

14 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACTS

14.1 INTRODUCTION

- 14.1.1** This chapter provides a landscape and visual assessment of the proposed redevelopment of the former RAF base at Upper Heyford. It has been prepared by Cooper Partnership, chartered landscape architects and environmental planning consultants of Bristol and Cardiff.
- 14.1.2** This assessment follows the Landscape Institute (LI) /Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment, 2002, although to allow time for new planting to mature, 20 years has been used for this assessment rather than the 15 years recommended by IEMA. On the basis of professional experience, 20 years has been found to be more representative of the long term appearance.
- 14.1.3** Chartered landscape architects carried out an initial landscape and visual survey, followed by more detailed assessments, which included views, topography, vegetation, and settlement pattern. Together with desktop information and published documents, this information then provided the basis to assess the baseline character of the landscape, as well as the impact of the proposals. The information was used to inform the Masterplan layout.
- 14.1.4** The findings of this assessment are set out within the Landscape and Visual Impact Tables in Appendix L.A01.

The Proposals

- 14.1.5** Full details of the proposals are set out in Chapter 3 of this Environmental Statement.
- 14.1.6** Those elements of the proposals with particular relevance to this landscape character and visual impact assessment include:
- i. construction of a new settlement, comprising approximately 1,075 dwellings, on the former airbase;
 - ii. revisions to the road system within the settlement area to provide access, including links to the employment area;
 - iii. removal of buildings and structures within the site;
 - iv. removal of the runway nibs and, in the case of the western nib, the adjacent perimeter road and the enclosing security fence; together with and its return to agriculture as unimproved grassland; and
 - v. the reconnection of two historic footpath routes which crossed the airfield in a north-south direction: Portway to the west, and Aves Ditch to the east; together with the potential to recreate links to the surrounding villages.

Landscape and Visual Objectives of the Proposals

14.1.7 The landscape objectives of the proposals are set out in the Design and Access Statement, on the Landscape Key Plan LI0, and on the Landscape Master Plan LI4. Those of particular relevance are to:

- retain the open landscape character of the plateau; this being achieved by limiting the amount of new or replacement woodland (or hedgerows) to key locations, and to ensure that planting is of an open character, with glades and clearings;
- protect key views, particularly (but not exclusively) from Rousham, the Cherwell valley, the approach from the south-east, and the views from the south;
- reduce visual impact by the removal of the 25m water towers, selected HASs and other buildings, so far as this is possible within the need to retain structures and buildings of historic interest;
- plant a new off site hedgerow and open copses along the southern edge of the settlement which will provide a layering of vegetation to soften views across the plateau from that direction.
- demolish the northwest and the southwest HASs, which are to be removed for visual reasons.
- remove the security fencing, where this is appropriate and secure for the remaining land uses on the site: close to Upper Heyford village, along Camp Road, and around the eastern nib;
- elsewhere to remove the barbed wire cranked top to the remaining security fence, except for the Northern Bomb Stores and the QRAA;
- retain the historical landscape character of the flying field, a Cold War airfield and command centre, for the benefit of understanding by future generations;
- use a mix of mostly locally indigenous plant material, suitable for the plateau landscape in which they are to be located, to soften selected views, but without creating large areas of woodland, which are inappropriate in landscape character terms;
- provide a landscape management regime to replace inappropriate non-indigenous species to restore, where appropriate, existing copses and hedgerows, subject to consideration as to their visual impact;
- create a high quality visual character for the new north south pedestrian routes of Portway and Aves Ditch, and link these to other pedestrian footpaths and bridleways, with the support of the County Council;
- provide attractive and useable open space and tree planting within the new housing areas;
- retain and manage the existing trees, particularly those trees assessed as being Grades A and B under BS 5837: 2005; and
- provide interpretation of historical and ecological features, where this is relevant.

14.1.8 For the purposes of the ES, it has been assumed that non indigenous conifers and R grade trees will be removed and replaced over a period of time of up to 20 years. Therefore, the ES considers a 'worst case', in line with established practice. In reality these tree removals will be undertaken as part of a rolling management and new tree planting programme, in discussion and agreement with Cherwell District Council.

14.2 SCOPE

Breadth of Topic

14.2.1 This landscape and visual assessment considers:

- i. the impact on the landscape character, historical landscape character and on landscape resource; and
- ii. the impact on views, including at night.

14.2.2 Landscape and visual matters are considered as separate, but linked, issues. Landscape impact relates to physical changes to the landscape, that is, changes to the landscape character, the historic landscape and to the landscape resource. This includes changes to landform, watercourses, footpaths, trees, hedgerows and other areas of vegetation and changes to land use. Visual Impacts relate to changes in views.

14.2.3 The Scoping Opinion provided by Cherwell District Council (CDC), dated 20 September 2006, explained that the ES should cover:

- i. environmental improvements, chiefly involving removal of existing structures and works;
- ii. conservation of the built heritage; and
- iii. provision of a new settlement.

14.2.4 CDC requested specific points to be included in the landscape and visual part of the ES. These have been taken into account, as follows:

- i. the assessment should refer to the character areas already identified in studies commissioned by Cherwell District Council and Oxford County Council;
- ii. night-time and winter impacts should be assessed;
- iii. visual receptors should reflect work previously agreed with the Council;
- iv. trees to be retained, removed or replaced should be assessed;
- v. the Zones of Visual Influence (ZVI) should include the visibility of individual structures; and
- vi. specific reference to be made to the area of the County Wildlife Study (CWS) in the assessment of landscape character and visual impact.

Study Area

14.2.5 The spatial scope of this assessment was determined firstly by the geographical spread of the area from where the existing site can be seen at the baseline. This is the visual envelope, Plan L6.

14.2.6 The extent of the visibility of the proposed development is called the Zone of Visual Influence or ZVI. This may extend to different distances from those of the existing site. The ZVI of the proposals was established by computer modelling, as described at paragraph 14.5.1 and set out on Plans L7-L9.

14.2.7 An initial limit of 15km was set from the edge of the airfield for the initial visual survey, beyond which, experience has shown, it is difficult to judge any changes in the landscape within any degree of accuracy. As shown by the ZVI plans, the nature of the landform was found to be such that assessed views were comfortably within this limit.

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Temporal Scope

- 14.2.8** This assessment considers adverse impacts and beneficial impacts (hereafter, for brevity, termed benefits), as follows including their significance, as required in the EIA regulations:
- i. Construction: a worst case period, in winter, during construction; this will be up to 5 years duration and will include temporary compounds, the storage of materials, vehicles movements and the erection of buildings;
 - ii. On Completion: on completion of the works, in winter, which includes the completion of new buildings, roads and structures with mitigation only partly in place and not yet fully effective; and
 - iii. After 20 Years: twenty years after completion, in summer, with the benefit of effective mitigation, this also including night-time impacts.
 - iv. At night: all periods.
- 14.2.9** In all cases, the assessment of impacts makes comparison with the baseline years 2006/2007, during which the assessments were carried out.

