

Land and Buildings at RAF Upper Heyford, Heyford Park

**Planning Statement in Support of Applications to
Extend the Period for the Temporary Use of Land and
Buildings**

**Submitted on Behalf of QEK Global Solutions (UK)
Ltd**

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Drivers Jonas act on behalf of QEK Global Solutions (UK) Limited, owned by Paragon Automotive Limited. For ease of reference, our Client is referred to as 'QEK' throughout the planning submission.
- 1.2 This planning statement is submitted on behalf of our Client in support of 12 planning applications submitted to further extend the time period for QEK's temporary use of land and buildings at Heyford Park, Upper Heyford.
- 1.3 The extant temporary planning permissions expire on 30 June 2007. They relate to a range of existing planning permissions, more particularly:
 - The change of use of land and various buildings to form premises for QEK's operations; and
 - The continued retention of various structures and alterations to certain buildings in relation to QEK's use of the site.
- 1.4 The current planning applications seek to extend time limiting permissions by a further five years in accordance with the transitional arrangements provided for in the recently adopted Comprehensive Planning Brief ("CPB") for the former RAF Upper Heyford. This further temporary period will provide the appropriate 'stepping stone' to enable QEK to work towards a permanent facility and footprint as part of a lasting arrangement for the airbase.
- 1.5 This supporting statement is submitted to assist the local planning authority in the determination of the current applications. Applications have been prepared following extensive engagement with Planning Officers from Cherwell District Council ("CDC"), particularly through the preparation of the CPB. QEK has also worked very closely with the North Oxfordshire Consortium ("NOC") to ensure that proposals can be fully integrated with the new settlement proposals (a position statement provided by the NOC is appended).
- 1.6 In summary, this supporting statement aims to demonstrate that allowing a further five year temporary period for QEK would be acceptable in terms of local planning policy, would ensure the continuation of a range of economic and other benefits and would in no way prejudice new settlement proposals for former RAF Upper Heyford.
- 1.7 This supporting statement consists of the following sections:
 - Section 2: Planning History;
 - Section 3: Description of Proposed Development;
 - Section 4: QEK: Operation and Economic Importance;
 - Section 5: The NOC's Timetable for New Settlement Proposals;
 - Section 6: Planning Policy Context;
 - Section 7: Consideration of Issues; and
 - Section 8: Summary and Conclusions.
- 1.8 Appendices are listed on the preceding contents page and referenced in relevant sections of this statement.
- 1.9 This supporting statement should be read in conjunction with the separate Design and Access Statement which is also submitted to support the applications.

2. Planning History

Introduction

- 2.1 Our Client (formerly Keddy Services) relocated to Heyford Park over 10 years ago at the request of the Cherwell District Council in order to help preserve the local economy as well as the buildings, infrastructure and environment of the former RAF base. Since that time, QEK has been granted a number of planning permissions to secure their continued occupation at Heyford Park.
- 2.2 Permissions have traditionally been limited by planning condition to a temporary period and have also been conditioned to be personal to our Client. The reason identified by the Council for this condition is in recognition of the current circumstances of the company in relation to their temporary occupation of the site. In particular, such circumstances are considered by the Council to be sufficient to justify overriding the normal planning policy considerations (i.e. Policy H2 of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan).
- 2.3 There are two principal temporary planning permissions applying to the site. These originally date back to the mid 1990's and have been renewed on a number of occasions. Temporary planning permissions for smaller related proposals within the context of the principal consents have also been granted.
- 2.4 The following paragraphs summarise details of relevant planning history with Council planning application references shown in *(brackets)*.

The Principal Temporary Planning Permissions

- 2.5 A five year temporary planning permission (95/00379/F) was initially granted in 1995 for the change of use of land and buildings to form headquarter and operation premises for motor industry, marketing, management and distribution company. This permission was subject to the completion of a lorry routeing agreement. Condition 7 of the planning permission also imposed a maximum vehicle cap of 6,000 vehicles to be stored on the site at any one time for the reason of limiting the number of transporter movements associated with the site.
- 2.6 A further temporary planning permission was granted (96/00424/F) to include additional land and buildings to address the need for space as the business expanded.
- 2.7 Condition 7 of the planning permission for 96/00424/F imposed a maximum vehicle cap of 5,500 vehicles. Thus, together with 95/00379/F, permission was granted for a maximum of 11,500 vehicles to be staged over the entirety of QEK's site.
- 2.8 The principal applications were first renewed in 1998 with the effect of extending the temporary period until 3 May 2003. These applications were subject to a lorry routeing agreement and completion of a Section 106 Agreement between QEK and the Council setting a maximum employee cap of 675 persons working at the site. The applications were also accompanied by a Unilateral Planning Obligation entered into by the North Oxfordshire Consortium.
- 2.9 The main purpose of the routeing agreement is to direct heavy commercial vehicles along specific approved routes to avoid traffic impacts, particularly on Upper Heyford and other villages located to the west of the site. This

agreement has been updated as part of subsequent renewal applications, including in connection with the extant suite of temporary permissions.

- 2.10 A renewal of the principal planning applications was granted on 2 May 2003 to extend the temporary permission period until 3 May 2005 (02/02048/F and 02/02039/F).
- 2.11 Most recently the renewals of the current principal planning applications were approved on 14 July 2005 (05/00284/F and 05/00283/F - details summarised in **Table 2.1**). A revised lorry routing agreement with Oxfordshire County Council was formally completed on 5 January 2006.

‘Other’ Temporary Planning Permissions

- 2.12 Other separate temporary planning permissions have been approved. These have related to the use, development and adaptation of other land and buildings within the context set by the principal consents.
- 2.13 These other permissions have followed a similar time line to the principal consents, also most recently being renewed in July 2005. Details of these other temporary planning permissions are summarised in **Table 2.2**.

