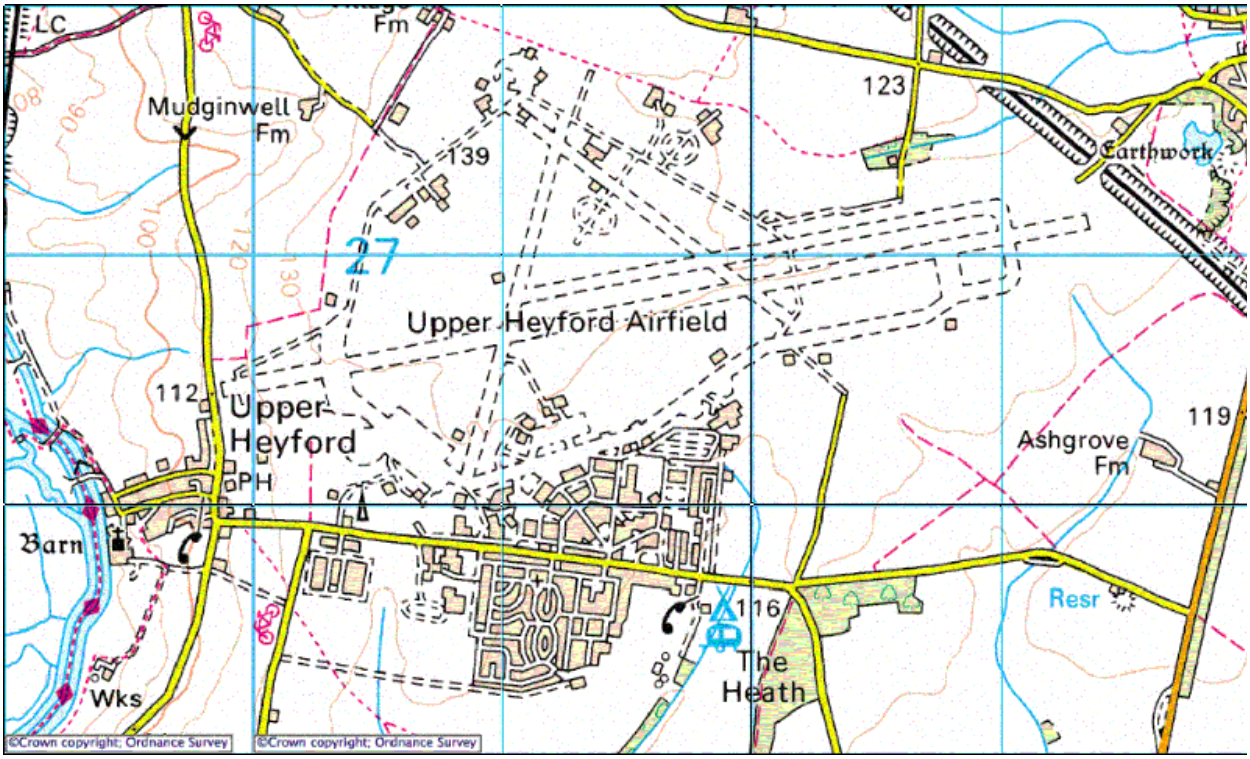


# Environmental Statement
# Part 4: Non-Technical Summary

Heyford Park

October 2010

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# Heyford Park

**Client Name:** Dorchester Group
**Document Reference:** EED10658.103.R.3.2.1.AH
**Project Number:** EED10658

## Quality Assurance – Approval Status

This document has been prepared and checked in accordance with
Waterman Group's IMS (BS EN ISO 9001: 2008 and BS EN ISO 14001: 2004)

| Issue | Date | Prepared by | Checked by | Approved by |
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# Content



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# Introduction

The Dorchester Group (the applicant) is seeking to obtain planning permission from Cherwell District Council for the redevelopment of Heyford Park (hereafter referred to as the 'Site'), located approximately 7 kilometres to the north-west of Bicester in Oxfordshire.

The proposed redevelopment (hereafter referred to as the 'Development') would create a settlement comprising housing, employment, education, retail and community uses, together with associated landscaping and infrastructure.