14.3 METHOD STATEMENT

Legislation and Guidelines

14.3.1 The main legislation and guidance documents used in the assessment are:

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| Reference 1 | Landscape Institute (LI)/Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) 2002, Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment. |
| Reference 2 | Landscape Character Assessment, Countryside Agency (now Natural England) and Scottish Natural Heritage 2002, Guidelines for England and Scotland, CAX 84. |
| Reference 3 | DoE Preparation of Environmental Statements for Planning Projects that require Environmental Assessment: A Good Practice Guide on Environmental Assessment, 1995. |
| Reference 4 | Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, Landscape Character Assessment, Topic Paper 6, 2004. |
| Reference 5 | Cherwell District Local Plan Adopted November 1996. |
| Reference 6 | Cherwell District Landscape Assessment by Cobham Resource Consultants, November 1995 |
| Reference 7 | The Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS) published 2004. |

Reference 8 Conservation Plan September 2005: Tourism Company, Oxford Archaeology, ACTA.

Consultations

14.3.2 A list of the consultations is set out Table LI below, together with a summary of the comments of the consultee and the response in this assessment:

Table LI - Consultations			
Consultees	Context	Comment of Consultee	Assessment Response
Assessment of the visual impact of the northwest HASs in discussions with CDC and English Heritage during 2006	Visual assessment of hardened aircraft shelters and layouts	Various	Changes built into Masterplan.
Cherwell District Council Meetings 2006 and 2007	Landscape character, viewpoints, methodology, as part of scoping exercise and in separate meetings	Various	Comments built into Masterplan.
English Heritage Meetings 2006	Historic environment and visibility of hardened aircraft shelters	Concerns about loss of heritage issues	Discussions with CDC, advice on CDC development brief options, input into Masterplan.
Meeting with CDC tree officer, 23 July 2007	Retention and management of trees	Concerns over tree loss in Conservation Area	Further revisions to layout to minimise tree losses
Discussions with CDC 2007, including the visual impact of the southeast HASs and the security fence	Landscape key plan	Various Concerns	Changes made to Landscape Key Plan, July 2007, including demolition of the southeast HASs, a greater length of the security fence removed, and the removal of the cranked barbed wire top from much of the retained fence.

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County Council comments to NOC at public consultation	Footpaths	County Council has aspirations to link existing footpaths with those proposed on site	Links to surrounding footpaths shown on Plan L15, but as those are off site and outside of NOC control, NOC would assist the County Council, by means of funding and professional advice, to achieve the appropriate links.
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Sources of Baseline Information

14.3.3 The sources of baseline data are summarised in Table L2 below:

Baseline Topic	Data Source
Public Rights of Way	OS Explorer Maps and Cherwell District Council.
Scheduled Monuments	Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council
Listed Buildings	Cherwell District Council
Landscape Planning Designations	Cherwell District Council
Landscape Character	Countryside Agency, Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District Council
Tree Preservation Orders	Cherwell District Council
Historic Landscape Character	First Edition OS Plan 1884/1885

Assessment Method

14.3.4 The methodology, including the proposed impact criteria, together with the proposed viewpoint locations was submitted to the Local Planning Authority for comment in May 2007. In their letter dated 5 July 2007, the Council confirmed that a methodology based on the LI/IEMA Guidelines (see Reference 1) was acceptable; and that the viewpoints chosen for this chapter of the ES would be appropriate, as long as they included relevant views from previous LDA viewpoints (see Figure 5, Conservation Plan, LDA viewpoints, Reference 8).

14.3.5 The assessment seeks to be as objective as possible. However, the evaluation of landscape and visual impacts is based upon the experience and knowledge of a chartered landscape architect, using a methodology based upon the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment which states:

'Landscape impact assessment, in common with any assessment of environmental impacts, includes a combination of objective and subjective judgements, and it is therefore important that a structured and consistent approach is used. It is necessary to

differentiate between judgements that involve a degree of subjective opinion (as in the assessment of landscape value) from those that are normally more objective and quantifiable (as in the determination of magnitude of change).' (Paragraph 2.11 of Reference 1)

- 14.3.6** The basis of the assessment process and the terminology used is set out in Tables L4, L5, L6 and L7.
- 14.3.7** A three-stage process has been adopted for the assessment. First, the sensitivity of the landscape resource and the sensitivity of visual receptors were assessed. This was followed by an assessment of the magnitude of the landscape and visual impacts. Using these, the significance of landscape and visual impacts was then assessed.
- 14.3.8** The sensitivity of landscape receptors is set out in Table L4 and landscape impact magnitude is presented in Table L5. The sensitivity of visual receptors is given at Table L6, with visual impact magnitude presented at Table L7. Significance levels for both landscape and visual impacts are given in Table L8.
- 14.3.9** To provide information for the landscape and visual assessment process, the following plans have been prepared:
- i. the topography, aerial photograph, landscape planning context, landscape character, all as shown on Plans L1 - L4; with viewpoints from the surrounding area being shown on Plan L2;
 - ii. the historic landscape, as shown on Plan L5;
 - iii. the visual envelope of the site, as shown on Plan L6;
 - iv. the ZVIs, as shown on Plans L7 - L9;
 - v. the landscape key plan, Plan L10;
 - vi. the major tree groups for the settlement area, Plan L11;
 - vii. existing tree plan and tree loss plan, Plans L12 and L13;
 - viii. the landscape Masterplan for the settlement, Plan L14 (this should be read in conjunction with Plan L10 above, which covers the wider area of the site); and
 - ix. the potential County Council footpath links, Plan L15.
- 14.3.10** The assessment includes a description of the impacts and benefits of the proposals, including lighting, which is set out in the form of landscape and visual impact tables, which conform to the requirements in the EIA Regulations to cover significant environmental effects (note that in this chapter, effects are termed impacts, to accord with standard methodology). Summaries of the identified significant and moderately significant impacts are set out in the text. These are provided for each of the assessment periods (construction, on completion and 20 years following completion). Reference is made to night-time impacts in the visual impact table, and to landscape character, in the landscape impact table.

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14.3.11 The area surrounding the airfield was surveyed and photographed to assess the visibility of the site and the proposals, including built structures. Viewpoints reflect the previously agreed points with Cherwell DC and were those to which the public has access, including footpaths, bridleways and other public spaces. In the normal way, no private viewpoints were assessed. The purpose of this fieldwork was to:

- i. determine the extent of visibility of the existing site, including built structures and associated works;
- ii. determine the visibility of the proposals, the extent of which will be partly determined by both the landform and vegetation;
- iii. gain further understanding of the landscape character; and
- iv. carry out an assessment of landscape and visual impacts.

14.3.12 Viewpoints within a site are not commonly assessed within an ES. However, due to the size of the former airbase an assessment has been carried out of the landscape character changes arising from the development (see also paragraph 14.7.32 and the landscape assessment table in Appendix L.A01). In addition, views are included from existing or proposed public rights of way, including:

- i. the existing views from Camp Road (Viewpoint 30) and the Ardley Road (Viewpoint 36);
- ii. the proposed new view from a reconnected Portway (Viewpoints 38 and 38A), not a public viewpoint; and
- iii. the proposed new view from a reconnected Aves Ditch (Viewpoint 37), also not a public viewpoint.

14.4 CRITERIA FOR LANDSCAPE IMPACTS

Landscape Sensitivity

14.4.1 The term landscape receptor means a group of elements which will be directly or indirectly affected by the proposed development. Landscape receptors are physical elements of the landscape that could be affected by the proposed development, such as landscape character, landform, drainage, woodland or hedgerows, land uses and field boundaries.

14.4.2 Prior to the advent of the landscape character assessment procedure now used by local authorities, the sensitivity of landscape receptors were often defined in terms of landscape value which took the form of planning designations such as National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Areas of Great Landscape Value. As a result of Planning Policy Statement (PPS7), published in 2004, many landscape designations are now being replaced at a local level by a descriptive landscape character approach.