Summary of Current Temporary Planning Permissions

Table 2.1: Summary of Current Principal Temporary Permissions

| Application Ref | Summary of Proposal | Summary of Conditions |
|-----------------|---|--|
| 05/00284/F | Variation of Condition 1 and 2 of 02/02048/F to allow use of land and buildings by QEK until 3 May 2008 and to remove the restoration requirement at the end of this period | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use shall terminate on or before 30 June 2007 and buildings restored to their original condition unless otherwise first agreed in writing with the LPA 2. Personal permission to QEK |
| 05/00283/F | Variation of Condition 1 of 02/02039/F to allow use of land and buildings by QEK until 3 May 2008 and to remove the restoration requirement at the end of this period | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use shall terminate on or before 30 June 2007 2. Personal permission to QEK |

Table 2.2: Summary of ‘Other’ Current Temporary Permissions

| Application Ref | Summary of Permission | Summary of Conditions |
|-----------------|---|--|
| 05/00278/F | Variation of Condition 1 of 04/01527/F to allow use of mechanised car wash adj to building no. 80 by QEK until 3 May 2008 and to remove the restoration requirement at the end of this period | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use shall terminate on or before 30 June 2007 and land restored to its original condition |
| 05/00281/F | Variation of Condition 1 and 2 of 02/0203/F to allow use of 6 no. lamp posts by QEK until 3 May 2008 and to remove the restoration requirement at the end of this period | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use shall terminate on or before 30 June 2007 and land restored to its original condition |
| 04/02683/F | Retrospective application for the installation of a Liquid | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use shall terminate on or before 30 June 2007 and land restored |

| Application Ref | Summary of Permission | Summary of Conditions |
|-----------------|--|--|
| | Petroleum Gas Tank and Air Intake Duct at Building 2002 | to its original condition 2. Personal permission to QEK |
| 05/00277/F | Variation of Condition 2 of 02/02033/F to allow use of 2 no. lamp post by QEK until 3 May 2008 and to remove the restoration requirement at the end of this period | 1. Use shall terminate on or before 30 June 2007 and land restored to its original condition |
| 05/00274/F | Variation of Condition 1 of 02/02034/F to allow use of building no. 3205 by QEK until 3 May 2008 and to remove the restoration requirement at the end of this period | 1. Use shall terminate on or before 30 June 2007 |
| 05/00279/F | Variation of Condition 2 of 02/02037/F to allow the trench and concrete rings to remain until 3 May 2008 and to remove the restoration requirement at the end of this period | 1. Use shall terminate on or before 30 June 2007 and land restored to its original condition unless otherwise first agreed in writing with the LPA |
| 05/00280/F | Variation of Condition 1 of 02/02040/F to allow use of building no. 354 by QEK until 3 May 2008 and to remove the restoration requirement at the end of this period | 1. Use shall terminate on or before 30 June 2007 |
| 05/00282/F | Variation of Condition 1 of 02/02046/F to allow use of building no. 2002 by QEK until 3 May 2008 and to remove the restoration requirement at the end of this period | 1. Use shall terminate on or before 30 June 2007 |
| 05/00275/F | Variation of Condition 1 of 02/02044/F to allow use of building no. 123 & 125 by QEK until 3 May 2008 and to remove the restoration requirement at the end of this period | 1. Use shall terminate on or before 30 June 2007 2. Personal permission to QEK |
| 05/00276/F | Variation of Conditions 1 and 2 of 02/02042/F to allow use of 3 no. hardened aircraft shelters by QEK until 3 May 2008 and to remove the restoration requirement at the end of this period | 1. Use shall terminate on or before 30 June 2007 2. Personal permission to QEK |

2.15 A plan illustrating the approximate extent of all application boundaries relating to the various existing temporary planning permissions is included in the separate Design and Access Statement (*Figure 2.1*).

3. Description of Proposed Development

- 3.1 The current time limited temporary planning permissions, as summarised in **Tables 2.1 and 2.2** in Section 2, expire on 30 June 2007. The main purpose of the current planning applications is to:
- Extend the currently permitted temporary period by a further five years. i.e. until 30 June 2012;
 - Ensure sufficient flexibility in the requirement for QEK to restore certain land and buildings to their 'original condition' on or before expiration of the temporary permission; and
- 3.2 Our suggested wording for planning conditions is included at **Appendix 1** of this statement.

The Need for a Further Five Year Temporary Period

- 3.3 An adequate transitional period is required to allow QEK to commence putting into place necessary changes in working practices and to seek to agree changes to QEK's Client requirements. Such changes need to be brought in over a commercially realistic timeframe and are essential to the longer term creation of a much physically reduced facility.
- 3.4 A five year time period will provide certainty for QEK and their customers. This will give QEK confidence to invest in the significant operational changes needed to work towards a lasting vision for the former RAF Upper Heyford. Similarly, customers must have confidence in QEK's ability to adapt to change over time in a commercially sound way, which will be an essential driver to making alterations to the existing vehicle staging footprint over the period.
- 3.5 A shorter temporary period than the proposed five years provided for in the Comprehensive Planning Brief for RAF Upper Heyford will reduce the level of certainty and as a result, the potential ability to deliver necessary operational change. In turn, this may impact on the ability of our Client to continue to deliver the current range of economic and other important benefits. The importance of QEK's operations at Heyford Park to the local economy is well understood by the Council and is described in greater detail at Section 4 of this Statement.
- 3.6 Our Client recognises the importance to the Council of bringing forward new settlement proposals at Heyford Park. As discussed elsewhere in this supporting statement, an extension of time for a further five years would not prejudice the timely provision of the NOC's proposals. Moreover, QEK and the NOC have worked closely to create a position where our Client's temporary transition (and ultimately a permanent facility) can comfortably co-exist with proposals for bringing forward the new settlement (see Section 5), which will include employment uses.

Changes to Vehicle Staging Over the Five Year Temporary Period

- 3.7 The CPB proposes that operational changes (i.e. alterations to vehicle staging on the flying field) over the life of the proposed five year temporary period should be secured through the use of a legal agreement. Such an agreement should set an annual reduction in the extent and amount of use in accordance with an agreed timescale and linked to the grant of a permanent consent for the use to be satisfactorily accommodated within the settlement at the end of that period. A five year temporary period is

identified in the Brief as appropriate as it is considered that this would coincide with the completion of 700 plus new dwellings and the completion of the new settlement.

3.8 In broad accordance with the principles set out in the CPB, our Client is willing to explore with the Council the precise form of a legal agreement which would provide for a suitable mechanism to enable the periodic (say annual) review of operational requirements over the duration of a five year temporary planning permission and the scope to implement viable changes to our Client's vehicle staging footprint. In the context of the current temporary proposals, any agreement will need to be formulated with regard to the following main considerations:

- The need for change to be commercially viable; and
- The delivery of the NOC's new settlement proposals.