An Environmental Impact Assessment was undertaken by Waterman to assess the likely significant environmental impacts of the Development. The findings of the Environmental Impact Assessment are reported in an Environmental Statement, which was prepared to accompany the planning application. This document provides a summary of the findings of the Environmental Impact Assessment in non-technical language.

## The Site

The Site, which covers an approximate area of 76 hectares (ha), is located near to the village of Upper Heyford in Oxfordshire. A plan showing the location of the Site is presented as **Figure 1** and the boundary of the Site is shown in **Figure 2**.

The Site is bound by the runway and associated buildings of the former Royal Air Force (RAF) Airbase (known as the Flying Field) to the north and west, and agricultural land to the south and east. A sewage treatment works is located to the south east of the Site. The Site is surrounded by a network of small villages, including Upper Heyford, which is located to the west of the Site.

The main vehicular access to the Site is along Camp Road, which extends in an east to west direction and bisects the Site. Camp Road connects Upper Heyford in the west with the villages of Ardley and Middleton Stoney in the east. The principal entrance to the Airbase is via a roundabout on Camp Road.

The Site, which originally formed the majority of the 'Settlement Area' of the former RAF Airbase, was largely developed by the 1920's. The entire Site is currently occupied by buildings and structures associated with the operation of the former RAF Airbase, with much of the Site to the north of Camp Road currently occupied by commercial and office buildings. The existing buildings and structures are positioned around a formal street pattern, including three partially tree-lined avenues, known as the 'Trident' that extends from the principal entrance to the former Airbase. Two important Cold War buildings are located in the western part of the Site to the north of Camp Road: the Battle Command Centre and the Hardened Telephone Exchange. Other buildings of historical importance include four large air hangers in the north of the Site, which are currently used for commercial purposes, and the disused 1920's RAF Officers' Mess, which is located largely in its original setting towards the east of the Site.

To the south of Camp Road, the Site largely comprises bungalows and two-storey semi-detached or short terraces of 1950's houses. A small supermarket and chapel immediately to the south of Camp Road serve the existing residents living on the Site. Open space to the south of Camp Road comprises a sports field and gymnasium, which are located in the western part of the Site and the historically important Old Parade Ground in the eastern part of the Site.

At present there are just over 300 dwellings available on the Site for residential occupation, the majority of which are currently let. As a result, the Site is now home to around 800 residents.

There are a number of disused buildings across the southern part of the Site, including the petrol pumps located adjacent to the supermarket, together with the store, sports pavilion and hospital in the western part of the Site. The eastern part of the Site is occupied by a complex of multi-storey former barrack buildings, together with offices and car parks, all now disused and in a poor state of repair. Many parts of the Site, including the former barrack buildings and sports field, are fenced off and not accessible to the general public. Furthermore, existing residential and commercial areas of the Site are in a poor state of repair.

The majority of existing housing present on the Site are one storey in height, although the officer family housing to the north of Camp Road are two-storeys, as is some of the housing South of Camp Road. Existing office buildings are also mostly two-storeys in height, whereas the commercially used air hangers are of larger scale and equivalent to four-storeys.

The entire former Airbase was designated a Conservation Area in 2006 owing to the distinctive Cold War architecture and layout. Due to the Site being designated a Conservation Area; there is a statutory duty to preserve its character and appearance.

## Background to the Planning History of the Site

A planning application for the entire former RAF Airbase (i.e. the Site and the Flying Field to the north and west) was submitted in 2007 and was granted permission in January 2010. The planning application was accompanied by an Environmental Statement (Roger Evans Ltd, Environmental Statement, September 2007). The proposals which are described below would therefore replace the approved development for the Site itself, although the consented development for the remainder of the former Airbase (i.e. not within the Site) will proceed as per the planning permission granted in January 2010.

## What are the Proposals?

The planning application takes the form of a 'hybrid' application. This means that the proposal for the erection of new buildings has been submitted in outline, although where approval is being sought for the change of use of existing buildings, the buildings and proposed uses are specified.

The application seeks to establish development principles across the Site. The main components of the Development are shown on a series of parameter plans, which are presented in **Part 1** of the Environmental Statement. The parameter plans show the buildings to be retained and demolished, together with the type and amount of proposed land uses, areas of open space, the maximum heights of new buildings and the main access routes through the Site. The parameter plans form the basis of the planning application and the assessments carried out within the Environmental Impact Assessment.