14.4.3 Table L3 below sets out typical landscape designations and relates these to the site:

Table L3 - Landscape Designations			
Typical Scale	Typical Designation	Description	Actual Designation for this Site
International	World Heritage Site	Unique sites, features or areas of international importance with views or settings that are of especially high quality.	The airfield site contains buildings of international significance as identified in the 2005 Conservation Plan.
National	National Park, AONBs, Grade I listed buildings, most important scheduled monuments	Unique sites, features or areas of nationally high visual quality landscape with views or settings which are also of high quality; Grade I listed buildings; valued areas of intact landscape character; important viewpoints; important routes; all with little or no degradation.	The airfield site contains buildings of national significance as identified in the 2005 Conservation Plan.
Regional	Special Landscape Areas, Areas of Great Landscape Value, Areas of Landscape Importance, other Scheduled Monuments, Grade II* listed buildings	Areas of high visual quality surrounding National Parks, and elsewhere; conservation areas; other listed buildings; long distance footpaths; other landscape character areas with intact character and good views, landscapes whose value is exceptional through publications or artwork.	Large area of the airfield site identified of national historic significance in the 2005 Conservation Plan. The whole of the former Upper Heyford former airbase designated a Conservation Area in April 2006, following publication of the Conservation Plan in 2005. This designation restricts demolitions of buildings and structures and the removal of trees.
District or Local	District, local or no designation	General countryside area.	Proposals for the site are set out within the adopted CDC Development Brief 2007.
Local	Probably no designation	Other countryside, urban or industrial areas, local	Proposals for the site are set out within the CDC

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		footpaths, areas with some degraded views.	Development Brief 2007.
Local	No designation	Degraded areas in need of improvement.	Proposals for the site are set out within the CDC Development Brief 2007

14.4.4 The sensitivity of the landscape receptors is defined in Table L4 below:

Table L4 - Sensitivity of Landscape Receptors by Reference to Users	
Sensitivity	Landscape
High	An area possessing a particularly distinctive sense of place, in good condition, or highly valued for its scenic quality and/or landscape character, a landscape with low tolerance to change of the type identified, for example National Parks, AONBs, Heritage Coasts, Grade I listed buildings.
Medium	An area with a clearly defined sense of place and/or character in moderate condition; an area valued at a local or regional level, a landscape which is partially tolerant of change of the type identified
Low	An area with a weak sense of place, and/or landscape character in poor condition, often not valued for its scenic quality, an area that is tolerant of substantial change of the type identified.

Tree and Hedgerow Surveys

14.4.5 A tree survey was prepared in January 2007 by qualified arboriculturalists, Nicholson Nurseries (see Appendix L.A02, Plan LI2 and Plans LI3a-h). The survey was carried out in accordance with BS5837:2005 and current good arboricultural practice, and included tree tagging to enable future identification. Of necessity, this survey was targeted towards the New Settlement Area, because of the large number of trees in this area. Since that time, applications have been made to CDC for the removal of dead, dying or dangerous trees, and where approved by CDC, various trees have been removed. A site walkover examination of the trees was held with CDC arboricultural officer on 23 July 2007.

14.4.6 The survey results classified individual trees into one of the following categories:

- A - highly desirable for retention (high quality and value)
- B - desirable for retention (moderate quality and value)
- C - not important (low quality and value)

R - tree for removal (dead, dying or dangerous)

Magnitude

14.4.7 The criteria to assess the magnitude of landscape impacts (including those on landscape character and historical landscape character) are based upon the amount of physical change that will occur as a result of the proposals, as described in Table L5, below. These are based on best practice examples and experience:

Table L5 - Landscape Impact Magnitude	
Category	Description
Major adverse landscape impact	The proposals will be at total variance with the landscape character, landform, scale, pattern and features of the landscape.
Moderate adverse landscape impact	The proposals will be clearly at odds with the landscape character, landform, scale, pattern and features of the landscape.
Slight adverse landscape impact	The proposals will not quite fit into the landscape character, landform, scale, pattern or features of the landscape.
Negligible adverse landscape impact	The proposals will create a just discernible change to the landscape character, landform, scale, pattern or features of the landscape.
No change	The proposals will not cause any change to the landscape character, landform, scale, pattern or features of the landscape
Negligible landscape benefit	The proposals will provide a just discernible improvement to the landscape character, landform, scale, pattern or features of the landscape.
Slight landscape benefit	The proposals will achieve a degree of fit with the landscape character, landform, scale, pattern or features of the landscape and go some way towards improving the condition or character of the landscape.
Moderate landscape benefit	The proposals will fit well into the landscape character, landform, scale, pattern or features of the landscape or would noticeably improve the condition or character of the landscape.
Major landscape benefit	The proposals will totally accord with the landscape character, landform, scale, pattern or features of the landscape or would restore, recreate or permanently benefit the condition or character of the landscape.

14.5 CRITERIA FOR VISUAL IMPACTS

ZVIs

14.5.1 The extent of the impact or benefit is illustrated by comparison between the visual envelope and the ZVIs (see Plans L6-L9) are computer generated. Target points are used for the chosen buildings or structures, which were selected as being representative of the range of buildings on the site (these target points are shown on the plan). The computer software then processes the landform and other barriers to identify the theoretical extent of the area from which the proposals will be visible. The ZVIs illustrate the worst-case scenario in that they take into account only the principal areas shown on the plans of woodland, buildings, settlements and landform.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

14.5.2 Views may be glimpsed, open, oblique or framed. impacts are described as direct or indirect, secondary, cumulative, short, medium and long-term, permanent and temporary, adverse or beneficial.

14.5.3 The term visual receptor means an element or group of elements that will be directly or indirectly affected by the proposals. Visual receptors are publicly accessible viewpoints, the sensitivity of which would be dependent on the location, the activity of the viewer and the importance of the view. These would include viewpoints available to users of outdoor facilities, sporting activities and users of rights of way; viewpoints from landscape features and beauty spots; viewpoints outside local properties; and viewpoints available to people travelling through the landscape, as requested by CDC, the viewpoints including relevant locations previously carried out by LDA, for Cherwell DC.

14.5.4 The determination of sensitivity of the visual receptors is a matter of professional judgement. The guidelines (Reference I, paragraph 14.3.1) recommend that the assessment of sensitivity should have regard to many factors such as:

- i. the location and context of a viewpoint;
- ii. the expectations and activity of the viewer and the number of people affected;
- iii. the nature of a particular view;
- iv. the popularity of the viewpoint, its appearance in guidebooks, on tourist maps, in the facilities provided for its enjoyment, references in literature or art, particularly relevant for the proposed new viewpoints at either end of the main runway;
- v. the capacity for change, with regard to factors such as landform, land use, the pattern and scale of the landscape;
- vi. the sense of enclosure or openness, particularly relevant to the plateau landscape;

- vii. the sense of remoteness, as above;
- viii. the nature of the settlement pattern;
- ix. impacts on the skyline, particularly relevant in views from the west;
- x. intervisibility; and
- xi. the rareness of any landscape features.