3.9 At the end of the temporary period or in accordance with the NOC's timetable (should these timescales be different) and in advance of the establishment of a final permanent facility, our Client will agree to migrate down fully to an anticipated future staging footprint of 15.5 hectares (38 acres), which is almost 50% less than the currently permitted staging area. At this point in time, it is not possible to identify whether subsequent longer term reductions beyond the proposed temporary period may be possible as this will be driven by longer term changes in the automotive industry which are extremely difficult to predict with any certainty.

Commercial Viability

3.10 As emphasised to the Council previously, any mechanism for change will need to be commercially viable in terms of our Client's business operations. QEK will require a realistic lead-in period of time in order to introduce significant operational change. The setting of rigid annual reductions in site area from the outset will not be a commercially viable business proposition.

3.11 QEK is fully aware however of the aspirations of the Council set out in the CPB in relation to businesses operating under temporary planning permissions on the flying field. Although it is difficult to define the exact timing and associated extent of change at the present, our Client would be willing to explore priorities for change in the context of the proposed temporary period. This could include, for example, looking first at the withdrawal of staging operations from the main runway, identified in the CPB as being included in the 'Core Area of National Significance'.

The NOC's New Settlement Proposals

3.12 The extent and pace of change will also be dependent on the delivery of the NOC's proposals. The NOC's outline planning application is to be submitted shortly. This will identify separately the eventual permanent facility for QEK to be provided as part of the new settlement as well as proposals for the phasing of the wider development and environmental improvements over the airbase as a whole. Ultimately, QEK's operations will need to be fully consistent with the NOC's proposals and fit in with their timetable for the settlement and associated site infrastructure works.

3.13 We would welcome the opportunity to consider further with the Council the detailed scope and content of a legal agreement.

Reinstatement of Land and Buildings to Their Original Condition

- 3.14 A number of the existing temporary planning permissions are conditioned to require land and buildings to be restored by QEK to their 'original condition', (i.e. the condition existing immediately prior to the commencement of use by QEK). As part of the most recently permitted suite of renewals, the restoration requirement was removed in its entirety from certain permissions.
- 3.15 Where a restoration requirement is retained, it is important that sufficient flexibility is provided for. For example:
- Further to the CPB, the long term retention of QEK will mean the retention and long-term continued use of a number of buildings already occupied by our Client;
 - The CPB envisages that certain buildings and other infrastructure within QEK's current boundary will be removed as part of a lasting arrangement for the site; and
 - The NOC's planning application for permanent proposals for the new settlement (which will also identify any permanent facility for QEK) will set out and deliver comprehensive restoration and environmental improvement works for the flying field and elsewhere on the airbase.
- 3.16 To also ensure consistency in approach, we would propose the inclusion of standardised wording along the lines of that included with the principal permission 05/00284/F which requires buildings to be restored to their original condition '*unless otherwise first agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority*' (see **Appendix 1**).

Application Boundaries

- 3.17 Our Client's current application boundaries cover a total site area of circa 61 hectares (150 acres) comprising office accommodation, technical workshops, ancillary facilities, grassed areas, and around 24 hectares (60 acres) net hardstanding.
- 3.18 QEK has previously reduced its staging area, with approximately 10 hectares (25 acres) of net hardstanding at the eastern end of the site released from the land included within the former planning permission 02/02039/F. More recently, a further 1.4 hectares (3.5 acres) of hardstanding was removed as part of the currently permitted temporary staging area to fully address visibility considerations.
- 3.19 The suggested mechanism to provide for alterations to the current operational footprint in the context of the proposed further temporary period is discussed above.

4. QEK's Operations

Nature of Business

- 4.1 Heyford Park is well suited to meet our Client's business needs as a specialist provider of marketing support, technical services and training to the automotive industry. Further details on QEK's operations are included in the Design and Access Statement.
- 4.2 Over recent years, QEK has reduced the physical scale of operations at Heyford Park albeit that the nature of the business has evolved so that the employment and other benefits provided by our Client to Cherwell District have grown over time. Our Client's long term business vision for Heyford Park is to continue to increase their staff, skills, knowledge base and contribution to the local economy whilst also delivering operational changes which will permit alterations to the physical extent the current site.
- 4.3 It is important to properly distinguish QEK from a low tech, low skilled and low employee generating car storage operator. Although the 'staging of live vehicles' is an integral part of our Client's overall business, this provides a necessary supporting element to the main technical and specialised processes which take place on site.
- 4.4 More particularly, our Client provides a highly skilled, employment-intensive operation for the automotive industry and is now widely acknowledged as providing a 'Centre of Excellence' at Heyford Park. The development of IT solutions and a highly skilled workforce means that QEK is recognised as providing the highest level of technical expertise available in the UK to automotive clients who entrust their most sensitive and advanced models to QEK's care. The volume of specialised vehicles processed is unique to our Client due to the fact that they have the highest concentration of Master Technicians and Licensed Technicians in the country.
- 4.5 Given the nature of our Client's operations and the strategic location offered at Heyford Park, finding an appropriate and available alternative in the District would be extremely problematic. Long term retention at the site depends on the ability to remain commercially viable. The absence of QEK from Upper Heyford (and Cherwell District) would remove the substantial economic and other benefits it already contributes and in the longer term, would impact on achieving the most sustainable form of new settlement.
- 4.6 The following paragraphs describe various details which demonstrate the importance of QEK to the local economy and community. The Council is already aware of much of this information but a number of the key points are reiterated in this Statement for completeness.

Local Economic Benefits

- 4.7 It is acknowledged that Cherwell District, and Oxfordshire as a whole, has a relatively low unemployment rate. This being said, the contribution that QEK makes to the local economy, including in terms of the nature of jobs provided, is significant and supports a number of objectives of the Cherwell Economic Development Strategy (2006 – 2011).
- 4.8 QEK is the largest existing employer at Upper Heyford and the 3rd largest employer in Cherwell District, contributing in the region of £30 million to the local economy annually. In addition to supporting local suppliers, services and other businesses, QEK directly provides in the region of 550 jobs,

which is over half of the total number of jobs currently provided at Heyford Park. A large proportion of QEK’s employees are also full time.