The Development would provide a new settlement comprising housing, employment and community uses to create a mixed use sustainable community. The key components of the Development are shown in **Figure 3** and are summarised below:

- up to 1,075 dwellings, of which 762 dwellings would be new homes and the remaining 313 are existing dwellings;
- hotel and / or care facility and student accommodation;
- employment uses comprising a mix of new build development and change of use to existing buildings to accommodate businesses, general industry, storage and distribution;
- retail uses comprising a mix of new build and change of use of existing buildings;
- community uses comprising a church, community hall, crèche and heritage centre;
- a primary school;
- a petrol station; and
- playing pitches and courts, sports pavilion and open space.

A local centre would be provided in the centre of the Site along Camp Road which would include the church, community hall and crèche along with the retail uses and some residential units. To facilitate the Development, a number of existing buildings would require demolition. Buildings to be demolished include the disused store and hospital in the western part of the Site, the majority of disused barrack buildings towards the south-western part of the Site and commercial buildings to the north of the Site. However, buildings of historical importance would be retained and integrated into the Development to conserve the heritage and unique character of the Sites Conservation Area status.

Heights of the new buildings would range from one-storey to a maximum of three storeys, to reflect the existing character and form of the Site. The proposed new primary school would be one-storey in height. However, new residential dwellings would be largely two-storeys in height but rising to three-storeys around the Old Parade Ground, Camp Road and the 'Trident' area in the northern part of the Site. The local centre and the new commercial buildings would also be a maximum of three-storeys in height.

New streets would be created to link the new residential and commercial areas to Camp Road, including a main circular route. The main circular route to the south of Camp Road would provide a one-way bus route, whilst to the north of Camp Road a dedicated route for Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGVs) would be created to provide access to the existing businesses in the north of the Site and on the Flying Field. HGVs and commercial vehicles would be directed from Camp Road in the east around the periphery of the proposed commercial area in the north of the Site and connecting to existing businesses to the north. Historically important street layouts such as the 'Trident' street pattern and Trenchard Circle in the northern part of the Site would be retained and integrated into the Development. Carswell Circle to the south of Camp Road would also be completely retained to preserve its character.

The Development would also provide public open space across the Site. Green spaces would be created within each neighbourhood area to provide accessible recreational facilities and would comprise areas of natural open space and sports grounds. The historically important Old Parade Ground, adjacent to the proposed local centre, would be restored to provide an area of open space, together with a sports ground.

Existing trees and mature vegetation would be retained across the Site, where possible. Tree planting is also proposed, including planting a line of trees along the southern boundary of the Site to screen the Site from views to the south.

A sustainable drainage system is proposed which would attenuate surface water runoff from the Site. This would take the form of a number of ponds as well as the use of permeable paving, oversized pipes and underground tanks.

The demolition and construction programme for the Development is expected to take five years to complete. It is anticipated that demolition and construction works would commence in 2012 and be undertaken in phases, with individual phases fully built out before work commences on the next phase.

## Approach and Environmental Impact Assessment Methodology

Environmental Impact Assessment is a formal process which aims to ensure that any potentially significant environmental impacts of a new development (which can be beneficial or adverse) are taken into account in deciding whether planning permission should be granted.

The Environmental Impact Assessment was carried out in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999 (as amended) using established methods such as site surveys, reviews of available reports and data, computer modelling, consultations with relevant organisations and specialist assessments. The results of the Environmental Impact Assessment are presented in an Environmental Statement, which is submitted to the planning authority (i.e. Cherwell District Council) as part of the planning application.

The first stage of the Environmental Impact Assessment process involved undertaking a 'Scoping Study', the purpose of which was to identify potentially significant environmental impacts arising from the Development and therefore define the focus of the Environmental Impact Assessment. The findings of the Scoping Study, along with details of the proposed methods for the specialist assessments, were presented in a 'Scoping Report' and submitted to Cherwell District Council in May 2010.