14.5.5 This assessment of the sensitivity of visual receptors is simplified below in Table L6 by reference to the nature of the viewer:

Table L6 - Sensitivity of Visual Receptors	
Sensitivity	Visual Receptor
High	Viewers with proprietary interest and/or prolonged viewing opportunities and/or who have a particular interest in their visual environment, for example residents, or visitors to National Parks, AONBs or Heritage Coasts.
Medium	Viewers with moderate interest in their visual environment, for example users of local open space facilities and walkers on footpaths.
Low	Viewers with passing or momentary interest in their everyday surroundings, for example motorists, or people at their place of work, whose attention is focussed on other activities and are therefore less susceptible to change.

Visual Impact Magnitude

14.5.6 The magnitude of visual impacts depends on factors such as distance, the time of day, weather conditions, elevation and aspect, as well as the context of the view. The following scale in Table L7 has been adopted for the magnitude of visual impact, based on the degree of change to the view, or to the composition. This is based on best practice examples and experience:

Table L7 - Visual Impact Magnitude	
Visual Impact Magnitude	Description
Major adverse visual impact or benefit	The proposals will cause a dominant or complete change to the composition of the view, the appreciation of the landscape character, the ability to take or enjoy the view.
Moderate adverse visual impact or benefit	The proposals will cause a clearly noticeable change to the view, which would affect the composition, the appreciation of landscape character or the ability to take or enjoy the view.

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Slight adverse visual impact or benefit	The proposals will cause a perceptible change to the view, but which would not materially affect the composition, the appreciation of landscape character or the ability to take or enjoy the view.
Negligible adverse visual impact or benefit	The proposals will cause a barely perceptible change to the view, which would not affect the composition, the appreciation of landscape character, or the ability to take or enjoy the view.
No change	The proposals will cause no change to the view.
Neutral	There will be a change to the view, but it is not possible to judge whether this change is an adverse or beneficial impact.

Duration

14.5.7 The following terminology is used to describe the duration of the proposals:

- i. short-term: 0<5 years
- ii. medium-term: 5-20 years
- iii. long-term: over 20 years

Distance of Views

14.5.8 The following terminology is used to describe the approximate distance between the viewer and the edge of the field:

- i. local: 0<1 km
- ii. medium: 1-3km
- iii. long distance: >3km

Type of the View and Numbers of Viewers

14.5.9 The type of the view and the number of viewers, or users, who experience the view are factors in making a judgement of significance. The terminology used is:

- i. Glimpsed/Open/Oblique/Framed Views; and
- ii. Few/Moderate/Many Viewers.

14.6 SIGNIFICANCE

14.6.1 The scale shown in Table L8, below, has been adopted to assess the significance of both landscape and visual impacts (the details of which are set out in the Landscape and Visual Impact Tables, see Appendix L.A01). The

significant impacts on landscape character and historical landscape character are considered as part of the landscape assessment on landscape impacts. The basis of this scale is derived from professional experience:

Table L8 - Assessment of Landscape or Visual Significance					
Sensitivity of Resource	Major Impact or Benefit	Moderate Impact or Benefit	Slight Impact or Benefit	Negligible Impact or Benefit	Neutral Impact
High	Significant	Significant	Moderately Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant
Medium	Moderately Significant	Moderately Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant
Low	Moderately Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant

14.7 BASELINE

Landscape Character at the Baseline

14.7.1 Landscape character is what makes an area distinctive, what gives it a sense of place and what makes it different from another landscape. The topography, woodland and field patterns of the area are shown in Plan L1, in the aerial photograph, Plan L2, and on the photographs, Appendix L.A04.

14.7.2 Natural England (previously the Countryside Agency) identifies the area as National Character Area 107 Cotswolds, a description of which appears in Appendix L.A03. The site lies at the eastern edge of this national character area. The description notes:

'The Cotswolds form perhaps the best-known of the stone-belt uplands that stretch right across England from Dorset to Lincolnshire. The dominant pattern is of steep scarp and long, rolling dip slope cut into a series of plateaux by numerous rivers and streams the fundamental unity derives in part from the harmony of the ever-present honey coloured oolitic limestone in walls, houses, mansions and churches.'

14.7.3 The key characteristics of National Character Area 107 are summarised below in Table L9:

Table L9 - Cotswolds
Description
Rolling, open, high wold plateaux moulded by physical and human influences, with arable and large blocks of woodland, divided up by small, narrow valleys.
Incised landscapes with deep wide valleys.

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Flat open dip slope landscape with extensive arable farmland.
Honey coloured Cotswold stone in walls, houses and churches.
Attractive stone villages with a unity of design and materials.

14.7.4 At a more local scale the site lies within the Farmland Plateau landscape type as defined in the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study 2004 (OWLS, Reference 7). The characteristics of and strategies for this landscape type are set out in Table L10 below. It is notable that this assessment seeks to retain the openness of the ridges, at the same time seeking to establish tree belts around airfields.

Table L10 - County Council Landscape Character Areas from OWLS 2004		
Character Area	Key Characteristics	Key Landscape Strategy Guidelines
Farmland Plateau	<p>Level or gently rolling ridges dissected by narrow valleys and broader vales.</p> <p>Large, regular arable fields enclosed by low thorn hedges and limestone walls.</p> <p>Rectilinear plantations and shelterbelts.</p> <p>Sparsely settled landscape with a few nucleated settlements.</p> <p>Long, straight roads running along ridge summits.</p>	<p>Conserve the open, spacious character of the landscape by limiting woodland planting on the more exposed ridge tops. Locate new planting in the dips and the folds of the landscape and establish tree belts around airfields, quarries and other large structures to reduce their visual impact using locally characteristic native tree and shrub species such as ash, oak and beech.</p> <p>Conserve all remaining areas of semi-improved grassland and encourage conversion of arable to pasture.</p> <p>Maintain the sparsely settled rural character of the landscape by concentrating new development in and around existing settlements. The exposed character of the plateau is particularly sensitive to visually intrusive development, large buildings and communication masts. Promote the use of local building materials, such as limestone and ironstone, and a scale of development appropriate to landscape type.</p>

- 14.7.5** The surrounding local landscape character areas shown on Plan L4 are taken from the Conservation Plan 2005 (reference 8), Figure 5.
- 14.7.6** Appendix L.A03 also provides background information on the Cherwell District Landscape Assessment carried out by Cobham Resource Consultants in 1995, albeit information is carried through into the more recent OWLS study.

Historic Landscape Character

- 14.7.7** The First Edition Ordnance Survey maps for the area were published in 1884 and 1885 (see Plan L5). These show the landscape before the military use of the airfield, which commenced in 1915 as a Royal Flying Corps Station. The plateau comprises a large-scale geometric field pattern characteristic of the late Parliamentary enclosure landscape. In contrast, the Parish boundaries are more irregular, as can still be seen on current maps. The lines of north-south pre-enclosure footpaths (Portway, to the west, and Aves Ditch, to the east) are shown on the earlier plans, with a further footpath crossing the airfield in a north-west to south-east direction. Potential footpath links to surrounding villages are shown on Plan L15. The road east from Upper Heyford village, now Camp Road, is in place as far as The Heath where it runs south-east to Middleton Stoney, without today's link east to the B430.
- 14.7.8** The airfield was previously characterised by small woodlands. Those which remain today include Kennel Copse, on the north side of the airfield; the Heath and The Gorse, to the south-east. Lost copses include Hallaid's Copse which used to lie at the east end of the present runway, and Gorse Covert to the south-east.