- 4.9 The Cherwell Economic Development Strategy, together with economic policies set at the county and regional level, recognises the importance of encouraging high-skilled and high-tech entrepreneurship in order to diversify the economy.
- 4.10 QEK has a highly skilled workforce. As indicated in **Table 4.1** below, our Client has over 50% of its employees concentrated in SOC Groups 3 (Associate Professional and Technical) and 5 (Skilled Trade Occupations), which is significant when compared to Cherwell District.

Table 4.1: Breakdown of Employees by SOC Grouping

| SOC 2000 Group | QEK (%) | Cherwell (%) 2005/6 | Difference (%) |
|--|-------------|---------------------|----------------|
| SOC Major Group 1-3 | 40.0 | 40.2 | -0.2 |
| 1 Managers & Senior Officials | 6.0 | 15.3 | -9.3 |
| 2 Professional Occupations | 2.0 | 13.4 | -11.4 |
| 3 Associate Professional & Technical | <u>32.0</u> | 11.6 | <u>20.4</u> |
| SOC Major Group 4-5 | 49.0 | 22.6 | 26.4 |
| 4 Administrative & Technical | 27.0 | 14.2 | 12.8 |
| 5 Skilled Trade Occupations | <u>22.0</u> | 8.4 | <u>13.6</u> |
| SOC Major Group 6-7 | 0.0 | 13.5 | -13.5 |
| 6 Personal Service Occupations | 0.0 | 6.0 | -6.0 |
| 7 Sales & Customer Service Occupations | 0.0 | 7.5 | -7.5 |
| SOC Major Group 8-9 | 11.0 | 23.2 | -12.2 |
| 8 Process Plant & Machine Operatives | 10.0 | 7.3 | 2.7 |
| 9 Elementary Occupations | 1.0 | 16.0 | -15.0 |

- 4.11 QEK also employs a diverse range of ages, from young apprentices to a high concentration of workers aged 50 and over.
- 4.12 The Cherwell Economic Development Strategy identifies that wages in the District lag behind South-East averages. The strategy aims to reduce this differential and QEK positively contributes to this aim with even certain unskilled workers receiving more than the average for the District.

Employee Development and Training

- 4.13 Given the highly skilled and specialised nature of operations, our Client is committed to employee development. QEK has been recognised by various awards and accreditations for its significant emphasis on staff training and development. Our Client also supports a wide range of local community groups, educational and other organisations. Main training initiatives relate to the following key areas:
 - Professional and Management;
 - IT;
 - Technical; and

- Health & Safety.
- 4.14 In recognition of our Client's commitment to training and development initiatives, QEK was awarded the 2003 Bicester Business Award for Best Practice in Staff Development. It has also secured a range of other accreditations including 'Investors in People', ISO 9002 and 9001 and Silver Standard from the Institute of IT.
- 4.15 Further details on training and development initiatives are listed at **Appendix 2**.

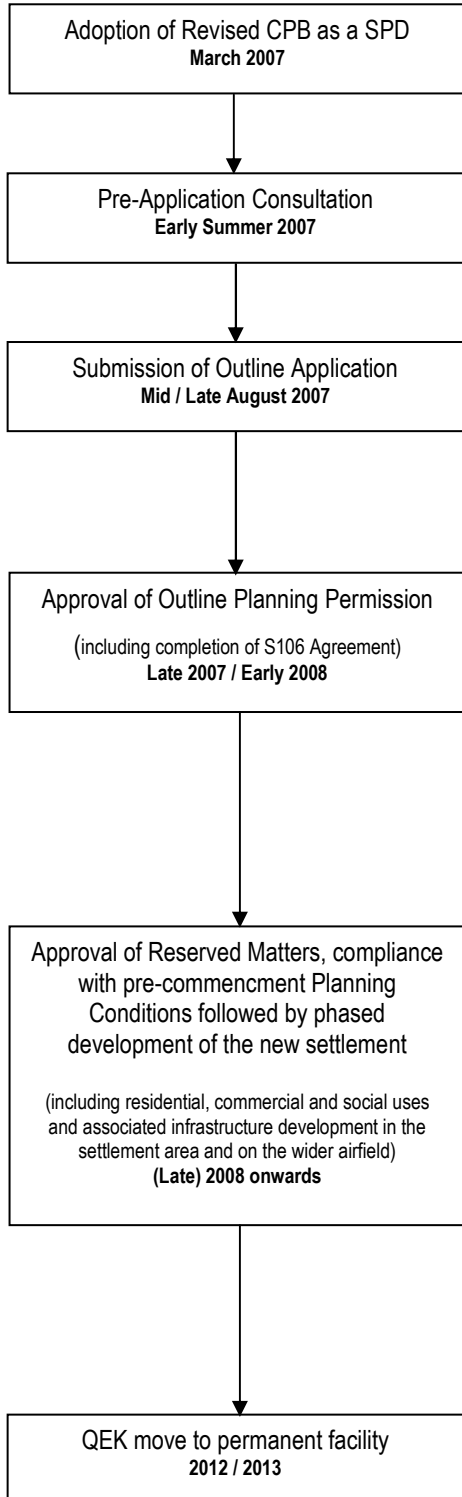
Corporate Social Responsibility

- 4.16 Our Client proactively supports a wide range of groups and organisations within the local community and becomes involved in a large number of local events and initiatives. Support and involvement relates in particular to the following:
 - Local and national charities;
 - Various local organisations (including Weston-on-the-Green Parish Council, Bicester Town Council, local primary schools and sports clubs);
 - Bicester Chamber of Commerce and related organisations; and
 - Oxfordshire Common Purpose.
- 4.17 QEK actively works with the local educational community to support their objectives. Oxford & Cherwell College is one of 3 colleges comprising the National College for Motorsport. QEK provides a unique contribution to the college as a Centre of Excellence for training opportunities.
- 4.18 QEK has also developed strong links with local schools, notably Coopers School and Bicester Community College, offering work experience, presentations and site visits. In addition, our Client operates an apprentice program, and currently has several people in the program and also a number of qualified trainees.
- 4.19 Further information on our Client's initiatives in support of its commitment towards the local community is included at **Appendix 3**.