The Scoping Report confirmed that the Development would be likely to give rise to a number of issues which need to be considered in the Environmental Impact Assessment. These would comprise: transportation; noise; air quality; ground conditions and contamination; water resources; landscape and visual character; archaeology and cultural heritage; ecology; socio-economics and cumulative impacts. Cherwell District Council consulted with statutory consultees on this Scoping Report and provided their agreement on these issues in correspondence dated June 2010.

Each of the above issues is addressed within individual chapters of **Part 1** of the Environmental Statement. In each chapter, a review of relevant legislation and planning policy is provided, as well as a description of the assessment methodology undertaken and existing Site conditions. This is followed by an assessment of the likely significant impacts of the Development, a description of suggested measures to reduce or offset any adverse impacts and an assessment of impacts taking into account these measures.

## What Are the Likely Environmental Impacts and How Would They Be Minimised?

The Environmental Impact Assessment has assessed a number of issues associated with the proposed Development in order to identify potentially significant environmental impacts and recommend appropriate measures to reduce them, where possible. The findings of the Environmental Impact Assessment are summarised below:

### Transportation

A Transport Assessment, which outlines existing and potential future traffic conditions, was prepared for the Site in 2007. It has been agreed with the local highways authority that the Transport Assessment remains valid for the proposed Development.

Construction traffic, largely comprising cars and vans and to a lesser extent HGVs, would be generated throughout the duration of the demolition and construction phase. This would lead to a temporary increase in traffic levels within the Site and on the surrounding roads, particularly leading up to Junction 10 of the M40 motorway at Ardley.

Once the Development is completed and operational, traffic generated from the Development is predicted to be of a similar level to those predicted for the approved development. HGVs would be directed along specific routes through the Site away from the proposed local centre and school. The Development would introduce new bus routes around the Site, improving access for the existing residents and occupants to bus services. The Development would also improve pedestrian and cycling facilities across the Site. To create a safer environment for pedestrian and cyclists, the Development would introduce traffic calming measures along Camp Road.

### Noise

Monitoring of existing noise levels demonstrates that the Site is typical of a quiet rural location, with sources of noise mainly relating to road traffic and to a lesser extent, existing commercial uses. The highest existing noise levels were found to be along Camp Road and attributable to traffic.

During demolition and construction, adverse noise impacts are likely to be experienced by people living and working on the Site, although due to the nature of works, noise impacts would be temporary. A number of measures to minimise noise levels should be implemented during the works including careful selection of modern and quiet plant and machinery, agreed working hours and traffic management measures. Noise monitoring should also be carried out during the demolition and construction works to confirm that noise levels are within acceptable levels.

In line with planning policies on noise, consideration has been given to whether the existing noise levels are suitable for the proposed uses. Analysis of the monitoring data confirmed that the majority of the Site is suitable for both residential properties and the proposed care home. However, noise levels are slightly higher adjacent to Camp Road and around the existing commercial buildings. Without mitigation, noise would adversely affect the proposed properties nearest to these areas. However, appropriate design of new buildings would ensure that future residents would be unlikely to be affected by existing noise sources.

Noise from traffic is predicted to increase on Camp Road in the central part of the Site, although decreases in traffic noise are also predicted elsewhere on Camp Road.

## Air Quality

During demolition and construction works, the main impact on local air quality relates to dust, which is most likely to be generated from demolition activities and ground preparation works. Significant dust generation could potentially cause nuisance to nearby residents, particularly those living on the Site during the works. However, any dust nuisance would be short-term and highly localised depending upon the nature of construction activities and weather conditions. Dust generation and the potential risk of nuisance to nearby residents should be effectively minimised and reduced through the use of best practice measures such as damping down exposed surfaces during dry and windy weather, providing hoarding around works and covering construction materials.

## Ground Conditions and Contamination

Localised contamination has been identified within the soils underlying parts of the Site, as well as groundwater in the north of the Site. Owing to historical and current activities on, and adjacent to the Site, there remains the potential for contamination to exist within other parts of the Site.

Ground preparation works during the demolition and construction phase would disturb and expose localised contamination in the soils and shallow groundwater, leading to a risk of construction workers coming into contact with contamination. However, construction workers would be subject to a range of health and safety controls, thereby reducing the risk to acceptable levels.