Existing landscape Features at the Baseline

- 14.7.9** The former airbase comprises the flying field on its northern side, with the built up area of the airbase building to the south (see also chapter 16, Cultural Heritage and the Design and Access Statement).
- 14.7.10** The former airbase is sited on an open limestone plateau, covered by thin soils. Beyond the boundary the plateau is mainly in arable cultivation, subdivided by low hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees.
- 14.7.11** At the western edge of the airfield the plateau drops away into the Cherwell Valley, defined by a series of attractive villages, constructed of honey coloured limestone, set on the valley sides. The villages of Steeple Aston, Middle Aston and North Aston lie on the west slope of the Cherwell Valley and face the plateau and former airbase. Upper Heyford village lies at the western end of the runway, and is overlooked by the security fence of the western end of the runway.
- 14.7.12** The flying field comprises a very open landscape made up of grazed grassland, studded with military buildings, towers, airdromes, runways and taxiways. Occasional blocks of woodland form features in this open landscape: for example, the Heath forms a woodland edge to the plateau, while Kennel Copse occupies a local valley on the northern margin of the airfield. Otherwise there are no landscape features in the flying field landscape.

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- 14.7.13** The characteristic rounded concrete hardened aircraft shelters (HASs) of the flying field and the occasional gabled technical buildings (see also chapter 16 on Cultural Heritage) provide a regularity in the building form, which contrasts with the openness of the landscape.
- 14.7.14** The landscape character areas of the flying field adopted for the Landscape and Visual section of the ES are taken from the Conservation Plan (Reference 8), Figure 11.
- 14.7.15** Within the flying field, two groups of HASs are visible from public viewpoints outside the site. These are the northwest and the southeast HASs, seen from locations including:
- i. the road between Somerton and Ardley, on the north side of the airfield, within 0.3km of the airfield boundary;
 - ii. the road between Upper Heyford village and Somerton on the west side of the airfield that abuts the nib of the main runway;
 - iii. the road between the former airbase and the B430, south east of the airfield, that runs within 0.5km of the airfield boundary; and
 - iv. the road between Steeple Aston to North Aston via Middle Aston that provides views across the valley towards the airfield structures over distances of between 2.5km and 3km.
- 14.7.16** The built up area on the south side of the airfield (part of New Settlement Area) consists of three distinct uses:
- i. the Technical Site, comprising hangars and other functional buildings, located on the southern part of the flying field, on the north side of Camp Road;
 - ii. the Residential Area, located mainly to the south of Camp Road, comprising three storey barrack buildings, two storey houses, and single storey dwellings (most of which are to be demolished) and
 - iii. south of Camp Road, west of the Residential Area, lies a services and recreational area including a hospital, a single storey school, and two water towers (both 25m high), comprising square steel tanks carried on a steel framework, all being prominent features, in many views defining the position of the former airbase on the skyline.

- 14.7.17** The proposed New Settlement Area currently appears as a conglomeration of buildings, particularly in views from public viewpoints to the south. For example, views from the B4030 where it crosses the plateau, passing through Caulcott, approximately 0.8km south from the former airbase boundary.
- 14.7.18** There are close to 3000 trees within the proposed New Settlement Area currently (see Plans L11-13 and the tree survey, Appendix L.A02). Of these, many in the new settlement area are classified as grade A or B, desirable for retention.
- 14.7.19** The trees are an obvious and important amenity feature of parts of the former airbase as a whole. The trees of the flying field comprise mixed deciduous and coniferous species mainly in groups in the north west corner and along the northern boundary. These are set out on the Landscape Key Plan, Plan L10 and on the aerial photograph Plan L2.. The main tree groupings of the New Settlement Area are shown on Plan L11, which is a detailed survey to comply with BS5837:2005. The main tree groups of the flying field and the proposed housing areas include:
- i. linear tree groups and hedgerows along the margins of the flying field, which soften many of the HASs in distant views;
 - ii. strongly defined mature trees along Camp Road and Dacey Drive (on the west edge of the Residential Area) which give a distinct treed character to the Technical Site;
 - iii. mature avenues, some chestnut, which emphasise the original Trident layout of the Technical Site, so called because of the three roads radiating out from the main entrance;
 - iv. ornamental trees, including two deodar cedars, creating a mature, almost parkland, setting for the distinctive Officers' Mess Building, constructed in the 1930s;
 - v. a substantial copse of mature trees, set in mown grass, on the east side of the Technical Site;
 - vi. groups of tall mature trees within the Technical Site, many of which are locally significant skyline features;
 - vii. individual semi-ornamental and other trees within the existing housing areas; and
 - viii. groups of non-indigenous alien conifer planting, such leyland and lawson cypress, and western red cedar, within the housing area, which are to be removed, subject to discussion.

Heyford Park Environmental Statement**Landscape Planning Designations at the Baseline**

- 14.7.20** A description and assessment of planning designations may be found in Chapter 4 of the ES.
- 14.7.21** The statutory development plan is the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 1996, the policies of which are saved until September 2007. A new Local Plan has been produced, which has not been adopted, because of the ongoing LDF process. Comments in this chapter of the ES refer to this non-adopted, but current document.
- 14.7.22** The main policy relating to Heyford Park is Policy UH1, which requires an integral scheme of landscaping and environmental improvement across the whole of the area of the former airbase, in accordance with Policy UH2.
- 14.7.23** Policy UH1 refers to the reinstatement of Portway and Aves Ditch.
- 14.7.24** Policy UH2 requires under Section (i) the removal of inappropriate buildings and structures (having regard to cultural heritage issues), including perimeter fencing which are unacceptably intrusive, in particular to:
- views from outside the former airbase;
 - the prevailing character;
 - the surrounding landscape;
 - the relationship with the new village and;
 - the enjoyment of the countryside from existing and reinstated rights of way.
- 14.7.25** Landscape Policy EN32 which recognises the narrow and vulnerable gap between Upper Heyford village and the former airbase and that it should be maintained as open land.
- 14.7.26** Landscape character is controlled by Policy EN34 which seeks to avoid visual intrusion into open countryside and harm to important landscape features, settlements, buildings or landmarks. Development should be consistent with local character and not harm its historic value, (see References 6, 7 and 8). Reference is also made to important landscape elements, including the River Cherwell.
- 14.7.27** Policy EN35 seeks to protect woodland and trees which are important to the character or appearance of the local landscape.
- 14.7.28** Policies EN39 and EN40 deal with Conservation Areas.
- 14.7.29** A separate Policy, E49, deals with Rousham Park and, in particular:
- protection of views and setting;
 - the removal of Former Upper Heyford buildings which are prominent from the park, having regard to cultural heritage issues.
- 14.7.30** The airbase has no specific landscape planning designations. It is not part of any Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Area of Great Landscape Value.
- 14.7.31** Landscape planning designations are shown on Plan L3. These are:
- i. the whole of the former airbase site is a Conservation Area, designated by Cherwell District Council in April 2006, on account of its historical significance;

- ii. an area of the Cherwell Valley designated a Conservation Area in 1991, on account of its importance to the setting and views from Rousham;
- iii. Rousham Park, listed Grade I in the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens, which lies approximately 2km south-west of the former airbase; and
- iv. the area around the eastern end of the runway is a County Wildlife Site, designated in November 2000 because of its limestone grassland and associated species (see Chapter 15, Ecology and Nature Conservation).

Landscape Areas within the Application Site

14.7.32 The area of the airfield to the north of Camp Road and within the flying field has been previously subdivided into the landscape character areas shown in the Conservation Plan 2005 (Reference 8, Figure 11, Appendix LA03).