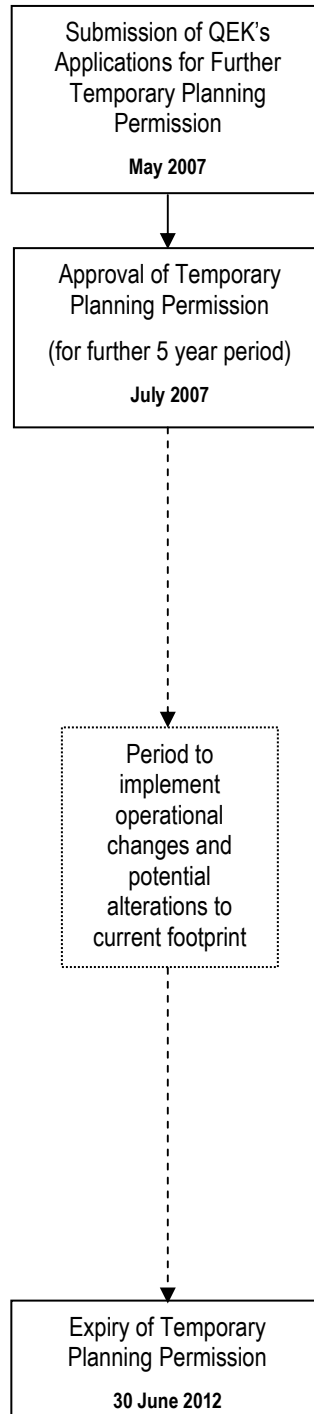
5. The NOC's Timetable for New Settlement Proposals

- 5.1 A position statement has been prepared by the NOC's planning advisors in respect of new settlement proposals. This position statement is reproduced in full at **Appendix 4**.
- 5.2 Submission of the NOC's outline planning application is anticipated in summer this year. This is to be subject to pre-application consultation and is being prepared in the context of the main provisions of the adopted Comprehensive Planning Brief for the former RAF Upper Heyford.
- 5.3 Following the grant of outline planning permission (including the completion of a Section 106 Agreement) and the subsequent approval of reserved matters, it is currently anticipated by the NOC that the development of new settlement proposals will commence in 2008.
- 5.4 Given the scale and complexity of the site and issues highlighted in the CPB, including transitional arrangements for temporary uses and various heritage and environmental considerations identified in relation to the flying field, development will necessarily be phased over a long period. Details of anticipated phasing and construction periods will be submitted as part of the NOC's outline planning application and associated master plan.
- 5.5 The retention of QEK for a further five year period will not impact on the timely and appropriate delivery of new settlement proposals. The NOC has confirmed that accommodation of our Client over this transitional period and in the longer term will be consistent with their wider aspirations to achieve a balance of jobs, housing and securing environmental and heritage objectives. In deed, the retention of our Client is identified as being an integral part of delivering a viable and workable lasting solution for the airfield site.
- 5.6 Based on details within the position statement, we have prepared the following flowchart to illustrate visually the NOC's predicted timescales against the proposed further five year temporary proposed for our Client. This provides an updated position to that set out in the CPB.

**NOC's Anticipated Timescale for
New Settlement Proposals**



**QEK's Timescale
for Temporary Permission**



6. Planning Policy Context

Overview

- 6.1 The following local planning policy documents are of relevance to the development of land at the former RAF Upper Heyford:
- Oxfordshire Structure Plan;
 - Cherwell District Local Plan and emerging Local Development Documents;
 - RAF Upper Heyford Revised Comprehensive Planning Brief (“CPB”); and
 - Upper Heyford Conservation Area Plan Appraisal.
- 6.2 In addition to the above documents, Kate Barker’s ‘Review of Land Use Planning’, commissioned by the Government to provide an independent assessment of the planning system, was published on 5 December 2006. A statement issued by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government on the same day confirmed that her report will be taken forward and that the Government agrees with the overall analysis. Although the report does not yet constitute formal planning policy, in the context of the Secretary of State’s statement (and the recent White Paper), it does provide an important material consideration in terms of a firm indication of the intended direction of policy. Main recommendations will be reflected in the update of national planning policy on economic development (PPS4), expected later this year.

Oxfordshire Structure Plan

- 6.3 The Oxfordshire Structure Plan was adopted in 2005, covering the period to 2016. Policy H2 provides the adopted development plan policy context for new settlement proposals at Upper Heyford.
- 6.4 In accordance with this Policy, Cherwell District Council approved a revised RAF Upper Heyford Comprehensive Planning Brief in March 2007. The purpose of this Brief is to ensure that the conservation of heritage resources, landscape, restoration, enhancement of biodiversity and other improvements are achieved across the whole of the former airbase in association with the provision of a new settlement.

Cherwell District Local Plan

- 6.5 The Cherwell District Local Plan was adopted in 1996, covering the period up to 2001. The adopted Local Plan remains part of the Statutory Development Plan and policies will be ‘saved’, [except where they are deleted by the Local Development Scheme (LDS) or the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR)] until September 2007.
- 6.6 The District Council published a deposit draft review local plan in 2001 and revised deposit plan in 2002, to provide local policy guidance up to 2011. This Pre-Inquiry Changes (“PIC’s”) to the Cherwell District Local Plan Review were issued in June 2004. This included substantial amendments to policies relating to land at Upper Heyford.
- 6.7 Following advice from the Government Office for the South East (“GOSE”) it was resolved by Cherwell District Council that the local plan review process be discontinued. The revised deposit plan, together with the PIC’s, has been approved by the District Council as interim policy for use in development control decisions and renamed “The Non-Statutory Cherwell Local Plan 2011”. This interim policy does not carry the same weight as an

adopted plan, particularly in respect of new policies which have not been assessed at Inquiry or which have been the subject of significant objection.

- 6.8 Section 2 of the non-statutory Local Plan deals with the former RAF Upper Heyford but does not specifically relate to the continuation of temporary uses. In particular, Policies UH1 to UH4 relate to the development of the site for a new village, pursuant to the provisions of Structure Plan Policy H2.

The Emerging Local Development Framework

- 6.9 The Council has prepared a Local Development Scheme which sets out the programme for the delivery of various elements of the LDF. Development Plan Documents (“DPDs”) being prepared include the Core Strategy and a Site Allocations DPD (to which QEK has previously commented in relation to the provision of a permanent facility at Heyford Park). A number of Supplementary Planning Documents are also being progressed. This includes the recently adopted Revised Comprehensive Planning Brief for RAF Upper Heyford (see below).