Pollution of the underlying groundwater and springs draining the Site could also occur as a result of new sources of contamination introduced to the Site during the demolition and construction phase, together with the disturbance of any existing contamination in the soils. However, mitigation measures should be implemented (e.g. appropriate storage of hazardous materials), where necessary, to minimise the risk of pollution reaching surface water courses and underlying groundwater.

The Development does not include land uses that would be likely to result in significant contamination of soil, underlying groundwater and surface waters. However, future Site users could be exposed to historical contamination in soft landscaped areas and ground gases accumulating in buildings. Prior to developing the Site, a Ground Investigation would be carried out to ascertain the nature and extent of contamination across the Site. Where necessary, the Site would then be remediated so that ground contamination is reduced to an acceptable level.

## Water Resources

In line with planning policy a Flood Risk Assessment was undertaken for the Development. The Site is located in an area which has a very low risk of flooding from surface watercourses. Ground levels would remain as existing and no basements are proposed. As a result, there would be no flood risk to the Development.

A preliminary surface water drainage strategy was developed to ensure the Development could effectively manage and reduce surface water runoff. This would be achieved through a range of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) including attenuation ponds, underground tanks and porous paving materials. The Development would be designed so not to increase flood risk on-site or elsewhere.

The Development would increase the volume of foul water discharge from the Site to the existing sewage treatment works due to the additional housing and other proposed uses. However, the increase would be comparable to the volume that discharged to a sewage treatment works when the Site was fully occupied during the operation of the RAF Airbase. The Development would also result in additional demand for local water supply, although consumption could be minimised through the implementation of water efficiency measures as part of the Development.

## Landscape and Visual Character

The Development would result in the comprehensive redevelopment of the Site, which would result in some temporary adverse impacts during the demolition and construction phase. However, such impacts would be restricted to areas of the Site where works are taking place and their immediate surroundings. Indeed, the demolition of existing buildings, which do not contribute positively to the landscape character of the Site, is considered to be beneficial. The character of neighbouring areas would experience limited visual intrusion during demolition and construction due to screening of the Site provided by existing vegetation.

The completed Development is anticipated to result in beneficial changes to the character of the Site as current buildings that are in a state of poor repair are replaced by new residential and community uses and open space. Areas of the former Airbase outside the Site boundary would experience negligible impacts as a result of existing screening from trees and the physical separation between areas. The character of areas adjacent to the Site would also experience some improvements in landscape character, whilst those further away would experience negligible impact.

In relation to visual impact, sensitive lcoations within the Site and immediately to the south would experience the greatest amount of change. Overall, the Development would improve the amenity of views by reducing the prominence of existing buildings and creating a more natural transition between the Site and surrounding countryside, through the introduction of new landscape planting, wildlife and open space areas. As such, enhancements are predicted to views from within the Site and from local footpaths and dwellings. At further distances from the Site, such as from Upper Heyford, Rousham Park and the Cherwell River valley, the Development becomes indiscernible on views and negligible impacts are predicted.

## Archaeology and Cultural Heritage

The Site has the potential to contain archaeological deposits of the Iron Age and Roman period, however, these are likely to have been significantly disturbed or destroyed by previous development of the Site. As such, only limited areas of the Site (for example the area of the proposed access road in the south west) would need to be evaluated in more detail during construction works.

The whole of the Site is designated as RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area. Five Cold War related sites (two within the Site and three nearby) are also designated as Scheduled Monuments. The Site is of less significance than the Flying Field to the north, parts of which (the Scheduled Monuments) are considered to be of international significance for their Cold War heritage value.

The Development will involve the demolition of a significant number of buildings throughout the Site, however, the most valuable structures and buildings, including the houses at Carswell Circle, the Hardened Telephone Exchange and Hardened Battle Command Centre (both Scheduled Monuments), will be retained. The majority of existing residential buildings will also be retained.

Overall, there would be considerable change within the Site although the more significant buildings and areas would not be directly impacted. Demolition would predominantly be carried out within the less historic areas. Impacts will be minimised by a programme of mitigation that will be agreed with the English Heritage and the County Archaeologist. This will entail the recording of all adversely effected structures and areas within the Site, which will increase understanding of modern military history. The inclusion of a heritage centre within the Development will also bring significant benefits through increasing understanding and awareness of the Site's history.