14.7.33 These landscape character areas are as follows:

Area 1A: The Central Runway: a visually open swathe of land partly defined on either side by groups of HASs;

Area 1B: Groups of HASs: squadron clusters, as for Area 1A defined by their open, expansive and treeless character;

Area 1C: the QRAA: the quick reaction area, defined by security fences, and with an inward looking and menacing military nature;

Areas 1E and 1D: the QRAA and Southwest HASs: an area of historical airfield buildings, partly open in character, visually associated with the settlement area, with some tree groups closest to the buildings;

Areas 2 and 3: Runway West and Runway East Terminals: the runway nibs, areas of runway extensions to the west and east of the main runway, open but with less visual definition and visual presence; in the case of the western nib overlooking the village of Upper Heyford;

Areas 4 and 5A: the Northern and Southern Bomb Stores: emotive and inward looking military features;

Areas 5B and 5C Plateau Edge and Northern Fringe: groups of HASs on the edge of and running to the north and north west of the plateau, mostly open but with some groups of non indigenous and indigenous tree planting and a scattering of larger buildings;

Area 6: Southeast HASs: a grouping of seven HASs partly viewed on the skyline when seen from the Ardley Road; and

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Area 8: the built up Southern Edge and the Avionics Building: former airfield buildings visually associated with the settlement.

Rights of Way at the Baseline

14.7.34 Public Rights of Way in the vicinity of the site are shown on Plan L15. There are none within the former airbase site, these having been extinguished by the construction of the airfield. Former tracks across the site are shown on the historical, Plan L5. Potential County Council links are shown on the Landscape Key Plan L15.

Lighting at the Baseline

14.7.35 Night time photographs are provided in Appendix L.A04. Point lighting is concentrated within the Residential Area and the Technical Site, and includes street lighting along Camp Road. There is also intermittent lighting on the airfield, where buildings are in use for commercial purposes.

14.7.36 The rural areas surrounding the former airbase are largely unlit, but there is a considerable night glow from Banbury, and Bicester, both to the north, as well as from the M40 junction lighting, to the east.

Views at the Baseline

14.7.37 Photographs are provided at Appendix L.A04. Photomontages are provided in Appendix L.A05. Photograph locations are shown on Plan L2.

14.7.38 The key views are as follows:

From the west: Typical views from Middle Aston, Steeple Aston and North Aston, as shown by Photographs 14, 15, 16, 18 and 19. These and similar views are available across the Cherwell valley. They tend to show the former airbase buildings on the edge of the Upper Heyford plateau, often as skyline features. Of particular importance are the water towers, as an example visible on the right hand side of Photograph 14.

From the north-west: Discussions have taken place with CDC and English Heritage on the visibility of the HASs and the storage building in the north-west corner. It has been agreed that HASs 3052, 3053, 3054 and 3055, together with Building 3135 will be demolished, due to their visual impact. They are best shown by Photographs 26-29 and the photomontages (Appendix L.A05).

From the north: Photographs 26 and 29 show the view from the vicinity of the North Aston - Fewcott Road, which comprises a rising skyline, including regularly spaced HASs. Discussions took place with CDC and English Heritage on selected removal of some of these HASs, but it was decided that either they should all be removed, or none. Therefore, no demolitions have been proposed.

From the east: glimpses of the former airbase are available, but no key views were identified;

From the south-east: Vehicles travelling from the Ardley - Middleton Stoney direction first have a major view of the airbase from the road, for example from Photograph 36, and the bend and lay-by which follow that

viewpoint. The photograph shows the southeast HASs (the 'Christmas Tree' HASs) on the skyline. These would be removed for reasons of visual impact.

From the south: Photographs 31-33 show the view from the Lower Heyford - Caulcott Road, where the existing airbase forms a medium distance skyline, interspersed by trees and hedgerows. The main visual detractors are the water towers and hospital chimney (both of which would be removed), along with the edges of the bungalows (which would be replaced by modern housing). A new off-site hedgerow would be provided;

The security fence: Photograph 29 shows how the security fence looms over Upper Heyford village. This part of the fence would be removed and the area beyond returned to low fertility wildflower meadow.

From Rousham: Rousham Park is an important Grade I listed building and registered parkland. Photographs 10, 11, 11A and 12 show the many trees of the park and how they conspire to limit views of Heyford Park. Glimpses of the water towers are available from some views, for example from the Dying Gladiator in Photograph 11A.

14.8 ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE IMPACTS

Landscape Impacts for All Periods

- 14.8.1** Details of landscape impacts are set out in Table L11 in Appendix LA01. The summary text which follows focuses on the significant and moderately significant impacts, together with the reasons for those impacts.
- 14.8.2** During construction, there will be changes to the landform, as a result excavation and demolition, but these will not be significant.
- 14.8.3** There will be a long term moderately significant benefit to the landscape pattern, due to the restoration of Portway, Aves Ditch and other footpaths, as well as the creation of a new hedgerow and the restoration of indigenous woodland.
- 14.8.4** The retained trees within the new settlement area will be subject to a comprehensive management programme, a significant landscape benefit.
- 14.8.5** Austrian pine and larch within the existing tree mixes of the Flying Field will be selectively removed, once their value as nurse species has reduced. Scots pine will be retained.
- 14.8.6** As with any development, some trees will require removal either to allow access, to facilitate development, or for arboricultural or safety reasons. The trees to be removed are set out on Plans L13a-f, and in Table L11 below. These removals are based either upon good horticultural principles (in the case of R grade trees), as well as those necessary for removal due to the access requirements or for the construction of buildings shown on the submitted masterplan. The lies within a Conservation Area and therefore each of the trees proposed

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for felling will need to be agreed with the Council, in conjunction with a more detailed masterplan to be prepared later in the planning process. In any event, all trees to be felled will be replaced by new tree planting.

14.8.7 To take the 'worst case' for the ES, it has been assumed that all R grade trees and non indigenous alien conifers will be removed, subject to further discussions with the CDC tree officer.

14.8.8 The settlement area contains 769 conifers, within the figures in the table below. Of these 57 conifers are category R and will be removed as a result. A further 351 conifers are alien (Leyland cypress, Lawson cypress and Western red Cedar), mostly as overgrown hedges, rather than free standing trees. These will also be removed. Therefore the total number of conifers scheduled for removal is 408 trees.

Table L11 Overall tree mix within new settlement area, before and after development		
	Existing trees	Trees to be removed (A, B, C trees to be removed due to development; R trees to be removed for arboricultural reasons and development, alien conifers to be removed in total)
Grade A	116	11
Grade B	1276	221
Grade C	1106	331
Grade R	313	313

14.8.9 The key objective of retaining the openness of the landscape character areas will be retained.

14.8.10 National character area 107: Cotswolds, Oxfordshire County Council character areas, and local character areas (10) Mudginwall Slopes, (14) Upper Heyford Airbase and (15) Upper Heyford (village), will all experience long term character benefits as a result of the removal of the runway nibs, perimeter road and security fence at the western end of the former airbase, together with demolition of skyline HASs and tall structures. The impacts are not significant for National Character Area 107 and moderately significant for the three local character areas (local character areas 10, 14 and 15).

14.8.11 Moderately significant long term benefits will occur to OWLS landscape character areas, where these lie adjacent to the former airbase. They include the farmland Plateau, the Farmland slopes and the Valley Sites. Such benefits will be created by removal of overlooking skyline structures such as the HASs, building 3135, the water towers and, in appropriate locations, the security fence.