RAF Upper Heyford Revised Comprehensive Planning Brief (March 2007)

- 6.10 In 1999 Cherwell District Council first published a Comprehensive Planning Brief (“CPB”) to guide the implementation of a new settlement at RAF Upper Heyford. A Revised CPB was approved on 5 March 2007. This replaced the original CPB and also supersedes separate supplementary planning guidance dealing specifically with temporary uses which was issued in September 2004. The CPB has been adopted as a ‘Supplementary Planning Document’ (“SPD”). Unlike DPD’s, the CPB does not form part of the statutory Development Plan.
- 6.11 The revised CPB is intended to assist and guide the comprehensive redevelopment and long term management of the site. In accordance with Structure Plan Policy H2, the principles set out in the CPB primarily relate to the provision of around 1,000 dwellings with necessary supporting infrastructure, including appropriate employment uses, together with objectives relating to design, sustainability, transport, the environment and future management. The conservation of the heritage interest at the site is also identified as an important objective reflecting the growing emphasis being placed on the Cold War value of the airbase.
- 6.12 The Brief identifies a specific area within the context of the new settlement which may be appropriate for a permanent facility for QEK. In the interim, the CPB makes provision for the issuing of personal and temporary consents for the continuation of uses beyond the settlement area. It is suggested that such consents be controlled by a legal agreement that sets an annual reduction in the extent and amount of use in accordance with an agreed timescale and linked to the grant of a permanent consent for the use to be satisfactorily accommodated within the settlement at the end of that period.

Upper Heyford Conservation Area Appraisal

- 6.13 The RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area Appraisal was adopted by the Council in April 2006. As a result, the entire former RAF Upper Heyford site has been designated as a Conservation Area. A number of the buildings at the airbase are also statutorily listed, scheduled as ancient

monuments or identified as being of national or local significance (although not considered worthy by English Heritage of being specifically listed).

Kate Barker’s Review of Land Use Planning (December 2006)

- 6.14 This recent independent review of the planning system concluded that there is a need for an enhanced focus on economic development so that planning decisions can be more responsive to the needs of changing economic circumstances and balance each of the components of sustainable development. Existing government guidance, including PPS1, already identifies the maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment as one of the four aims for sustainable development.
- 6.15 As noted previously, a key recommendation of the review is to update national planning policy on economic development by the end of this year. A number of key points are also identified as needing to be addressed. Those of particular relevance to QEK’s current proposals include:
 - Strengthening the consideration to be given to economic factors in planning policy, so that the range of direct and indirect economic benefits of development are fully factored into decision making alongside the consideration of other issues;
 - Ensuring that development in rural communities is not unduly restrained and allows for a wide range of economic activity; and
 - Improve current practices to ensure that decision makers understand better the imperatives of business, notably the locational needs of business and business planning.
- 6.16 In short, the Barker Review recommends that an elevated status should be attached to business and economic issues in the planning process.

Planning for a Sustainable Future White Paper (May 2007)

- 6.17 The White Paper sets out a wide ranging package of reforms for the planning system. Carrying forward recommendations from Kate Barker’s review proposals are intended to create a planning system that positively supports economic development and encourages greater investment, both domestic and foreign, in the UK economy.
- 6.18 It makes clear that, in determining planning applications, local planning authorities must pay full regard to the economic as well as the environmental and social benefits of sustainable development. Other suggestions of particular relevance to our Client include:
 - In decision taking planning authorities should take full account of the longer term benefits, as well as the costs, of development that will create jobs, including those with wider benefits to national, regional or local economies by improving productivity and competitiveness;
 - There will be a new approach to determining planning applications which do not have the specific support of plan policies, using market information as well as environmental and social information;
 - Development plans should promote mixed-use development and respond to new forms of economic development enabling each locality to fulfill its potential; and

- Authorities should make better use of market information and other relevant evidence in planning for sustainable economic development and in considering specific proposals for development.
- 6.19 A new Planning Policy Statement on Planning for Economic Development (PPS4) is proposed which will reinforce the Government's commitment to a strong stable and productive economy with access for all to jobs, regeneration and improved employment prospects. The new PPS will be published as a draft in Summer 2007 and a final version will be published in Spring 2008.

7. Consideration of Issues

Introduction

- 7.1 As a general starting point, it is important to distinguish our Client from other (former) temporary automotive operators located at Heyford Park, who were present at the time of drafting the CPB. Differences are not only economic but also environmental, such as in relation to landscape, visibility, heritage and traffic, arising from important locational and operational differences.
- 7.2 Notwithstanding this position, the significance of any impacts arising as a result of the proposed further temporary period for QEK should be assessed on the basis of their relatively short-term nature. Additionally, as part of alterations to our Client's current operational footprint which could potentially be made through a legal agreement linked to the grant of temporary planning permission, improvements to the current position could be achieved. Following on from this temporary period, the provision of an eventual future final step with the creation of permanent facility as part of comprehensive proposals for the airbase will enable the optimum final solution to be provided. This will include the ability to address issues fully and mitigate against any remaining impacts in accordance with the main provisions of Structure Plan Policy H2.
- 7.3 The following paragraphs provide an assessment of QEK's proposal for a further five year extension of temporary planning permission, considering key planning issues not examined in previous sections of this Statement.
- 7.4 Issues are generally discussed in the context of the existing physical extent of QEK's operations. As suggested, improvements to this position could be achieved over time.

Heritage

- 7.5 Increasing emphasis is now being placed on the Cold War importance of features and areas at the former RAF Upper Heyford. This is reflected in a number of recent studies led by the Council including the Conservation Plan (September 2005), Conservation Area Appraisal (April 2006) and the consequent designation of the entire airbase as a Conservation Area.
- 7.6 A number of structures across the base are now scheduled as ancient monuments or are statutorily listed. Several additional buildings are also identified as making a positive contribution to the conservation area and proposed for retention in the CPB.
- 7.7 Due to its location within a less sensitive and visible part of the site, QEK's impacts on Cold War heritage (and also other impacts such as in relation to visibility in the landscape) are much less than other automotive operators previously located at Heyford Park. The recent departure of Walon from the site has therefore substantially enhanced the overall position.
- 7.8 Since the USAF left the airbase in the mid 1990's, QEK has played an important role in maintaining site security, the condition of site infrastructure and ecological resources. The current temporary proposals provide an important transitional 'stepping stone' towards the eventual provision of a permanent facility to be taken forward as an integral part of the comprehensive proposals for the new settlement. This transitional step will ensure that QEK can continue their role in terms of maintaining the site, a

role which has become more important since the heritage value of the overall base has increased.

