  
**Rt Hon John Reid MP**  
**Secretary of State for Defence**  
**House of Commons**  
**London**  
**SW1A 0AA**

*Please note, according to the ODPM web-site: "... we do not respond individually to large volumes of identical correspondence. However, we do keep a record of the volumes received and we make sure this information is passed to the relevant officials."*

This may be our best chance yet to stop the development of the next generation of nuclear weapons at Aldermaston.

Your address

Date

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London  
SW1E 5DU

Dear Mr Prescott,

I am writing to request the Deputy Prime Minister, as the relevant Secretary of State, to call in all Notices of Proposed Development related to new developments at AWE Aldermaston submitted to date by the Ministry of Defence, and in particular, the NoPD for the Proposed "Replacement" Laser Facility (ref. 05/02003/RESMAJ).

Planned developments at AWE were laid out in a "Site Development Strategy Pan", published in August 2002 and subsequently updated (for latest - see [http://www.awe.co.uk/main\\_site/news/articles/PR\\_2005\\_031.html](http://www.awe.co.uk/main_site/news/articles/PR_2005_031.html)). The nature, number and size of these developments - taken as a whole - represent a major building programme which will take many years to complete and has an impact well beyond the scope of the local planning authority

I urge you to immediately open a non-statutory Public Inquiry into the laser and other planned developments at AWE Aldermaston, on the following grounds:

- (1) Para 44 DETR Circular 2/99 - "Environmental Impact Assessment" (EIA) - states that a particular planning application should not be considered in isolation if, in reality, it is properly to be regarded as an integral part of an inevitably more substantial development. "In such cases, the need for EIA ... must be considered in respect of the total development";
- (2) The Eastern Area Planning Committee of West Berkshire District Council on 23 February 2005 resolved that the Head of Planning and Transport Strategy would write to the Secretary of State 23 February 2005 it was resolved that the Head of Planning and Transportation Strategy would write to the Secretary of State urging that an EIA be undertaken in respect of all the proposals in the site's development plan; to date no such EIA, including the expert and detailed analysis required in para 41 of the same guidelines, has been submitted;
- (3) Similarly, a long-expected Transport Plan for the whole site, recommended by the Eastern Area Planning Committee on 23 February 2005, had not been completed by the November meeting;
- (4) The Eastern Area Planning Committee has consistently failed to take into account the large number of objections received to applications by AWE Aldermaston (or defence Estates or their behalf); such large numbers of objections may, under s. 25, DoE Circular 18/84, trigger a public inquiry;
- (5) The proposed new developments, including the laser facility, have a regional and national

environmental and economic impact and should thus be considered as a “major project”. “Their size means it would be unsatisfactory for a single local planning authority to give a planning approval since the impact of the proposal extends beyond the boundary of the local authority ..... such projects tend to be approved by Government Ministers usually after a form of local public inquiry.” See <http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1144608>

- (6) The proposal to build facilities to design and test a new generation of nuclear weapons is also too important to be considered by a local planning committee and should be subject to both parliamentary debate and public scrutiny (of which a public inquiry should form a part), as promised by the Secretary of State for Defence, (*The Guardian*, 13 September 2005).
- (7) “The threat or use of nuclear weapons would be contrary to the rules of international law”, (ICJ opinion, 1996); further developments would render the UK in violation of Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

On 23 November 2005, consideration of the NoPD (ref. 05/02003/RESMAJ) was deferred by the Eastern Area Planning Committee on the grounds that all the relevant information had not been made available to the members of the committee.

I understand that it is currently intended to take this NoPD to the local planning meeting on 25 January 2006. I urge you to call in this application before that date.

Yours sincerely,