## Ecology

The majority of habitats on the Site are of low nature conservation value, although trees and hedgerows provide important habitat for invertebrates, bats and birds. The planting of new native hedgerows and trees to compensate for those lost through the Development should improve connection between habitats to ensure ecological benefits are maximised. Further habitat enhancement measures are proposed to provide even greater biodiversity value at the Site.

Two European protected species: great crested newts and bats are currently present at the Site and both species are likely to be impacted during the construction phase through the loss of important habitat. Great crested newts would require new habitat, in the form of ponds, prior to their relocation under an appropriate licence from Natural England. New ponds should be enhanced with suitable vegetation and log and stone piles to protect and enhance great crested newt populations at the Site. Three species of bat were found to be roosting in a number of buildings proposed for demolition. The demolition of these buildings would need to take place under an appropriate licence from Natural England. Further bat survey is required prior to demolition to accurately assess the type of bat roosts to inform the licence application. The provision of alternative roosts, possibly incorporated into existing or new buildings would minimise the impacts on bats.

Breeding birds at the Site are common and widespread, however, works that may affect nesting birds (e.g. vegetation clearance and building demolition) should take place outside of the breeding season to ensure that impacts are minimised. Replacement planting of native species and provision of bird boxes should ensure that breeding bird populations are protected, and even enhanced, across the Site.

## Socio-economics

The Development is likely to generate around 285 construction jobs and around 250 new jobs on-Site once the Development is completed. The Development would also provide long-term security in terms of employment for the people currently living on the Site and within the surrounding area, which would contribute positively to the local economy.

The Development would also contribute to the housing targets of the Council by providing 762 new homes. The mix of housing types and tenures, including a proportion of affordable housing, would further help to meet the needs of local people. However, the Development would also result in around 1,800 additional people living on the Site resulting in an increased demand on local healthcare and education facilities. A primary school is proposed as part of the Development to meet demand, and Oxfordshire County Council has already planned for the accommodation of secondary school pupils from the Site within local secondary schools, which should be met by a financial contribution from the applicant. The increased demand for healthcare facilities could be offset through the provision of new facilities within the Development or a financial contribution to offsite facilities.

## Cumulative Impacts

Two types of cumulative impacts are considered in this assessment:

- impact interactions: the combination of individual impacts arising from the Development on a particular receptor, for example noise and vibration, dust and visual impacts; and
- cumulative impacts: impacts from reasonably foreseeable developments, which in isolation may be insignificant, but when considered together could result in a significant cumulative impact.

During the construction phase, a combination of nuisance impacts from noise and dust together with visual, traffic and pollution impacts could be experienced. The assessment found that this would most likely affect occupants and residents living on the Site throughout the 5 year construction period. The

implementation of mitigation measures, such as a Construction Environmental Management Plan, would minimise the nuisance impacts on residents and users of the Site during construction works.

The cumulative impacts of the Development together with other planned developments within Cherwell District were assessed. The other planned schemes considered comprise:

- approved development proposals for the change of use of buildings on the Flying Field (to the immediate north) with associated car parking, landscaping and fencing;
- a proposed windfarm on land at Willowbank Farm (approximately 2.7 kilometres north east); and
- a proposed energy from waste facility at Ardley Landfill Site (approximately 2 kilometres east).

The cumulative impacts of the Development in conjunction with the planned developments were generally found to be minimal, during both the construction and operational phases. Should construction of the Development overlap with construction of the other planned developments, temporary adverse cumulative impacts would potentially arise as a result of increased traffic and potential ground contamination. To a lesser extent, there would also be the potential for temporary cumulative noise and visual impacts to the landscape. However, there would also be a temporary cumulative increase in employment, which would benefit the local economy. Once the Development and the other planned developments are completed and operational, the cumulative impacts would relate to increased traffic on the local roads and increased employment.

## What Will Happen Next?

Following the submission of the application, there will be an opportunity for any interested parties to comment on the proposals. The Environmental Statement and a set of documents supporting the planning application can be viewed at the following location:

Cherwell District Council
Planning Department
Bodicote House
Bodicote
Banbury
Oxfordshire
OX15 4AA

Additional copies of the Environmental Statement can be purchased from Waterman on request (contact details below). Additional copies of the Non-Technical Summary can be obtained free of charge. A CD version of the Environmental Statement can be purchased at a cost of £20.