- 7.9 The retention of QEK in their current form will *'maintain'* the level of impacts (positive and negative) on the Conservation Area and important buildings at the airbase, which have been designated / identified in the context of QEK's presence at the site. The further five year temporary period sought will provide an opportunity for QEK to consider operational changes and as a result, take potential steps to reconfigure vehicle staging over this period and work towards an eventual agreed area to be included as part of the NOC's proposals for a permanent settlement. Such interim steps could include the removal of vehicles from parts of the current site which are considered to be more sensitive and as a result *'enhance'* QEK's current contribution to heritage objectives.
- 7.10 The CPB specifically provides for transitional arrangements for the further temporary continuation of existing uses beyond the proposed permanent settlement boundary, including in relation to *'storage or other external uses carried on by that company'*. QEK's use clearly falls within the category.
- 7.11 Notwithstanding the specific local planning policy support for the principle of the further continuation of temporary planning permission, we set out below a more specific assessment of QEK's current operations against heritage objectives set out in the CPB, albeit that these objectives are more relevant to proposals for the permanent settlement. Further information on the heritage context in relation to QEK's current site is included in the separate Design and Access Statement.

Impacts on the Conservation Area

- 7.12 The Conservation Area Appraisal identifies the area of the airbase to the north of the main runway (i.e. beyond QEK's current site) as being of most importance in overall heritage terms by virtue of the fact that it has greater coherence containing the most clearly defined groups of buildings, both functionally and spatially.
- 7.13 Other than the section of the main runway used by QEK for vehicle staging, the majority of QEK's site lies outside of the *'Core Area of National Significance'* as defined in the CPB. Our Client has previously reduced their permitted usage of the main runway to address visibility issues. Limiting usage of QEK's staging from within this Core Area could potentially be considered as part of the current temporary proposals.
- 7.14 The remainder of QEK's existing vehicle staging operations is focused within that part of the flying field defined in the CPB for substantial clearance. The approach proposed for this area in the Brief suggests that its heritage importance is not the overriding consideration over the long term (albeit that our Client will be able to continue to maintain this area as part of the proposed further temporary permission).
- 7.15 A number of our Client's administrative and technical buildings already fall within an area defined in the CPB as suitable for employment as part of a lasting arrangement. This also includes a number of important buildings occupied and maintained by our Client proposed for long term retention.
- 7.16 Our Client appointed specialist architects to examine the heritage impacts arising from a permanent QEK facility indicatively located within (parts of) character areas 1D, 6 and 7 of the airfield. A full copy of this report has been submitted previously to the Council to assist in supporting our Client's long term retention at Heyford Park. This heritage assessment, which was

carried out in the context of the (then proposed) conservation area being designated, concluded that QEK's proposed use seemed entirely compatible with the utilitarian and industrial nature of the Cold War area.

- 7.17 QEK's current operational site area does not impact on other Conservation Areas in the locality. In addition to the visibility assessment and the views of the Council's Development Control Officer expressed in assessing the extant temporary planning permissions (concerning the very limited availability of views of QEK from outside of the airbase), this conclusion is also supported by the CPB. For example, Drawing 03C appended to the Brief shows the approximate 'cone of influence' relating to the setting of Rousham Park as only extending over the western part of the airfield formerly occupied by Walon.

Impacts on Important Buildings and Structures

- 7.18 There are no statutorily listed buildings or scheduled ancient monuments within the application site. Two ancient monuments do however lie adjacent to buildings within the technical area occupied by our Client [The Battle Command Centre (Building 126) and the Hardened Telephone Exchange (Building 129)]. The continued use of buildings by QEK, such as their main office building [the former Station Armory (Building 125)] provides an important role in maintaining the setting of these adjacent buildings, which are the only examples of ancient monuments within the extent of the settlement area defined in the CPB.
- 7.19 QEK's operations do not directly impact on other listed buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments located elsewhere on the former airbase buildings or significantly impact on the setting of these structures.
- 7.20 Although not statutorily listed, a number of buildings utilised by QEK within its current site boundary are identified as being of either or local national importance (e.g. the Southern Hardened Aircraft Shelters, QEK's main office building, A Frame hangers and buildings within the Victoria Alert Complex) due to their positive contribution to the conservation area. As noted above, QEK will continue to maintain these buildings, some of which are proposed for long term retention.

Landscape and Visibility

- 7.21 The extant temporary planning permissions were accompanied by a detailed independent visibility assessment carried out by Entec UK Limited to assess the day and night time impacts arising from QEK's staged vehicles on runways and taxiways within the site.
- 7.22 This assessment concluded that no receptors sustain significant visual effects. Those most greatly affected are located to the north of the site, including users of footpath 13 and residents in 1 and 2 Troy Cottages. However, impacts are not considered to be significant due to the distance of the staged vehicles from these receptors and the fact that vehicles only make up a small proportion of the view, particularly when considered in the context of buildings on the airbase.
- 7.23 Further to the conclusions of this assessment and subsequent negotiations with the Planning Officer, through the removal of vehicles from part of the main runway as part of the extant permissions, an agreed position has been reached where vehicle staging associated with QEK's currently permitted operations is barely perceptible and in the vast majority of instances, not even a feature in the landscape.

- 7.24 As part of the current applications for further temporary permission, the conclusions of the visibility assessment and those of the Planning Officer have been re-assessed on site to confirm that they still remain valid today.

Ecology

- 7.25 As with airbase infrastructure, QEK has played an important role since the cessation of military activity in maintaining ecological resources within their site. This role will be able to continue during the temporary period and pending the delivery of a lasting arrangement.
- 7.26 A large part of QEK's current site lies outside of any defined wildlife site or area of ecological importance. Notwithstanding the fact that QEK has played an important role in maintaining and managing ecological resources as part of their occupation at Heyford Park, the proposed further temporary period provides a potential opportunity to implement changes to the current staging footprint to remove staged vehicles from more sensitive locations such as that part of the main runway included within an area defined as being of ecological importance.

