

Policy Villages 5: Former RAF Upper Heyford

C.284 The former RAF Upper Heyford site is located 7 km north west of Bicester, in an isolated rural location, within the parishes of Upper Heyford, Somerton and Ardley. The airbase site measures approximately 500 hectares in total.



C.285 The US Air Force vacated the airbase in 1994 and since 1996 this unique site has been allocated for residential led mixed uses as enabling development to secure environmental improvements and conservation of the heritage interest of the site associated with its former use as a Cold War military base.

C.286 The airbase is located at the top of a plateau and is set within otherwise open countryside. Land to the west falls sharply to the Cherwell valley and Oxford Canal (the Canal itself has been designated as a Conservation Area). The Grade I listed Rousham Park is located in the valley to the south west of the site. The Rousham, Lower Heyford and Upper Heyford Conservation Area adjoins the airbase site, whilst the airbase itself has been designated as a

Conservation Area in view of the national importance of the site and the significant heritage interest.

C.287 There are a number of Scheduled Ancient Monuments, listed buildings, and non designated heritage assets of national importance on site, as well as other unlisted buildings that make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area, and much of the airfield is of ecological importance including a Local Wildlife Site (recently extended in area). The site has been divided into three main functional character areas: the main flying field and a technical site to the north of Camp Road and the residential area that is mainly to the south of Camp Road which itself consists of five distinctive character areas reflecting different functions and historic periods of construction. The flying field represents the core area of historic significance, and is of national significance due to its cold war associations.

C.288 The site was previously subject to a policy from the Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2016 (Policy H2) which was saved by the South East Plan and retained upon the South East Plan's revocation. Policy Villages 5 below replaces Policy H2 in guiding the future redevelopment of the site and provides a positive policy framework within which opportunities to accommodate development are considered having regard to known constraints, principally heritage, ecology and transport impacts associated with additional development.

C.289 Since the airbase closed in 1994 temporary planning permissions were granted for the reuse of a large number of the buildings on the site. At present there are just over 300 residential dwellings on the site, the majority of which are rented. Buildings used for employment purposes provide around 1000 jobs. The Cherwell

Innovation Centre is also located on the site, providing serviced offices and flexible office space, lab space, and meeting rooms. The Centre is home to a large number of science, technology and knowledge-based businesses. Paragon Fleet Solutions operate on a large part of the former airbase, undertaking office, technical and transport related activities centred around 'car processing'.

C.290 A number of matters raised in a 2008 public inquiry, set out in the appeal decision from the Secretary of State in January 2010 remain relevant to the consideration of the scale, location and type of development that can take place at Upper Heyford including:

- the delivery of the required balance of historical/cultural objectives, environmental improvements, ecological benefits and public access
- whether the scale, type and location of employment and storage proposed for the flying field would harm the character of the Conservation Area and setting of Listed Buildings
- the extent of demolition/reuse of historic buildings on the site
- whether adequate opportunities for travel other than by private car would be delivered
- whether adequate infrastructure could be delivered; and
- whether a comprehensive and lasting approach to the whole site could be delivered.

C.291 The site is allocated in this Local Plan as a means of securing the delivery of a lasting arrangement on this exceptional large scale brownfield site, whilst additional

greenfield land is now allocated in the context of meeting the full objectively assessed housing needs of the District by realising the opportunities presented by the development of this new settlement. The former airbase site currently has planning permission for a new settlement of some 1,075 homes (gross), and 'Policy Villages 5' provides for additional development through a combination of the intensification of the density of development proposed on the less sensitive previously developed parts of the site, and new, limited, greenfield development around the main airbase site in locations that will be complementary to the approved development. The additional development areas are shown on inset map 'Policy Villages 5'. The policy allows for residential development focused to the south of the flying field, avoiding the most historically significant and sensitive parts of the site, and on limited greenfield land to the south of Camp Road (and one greenfield area to the north of Camp Road, east of Larsen Road). Given the rural and isolated location of the settlement, and its significant heritage interest, securing adequate transport arrangements and funding the necessary mitigation of transport and heritage impacts will be of particular importance, whilst 'Policy Villages 5' also makes provisions relating to the importance of high quality design to reflect the distinctive character areas of the site.