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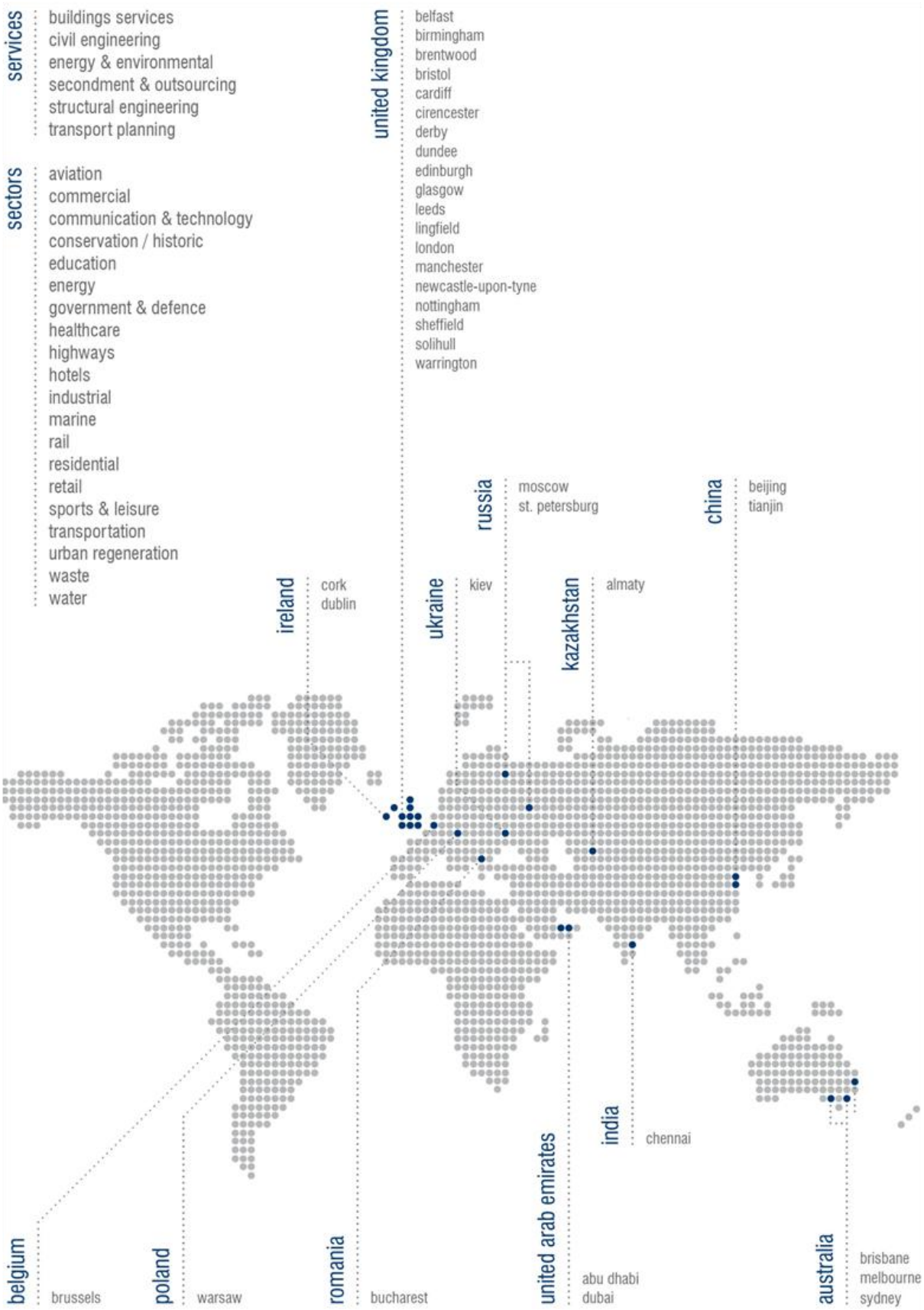
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