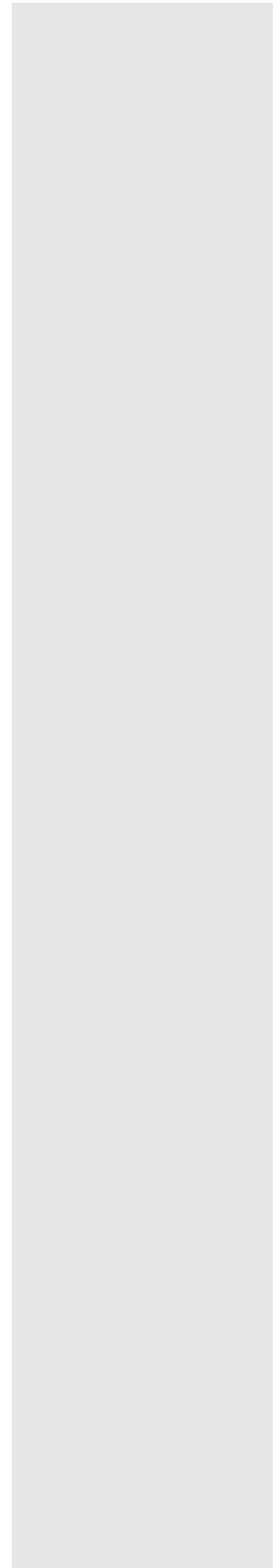
Traffic and Transport

- 7.27 With the recent relocation of Walon, the number of vehicle transporter movements generated at Heyford Park has dramatically decreased. QEK's own vehicle transporter movements are already low and future anticipated changes in QEK Client requirements and potential future changes in working practices will provide an opportunity to further enhance this position. It has been accepted that the number of heavy vehicle movements associated with QEK compares favourably with alternative employment uses.
- 7.28 As with the extant temporary planning permissions, our Client would be prepared to enter into and actively implement an updated lorry routeing agreement to continue to direct HGV traffic away from unsuitable rural roads and nearby villages. QEK has operated under the provisions of such agreements for several years and has a long standing track record of compliance.
- 7.29 As part of a future permanent facility and in the context of the new settlement and its associated infrastructure improvements, our Client would be willing to prepare and implement a Green Travel Plan to promote the use of non-car travel modes by its employees.

Sustainability

- 7.30 In addition to ensuring the effective utilisation and maintenance of previously developed land and buildings, the retention of QEK will ensure the availability of a large number of a high quality and diverse range of employment opportunities potentially accessible to local residents. This is key to ensuring a sustainable and balanced long term settlement which will, in turn, provide environmental benefits such as reducing the need to travel, thereby minimising greenhouse gas emissions etc.
- 7.31 In addition to these longer term benefits, it is important to note that QEK already contributes to sustainability objectives with over 200 of their employees residing within Cherwell District and with a large number also living within 5 miles of the site and even already resident in Upper Heyford itself. The proposed further temporary period will provide the necessary 'stepping stone' enable our Client to maintain and enhance their current sustainability benefits.

- 7.32 Through ensuring that continued operations are fully consistent with the NOC's proposals and fit in with their timetable for the settlement (as discussed in Sections 3 and 5), this will assist in minimising the extent of any impacts on the proposed settlement. In any event, any temporary impacts will be on a very short term basis.



8. Summary & Conclusions

- 8.1 Existing time limited temporary planning permissions relating to QEK's operations at Heyford Park expire on 30 June 2007. The current suite of planning applications seek to extend the permitted temporary period by a further five years (i.e. until 30 June 2012) and to ensure sufficient flexibility in associated restoration requirements.
- 8.2 We have assessed in detail our Client's proposals against existing and emerging policy and also in the context of the delivery of the proposed new settlement.
- 8.3 The proposed five year period for the continuation of temporary uses at the site, which is specifically provided for in the recently adopted Comprehensive Planning Brief ("CBP"), is necessary for QEK to implement the significant operational changes required to facilitate alterations to its overall vehicle staging footprint over time.
- 8.4 As summarised at Section 5 and at **Appendix 4**, proposals will not impact on the delivery of new settlement proposals. QEK will continue to work closely with the NOC to maintain a position where our Client's temporary transition (and eventual permanent facility) fully accords with a lasting arrangement for RAF Upper Heyford. This transitional process will be able to be controlled by an appropriate legal agreement.
- 8.5 The importance of QEK to the economy is well known to the Council. The proposed further temporary period is essential to secure the continuation of our Client's important contribution to the economy.
- 8.6 The wide ranging economic and associated benefits of QEK, together with the commercial needs of the business, should be afforded considerable weight in the determination of current proposals. These considerations are growing in importance in the light of existing and emerging policy concerning economic development.
- 8.7 Notwithstanding the local planning policy which supports the principle of QEK's further temporary five year retention at the former RAF Upper Heyford, for completeness current proposals have been assessed against main environmental issues including heritage, landscape, visibility, ecology and traffic considerations.
- 8.8 Proposals will allow QEK's role of ensuring site security and the maintenance and management of important airbase infrastructure and environmental resources to continue. The majority of other impacts associated with our Client's existing business (which should be properly assessed in terms of their short-term nature) are relatively minimal in any event. This is particularly the case when compared to the other low tech, low skilled and low employee density car storage operator formerly located at Heyford Park because of important locational and operational differences.
- 8.9 Where negative impacts are considered to exist, there is potential for these to be reduced over time through the implementation of operational changes and resultant commercially realistic changes to the existing vehicle staging footprint. Over the longer term, a permanent facility provided as an integral part of settlement proposals, will allow measures to be fully put in place to create a lasting arrangement.
- 8.10 In summary, it is considered that allowing the proposed further five year temporary period for QEK would accord with the main specific provisions

set out in local planning policy and would also ensure the continuation of a range of significant economic and other benefits. The proposals would not prejudice the delivery of the NOC's comprehensive proposals and moreover, would provide the necessary step towards creating a permanent and much reduced facility for QEK, integral to the creation of a sustainable and balanced new settlement in the future.

Drivers Jonas

June 2007