14.8.12 Moderately significant landscape character benefits will be created to the local landscape character areas in the Conservation Plan, as follows: Area 2 North Aston, Area 3 Middle Ashton, Area 4 Steeple Ashton, Area 9 Somerton, Area 10 Mudginwell Slopes, Area 12 Fritwell Plateau, Area 17 Caulcott Plateau; and well as within the site at Area 15 Upper Heyford. These will occur for the same reason as 14.8.11 above.

14.8.13 Within the former airbase moderately significant landscape character benefits will be created to Areas 2 and 3 Runway west and Runway east terminals, Areas 5B and 5C Plateau Edge and Northern Fringe, and to Area 6 Southeast HASs. These landscape character benefits will be created by the removal of visually intrusive structures, while retaining the Cold War character and the key openness of the flying field area, benefits which would be supplemented by the replacement of non indigenous evergreen trees and by a management programme designed to retain the openness of the plateau.

14.9 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL IMPACTS

14.9.1 The following provides a summary of the significant and moderately significant impacts, together with the reasons for those impacts. The location of the viewpoints is set out on Plan L2.

Visual Impacts during Construction

14.9.2 Visual impacts are set out on Table L12, Appendix L.A01 and on Plan L7.

14.9.3 Construction activities include the removal of the 25m water towers, demolition and removal of Hardened Aircraft Shelters, demolition of warehouses and other technical buildings, removal of trees, re-levelling some sections of the site and treatments to the runway nibs. These are all located on Plan L10.

14.9.4 Landscape management of trees will commence, including the start of selective rolling programme for the removal of alien conifers, the programme for which will be chosen to minimise visual impact. Some works will be undertaken during winter months, when the shortened hours of daylight may mean that lighting will be necessary.

14.9.5 Out of the total 56 HASs on site, 11 will be demolished for visual impact reasons.

14.9.6 During construction, there will be short lived but significant visual impacts in views from Heyford Park, arising from the demolition of the security fence, building 3135 and the HASs, together with the removal of the nibs of the runway. This will create significant and moderately significant adverse impacts, albeit short term, from local viewpoints such as from Upper Heyford village (see Photograph 1), and some Somerton viewpoints (see Photographs 27-29).

14.9.7 A further seven HASs will be demolished on the south east of the airbase, near Letchmere Farm (see Photographs 35 and 36), but these impacts will not be significant.

14.9.8 Short-term moderately significant adverse visual impacts will occur within wider views from the Cherwell valley villages. Typical viewpoints are from:

- i. Steeple Aston (for example Photograph 13);

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- ii. Aston Slopes (for example Photograph 14); and
- iii. South of Somerton (for example Photograph 28).

14.9.9 No significant visual impacts will occur in views from Rousham (see Photographs 10, 11, and 11A).

Visual Impacts on Completion

14.9.10 For the purposes of this assessment, it has been assumed that no planting will be effective on completion, even though some areas could by now have the benefit of 5 years growth. It has also been assumed that the removal of alien conifers will be part way through.

14.9.11 Building, levelling and planting will be complete. Planting and management will be ongoing to existing woodland and copses, the aim of which would be to affect a long-term change from coniferous to open woodland of locally indigenous deciduous trees, with glades.

14.9.12 On completion, there will be extensive and wide reaching benefits arising from the removal of the northeast and southeast HASs, building 3135, water towers, the hospital chimney and parts of the security fence. There will also be significant visual benefits (for example see Photographs 1, 13, 14, 27, 28, 29 and 31), arising from the removal of the fencing and runway at Heyford Park (see Photograph 19). There will be significant long-term benefits arising from the creation of new vantage points of the runway when seen from Portway (Photograph 38 and 38A) and from Aves Ditch (Photograph 37).

14.9.13 Moderately significant visual benefits will arise at:

- i. Steeple Aston, where the removal of the water towers, the northwest HASs, and building 3135, all diminish the existing visual impact (see Photograph 13);
- ii. the southern entrance to Middle Aston, where the removal of the water towers and selected HASs and warehouse will reduce the impact of the former airbase on the skyline (see Photograph 14);
- iii. south of Somerton, where the removal of selected HASs and building 3135 will diminish the impact of the base on the skyline (see Photograph 28);
- iv. the B4030 at Portway, where the removal of the American High School and the hospital building and its chimney will reduce the visibility of the urban edge (see Photograph 31);
- v. the B4030 east of Caulcott, where the removal of the bungalows and the planting of an off-site hedgerow will also reduce the visibility of the urban edge (see Photographs 32 and 33);
- vi. the removal of the 'Christmas Tree' HASs, when seen from the Ardley Road (see Photograph 35 and 36); and

- vii. from Rousham, Dying Gladiator (see Photograph I | A), due to the removal of the water towers.

14.10 MITIGATION

14.10.1 Mitigation is an integral part of the project.

Mitigation for the Benefit of Wider Views from the West

14.10.2 The proposals are designed to provide benefit to the wider landscape, as follows:

- i. retention of the openness of the plateau landscape
- ii. enhancement of the setting of Upper Heyford village;
- iii. enhancement of the setting of the Cherwell villages of Upper Heyford, Steeple Aston, Middle Aston, and North Aston;
- iv. retention and management of the woodland along the edge of the plateau;
- v. removal of the 25m high water towers and chimney; and
- vi. demolition of the northwest and southeast HASs.

Mitigation for the Flying Field Area

14.10.3 The landscape key plan, Plan L10, shows the works to be carried out to the flying field. This will involve:

- i. removal of technical buildings that have the largest visual impact on the surrounding landscape, without compromising the character of the open character;
- ii. removal of domestic buildings that no longer have a viable use and have an adverse impact on the surrounding landscape;
- iii. removal of the visually exposed western section of the runway, the adjoining perimeter road and parts of the security fencing;
- iv. removal of the runway nibs, to restore them as unimproved grassland;
- v. reconnection of Portway and Aves Ditch across the airfield, providing new viewpoints of the runway previously unavailable to the public;

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- vi. new footpath links east from Aves Ditch to the east of the site (providing a new link across to Ardley), also to surrounding villages, as set out on Plan L15, again providing new viewpoints currently unavailable to the public;
- vii. selective removal of alien conifers and replanting of the northern woodland belt with deciduous trees sensitive to the open character of the plateau, while avoiding inappropriate visual enclosure;
- viii. retention and enhancement of open woodland along the north and north west boundaries to soften the remaining HASs, but avoid the creation of dense boundaries or woodland; and
- ix. the creation of the Upper Heyford Trail, a new circular route for residents and visitors.

14.10.4 The runway nibs and taxiways will be scarified, where these are of concrete. Scarification will be designed to allow limestone grassland to develop, the detailed specification and methodology for which will be agreed with the Council. Concrete is alkaline and suitable for such grassland. Scarification will allow for percolation of water.

14.10.5 Where the nibs are of tarmac, this material is likely to be thin and will be removed. If the ground underneath is limestone or gravel, it will be left alone, except for scarification and adjustment of levels. If there is rubble underneath, it will be levelled and an alkaline subsoil/ crushed concrete mix used to adjust levels.

14.10.6 In both cases, any necessary minor modification of levels will be from site materials gained from locations where there would not be any implications for below ground archaeology. No materials will be imported.

