

DR. CAROLINE LUCAS

Green Party
for the South East of England

Rt Hon Hazel Blears MP
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London
SW1E 5DU

March 4th 2009

Dear Secretary of State,

West Berkshire Council: Planning Application 08/02287/COMIND. Main Process Facility at AWE Burghfield.

I am writing to add my voice to those calling for the above planning application to be called in, on the grounds that the local planning authority, namely West Berkshire Council, have not handled it properly.

My reasons for reaching this conclusion include the following:

- The majority of the consultation period for the initial planning application fell over the Christmas holiday 2008. After pressure being applied by local MPs this period was extended but West Berkshire Council's reluctance to do so is indicative of a worrying lack of commitment to genuine consultation.
- Reading Borough Council was not notified of the planning application until the beginning of February 2009, and then only in response to representations made by Reading Borough. Residents of Reading Borough make up a significant proportion of those that will be affected by the planned development, so I am concerned by West Berkshire Council's delay in carrying out the kind of liaison advised by the Health and Safety Executive in cases related to AWE.
- West Berkshire Council further refused to defer making a decision on the planning application, despite a holding objection from Reading Borough Council and a request that the deadline for comments to be extended. Given that West Berkshire Council's delay in liaising with Reading Borough Council was responsible for the latter's failure to submit comments on time, this seems very unreasonable.
- Neither the Ministry of Defence, AWE plc nor West Berkshire Council have been willing to meet members of the public or local voluntary sector groups to discuss issues relating to this planning application.
- The planning application does not contain sufficient information about risks, operational processes, and environmental impacts caused by the proposed development for members of the public to assess the true consequences of allowing the development to go ahead. In an attempt to fill these information gaps a number of Freedom of Information requests have been submitted to the Ministry of Defence and the Environment Agency but these

have not been processed in time to allow information to be put before the planning committee.

- West Berkshire Council's Eastern Area Planning Applications Committee were not given information about a number of important planning issues which had been raised by objectors to the development, including concerns over whether the development was consistent with government guidance in Planning Policy Statement 25 and the long term implications the development would raise in a strategically important area.

I trust you will give this matter your urgent attention and look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Caroline Lucas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Caroline Lucas - Green Party MEP for South East England.