C.292 A comprehensive approach will be required and it will be necessary to demonstrate how the additional land identified can be satisfactorily integrated with the approved development. The additional land will not be permitted to be developed independently of the main development and infrastructure contributions will be expected for the wider scheme.

C.293 Consultation with Historic England will be required in formulating specific development proposals for the site, whilst regard should also be had to the following documents in preparing any such scheme:

- Upper Heyford Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment (2014)
- Upper Heyford Assessment Interim Final Report (2014)
- Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Update (2014)
- The 2014 approved masterplan for the site
- RAF Upper Heyford Revised Comprehensive Planning Brief SPD (2007)
- RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area Appraisal (2006)
- Former RAF Upper Heyford Landscape Character Assessment of the Airbase South of the Cold War Zone (2006)
- Former RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Plan (2005)
- Former RAF Upper Heyford Landscape and Visual Impact and Masterplan Report (2004)
- Restoration of Upper Heyford Airbase – A Landscape Impact Assessment (1997).

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Development Area: 520 ha

Development Description: This site will provide for a settlement of approximately 1,600 dwellings (in addition to the 761 dwellings (net) already permitted) and necessary supporting infrastructure, including primary and secondary education provision and appropriate community, recreational and employment opportunities, enabling environmental improvements and the heritage interest of the site as a military base with Cold War associations to be conserved, compatible with achieving a satisfactory living environment. A comprehensive integrated approach will be expected.

Housing

- **Number of homes** – approximately 1,600 (in addition to the 761 (net) already permitted)
- **Affordable housing** – at least 30%

Employment

- **Land Area** – approximately 120,000 sq. metres
- **Jobs created** – approximately 1,500

- **Use classes – B1, B2, B8**
- **Any additional employment opportunities further to existing consent to be accommodated primarily within existing buildings within the overall site where appropriate or on limited greenfield land to the south of Camp Road.**

Infrastructure Needs

All development proposals will be expected to contribute as necessary towards the delivery of infrastructure provision through onsite provision or an appropriate off-site financial contribution to:

- **Education – provision of a 2.22 ha site for a new 1-1.5 form entry primary school with potential for future expansion, if required, and contributions to primary and secondary school place provision**
- **Health – contributions required to health care provision**
- **Open Space – sports pitches, sports pavilion, play areas, indoor sport provision**
- **Community Facilities – nursery, community hall, local centre/hotel, a neighbourhood police facility**
- **Access and Movement – transport contributions and sustainable travel measures as detailed below, countryside access measures, fencing along the boundary of the new settlement and the flying field**
- **Utilities – contamination remediation, improvements to the water supply and sewerage network, as well as other utilities, may be required.**

Key site specific design and place shaping principles:

- **Proposals must demonstrate that the conservation of heritage resources, landscape, restoration, enhancement of biodiversity and other environmental improvements will be achieved across the whole of the site identified as Policy Villages 5**
- **In order to avoid development on the most historically significant and sensitive parts of the site, new development is to be focused to the south of the flying field and on limited greenfield land to the south of Camp Road (and one greenfield area to the north of Camp Road, east of Larsen Road)**
- **The areas proposed for development adjacent to the flying field will need special consideration to respect the historic significance and character of the taxiway and entrance to the flying field, with development being kept back from the northern edge of the indicative development areas**
- **The release of greenfield land within the allocated site Policy Villages 5 will not be allowed to compromise the necessary environmental improvements and conservation of heritage interest of the wider site**
- **The settlement should be designed to encourage walking, cycling and use of public transport rather than travel by private car, with the provision**

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of footpaths and cycleways that link to existing networks. Improved access to public transport will be required