14.10.7 For commercial reasons, security fencing is required for boundaries to the flying field. Where the existing fencing is not retained, security will be achieved by a high quality 2.2m black coated mesh fence. The fence will be attractive to look at and the colour will help to facilitate the structure being absorbed into the background. The specification will be agreed with the Council. This fence will be located, as shown on Plan L10, linking the southern edge of the A frame hangars, along the western side of Aves Ditch, along the eastern side of Portway and along the northern side of Camp Road.

14.10.8 Planting will also be used in relevant locations along the fence line.

Mitigation of Existing Site Vegetation

14.10.9 Proposals for trees are shown on Plans L11 - L13. Mitigation includes:

- i. Grade A, B and C are to be retained, except where it is necessary to remove them for unavoidable reasons such as to provide access; where the removal of trees is unavoidable, replacements will be made with new trees based on native species;
- ii. a new hedgerow along the track leading from Portway to Field Barn Farm, and new structural planting on the southern edge of the residential area, east and west of Field Barn Farm, to soften views of the southern settlement edge;

- iii. new tree planting near Letchmere Farm, within the security fence, to soften the Technical Site in local views from the south east;
- iv. new woodland and structure planting, which on the periphery of the Settlement Area to comprise hedgerows with trees and tree clumps, consisting of locally indigenous species, designed to provide a visually open green framework and a setting for the new development, to provide integration within the surrounding countryside, to reduce its visual impact on local views, to provide a landscape structure which will contrast and enhance the new buildings; and
- v. a long-term landscape and ecological management plan to be agreed with the local authority.

Mitigation for the New Settlement Area

14.10.10 Mitigation for the settlement area is set out on Plan LI4 and within the Design and Access Statement. Planting proposals are set out in Appendix L.A06. Apart from the retention and planting of trees, the key landscape objectives are to create a sense of place, to provide open spaces with character and quality and to break up the southern edge of the new residential area.

14.10.11 A new hedgerow will be planted off site to provide a layer of vegetation in views towards the former airbase from the south. A 10m planting strip is also proposed adjacent to the new housing, this being an area of open intermittent tree planting designed to soften, not to screen, the new housing. The understory of this planting strip will be planted with locally indigenous grassland and shrubs.

14.11 VISUAL IMPACTS 20 YEARS AFTER COMPLETION

14.11.1 Residual landscape and visual impacts are those remaining 20 years after completion. It has been assumed in this assessment that many of the early phases of planting, including areas of advanced structure planting, will have had the benefit of over 20 years establishment and will be up to 18m in height, depending on the species and their initial planting height (assumed heights are shown on the ZVI plans). By now the alien conifers will have been replaced and their deciduous and coniferous replacements will have grown.

14.11.2 There are no significant adverse visual impacts, only benefits.

14.11.3 Significant benefits will arise:

- i. at Upper Heyford village (Photograph 1), due to its proximity to the Western nib, now returned to alkaline grassland, without its fence, together with a new skyline hedgerow along Portway; and
- ii. from Aves Ditch (Photograph 37) and Portway (Photograph 38), where new public vantage points will have been created.

14.11.4 Moderately significant visual benefits will have arisen from:

- i. Steeple Aston (see Photograph 13 and Photomontage 13), where mature strategic planting will soften views of the remaining HASs;

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- ii. close to Middle Aston (see Photographs 14 and 15 and Photomontage 15), where mature strategic planting will soften the remaining HASs;
- iii. eastern edge of Somerton (see Photograph 27 and Photomontage 27), where mature strategic planting will soften remaining visible HASs;
- iv. southeast of Somerton (see Photograph 28 and Photomontage 28), where mature strategic planting will soften the remaining HASs;
- v. from the Somerton Fewcott Road (Photograph 26), due to the growth of existing planting;
- vi. from the B4030, at the entrance to the Portway (see Photograph 31 and Photomontage 31) and B4030 east of Caulcott (see Photographs 32 and 33) where mature strategic planting and hedgerows will soften the housing edge; and
- vii. Chilgrove Drive and from the A430 (Photograph 35 and Photomontage 36) due to the removal of the southeast HASs.

Night Time Impacts 20 Years After Completion

- 14.11.5** Night-time visual impacts are set out on Table L12A, Appendix L.A01. Night time photographs are provided in Appendix L.A04.
- 14.11.6** Views at night are relatively undisturbed by light pollution, with the exception of the urban glow of Banbury and Bicester, lighting from the site, and the lights of Camp Road. There will be no major new areas of lighting, the commercial uses continuing on the flying field and the residential and business uses being replaced to the north and south of Camp Road. Lighting will also utilise more efficient units, which avoid an upward glow.

14.12 SUMMARY

Landscape and Landscape Character Impacts

- 14.12.1** There will be significant landscape, landscape character and historic landscape character benefits arising as a result of the proposed development.
- 14.12.2** In terms of landscape character, the former Cold War site will retain a productive commercial use which respects the surrounding landscape character and pattern, crucially while retaining its open landscape nature. The open plateau landscape will be retained for the future, in some respects, enhanced.
- 14.12.3** Inappropriate evergreen trees will be removed and the tree stock managed.
- 14.12.4** The runway extensions will be removed on the western and eastern nibs, but the great length and importance of the runway will still be visible from new viewpoints, as part of the retained landscape of the former airbase.

Likewise, HASs to be demolished to provide visual benefit, yet still having their outlines marked in the landscape, to perpetuate their historic locations.

14.12.5 There will be significant benefits for public access, two major new viewpoints at the end of the runway, as well as potential links to surrounding villages.

Visual Impacts

14.12.6 There will be short-term adverse visual impacts associated with demolition and removal of the water towers, selected HASs and building 3135, especially when seen on the skyline from the Cherwell villages. These construction works will be localised and short-lived.

14.12.7 On completion, and following the growth of planting, there will be widespread visual benefits. All viewpoints will experience benefits (apart from views where the impact is neutral or where there is no impact). The greatest benefits are:

- i. from Upper Heyford village, as a result of the removal of the security fencing;
- ii. new vantage points from the reinstated Portway and Aves Ditch;
- iii. from viewpoints in the northwest and southeast due to the renewal of the water towers and HASs;
- iv. improvements in the view from Rousham, as a result of the removal of skyline water towers;
- v. from the Cherwell villages, where views of the water towers and HASs would be removed; and
- vi. from the south, as a result of the removal of the water towers and the planting of a new off site hedge to provide layers of vegetation, to soften views of the new housing area.

Heyford Park Environmental Statement**Schedule of Plans and Appendices****Plans**

- L1 Topography
- L2 Aerial Photograph and photograph locations
- L3 Landscape Planning Context
- L4 Landscape Character
- L5 Historic Map: First Editions 1884/1885
- L6 Visual Envelope of Existing Site, including water towers and chimney
- L7 ZVI during Construction, following removal of water towers and chimney
- L8 ZVI on Completion, no effective planting
- L9 ZVI 20 Years after planting
- L10 Landscape Key Plan A3 and folded A2
- L11 Major Tree Groups within the Settlement Area
- L12 Tree Plan A3 and folded A0
- L13a-h Tree Plans A3 and folded A0 and A1
- L14 Landscape Masterplan for Settlement Area
- L15 Potential and Existing Public Access

Appendices

- L.A01 Landscape and Visual Impact Tables (Tables L11 and L12)
- L.A02 Tree Survey: Nicholsons Nurseries Schedule A3, A1 plans and disk
- L.A03 Landscape Character
- L.A04 Photographs
- L.A05 Photomontages
- L.A06 Planting Proposals