- Development should accord with Policy ESD 15 and include layouts that maximise the potential for walkable neighbourhoods with a legible hierarchy of routes
- Retention and enhancement of existing Public Rights of Way, and the provision of links from the development to the wider Public Rights of Way network, including the reinstatement of the historic Portway route across the western end of the extended former main runway as a public right of way on its original alignment
- Layouts should enable a high degree of integration with development areas within the 'Policy Villages 5' allocation, with connectivity between new and existing communities
- Measures to minimise the impact of traffic generated by the development on the surrounding road network will be required through funding and/or physical works, including to any necessary capacity improvements around Junction 10 of the M40, and to the rural road network to the west of the site and around Middleton Stoney including traffic calming and management measures
- Development will provide for good accessibility to public transport services and a plan for public transport provision will accompany any planning application
- Design and layout should reflect the management and mitigation of noise impacts associated with the development
- A Travel Plan should accompany any development proposals
- The construction of the settlement on the former technical core and residential areas should retain buildings, structures, spaces and trees that contribute to the character and appearance of the site and integrate them into a high quality place that creates a satisfactory living environment
- Integration of the new community into the surrounding network of settlements by reopening historic routes and encouraging travel by means other than private car as far as possible
- The preservation of the stark functional character and appearance of the flying field beyond the settlement area, including the retention of buildings of national interest which contribute to the area's character (with limited, fully justified exceptions) and sufficient low key re-use of these to enable appropriate management of this area
- The achievement of environmental improvements within the site and of views to it including the removal of buildings and structures that do not make a positive contribution to the special character or which are justified on the grounds of adverse visual impact, including in proximity to the proposed settlement, together with limited appropriate landscape mitigation, and reopening of historic routes
- The conservation and enhancement of the ecological interest of the flying field through appropriate management and submission of an Ecological Mitigation and Management Plan, with biodiversity preserved and

enhanced across the site identified as 'Policy Villages 5', and wildlife corridors enhanced, restored or created, including the provision for habitat for great crested newts and ground nesting birds in particular. A net gain in biodiversity will be sought

- Development should protect and enhance the Local Wildlife Site (including the new extension to the south)
- Visitor access, controlled where necessary, to (and providing for interpretation of) the historic and ecological assets of the site
- Provision of a range of high quality employment opportunities, capable of being integrated into the fabric of the settlement, and providing that the use would not adversely affect residents or other businesses and would not have an unacceptable impact on the surrounding landscape, historic interest of the site, or on nearby villages
- New and retained employment buildings should make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area and should be located and laid out to integrate into the structure of the settlement
- A full arboricultural survey should be undertaken to inform the masterplan, incorporating as many trees as possible and reinforcing the planting structure where required
- New development should reflect high quality design that responds to the established character of the distinct character areas where this would preserve or enhance the appearance of the Former RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area
- New development should also preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Rousham, Lower Heyford and Upper Heyford Conservation Area, as well as the Oxford Canal Conservation Area, and their settings
- Development on greenfield land within 'Policy Villages 5' should provide for a well-designed, 'soft' approach to the urban edge, with appropriate boundary treatments
- Management of the flying field should preserve the Cold War character of this part of the site, and allow for public access. New built development on the flying field will be resisted to preserve the character of the area
- Landscape/Visual and Heritage Impact Assessments should be undertaken as part of development proposals and inform the design principles for the site
- Proposals should demonstrate an overall management approach for the whole site
- A neighbourhood centre or hub should be established at the heart of the settlement to comprise a community hall, place of worship, shops, public house, restaurant, and social and health care facilities. Proposals should also provide for a heritage centre given the historic interest and Cold War associations of the site
- The removal or remediation of contamination or potential sources of contamination will be required across the whole site

- **The scale and massing of new buildings should respect their context. Building materials should reflect the locally distinctive colour palette and respond to the materials of the retained buildings within their character area, without this resulting in pastiche design solutions**
- **Public art should be provided**
- **Recycling and potential reuse of demolition materials where possible**
- **The provision of extra care housing and the opportunity for self build affordable housing in accordance with Policies BSC 3 and BSC 4**
- **Public open space should be provided to form a well connected network of green areas, suitable for formal and informal recreation**
- **Provision of Green Infrastructure links to the wider development area and open countryside**
- **Take account of the Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the site**
- **Provision of sustainable drainage including SuDS in accordance with Policy ESD 7: Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), taking account of the Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment development should be set back from watercourses**
- **Demonstration of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures including exemplary demonstration of compliance with the requirements of policies ESD 1 – 5**
- **Development on the site will be required to investigate the potential to make connections to and utilise heat from the Ardley Energy Recovery facility to supply the heat demands of residential and commercial development on the site**
- **An archaeological field evaluation to assess the impact of the development on archaeological features**
- **In all instances development proposals will be subject to the other appropriate development plan policies.**

