

**STATEMENT OF  
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

**FORMER RAF UPPER HEYFORD  
HEYFORD  
OXFORDSHIRE**

Pegasus Planning Group  
Pegasus House  
Querns Business Centre  
Whitworth Road  
Cirencester  
Gloucestershire  
GL7 1RT

Telephone: (01285) 641717 Facsimile: (01285) 885115

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This supporting document sets out the activities undertaken on behalf of the applicants, The Dorchester Group, (which now controls NOC Ltd) to provide stakeholders, local residents and other interested parties with an insight into the proposals that would form the basis of a future planning application for a revised approach to the delivery of a new settlement at Upper Heyford.
- 1.2 The aim of pre-application consultation is to provide appropriate opportunities where people can communicate their concerns or aspirations about the proposals and have those issues and aspirations recorded and reported to those who are engaged in devising and designing the development project, or those directly involved in the decision-making process.
- 1.3 The following short report outlines the exercises undertaken by NOC to publicise their revised proposals for the New Settlement Area within the base building on the previous scheme approved by the Secretary of State in January 2010.

## 2. DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

2.1 A full description of the proposals is set out the Supporting Planning Statement.

2.2 In summary, the scheme comprises a single hybrid outline planning application for a range of activities/structures including the erection of new buildings, and also the change of use of specified buildings across the application site. As the whole of the scheme forms part of a Conservation Area the use of an outline planning application is slightly unusual especially as central Government guidance recommends the use of full planning applications in such locations. However, in this case both the Planning Authority and the Secretary of State have previously accepted that a hybrid outline application is acceptable; along with planning conditions and Section 106 obligation the Planning Authority will have sufficient powers to control the appearance of the proposed new buildings. The proposed development within the New Settlement Area now includes the following uses:-

- 1) Class C3 (residential dwellinghouses): up to 1,075 dwellings (including the retention and change of use of the majority of existing military housing and the change of use of various buildings), comprising:
  - a) *46 existing dwellings already benefitting from a Certificate of Lawful Use or Development for Class C3;*
  - b) *change of use of 253 dwellings to Class C3 (already subject to planning application 10/00640/F);*
  - c) *change of use of 12 dwellings along Dacey Drive to Class C3;*
  - d) *change of use of 2 dwellings along Dow Street to Class C3;*
  - e) *erection of 764 new dwellings;*
  - f) *demolition of 2 existing dwellings, no.'s 5 and 7 Portal Drive South; and*
  - g) *change of use of Building 485 to Class C3*
- 2) Class D1 (non residential institutions): change of use of various buildings to provide up to 5,820 sq.m of floorspace, comprising change of use of:-
  - a) *Building 549 580 sq.m*
  - b) *Building 572 680 sq.m*
  - c) *Building 126 869 sq.m*
  - d) *Building 129 241 sq.m*
  - e) *Building 315 3,100 sq.m*

And erection of up to 350sq.m of new build Class D1 floorspace for a crèche

- 3) a Change of Use of Building 74 (4,020 sq.m) to a Class C1/C2 use
- 3) b Change of Use of Building 41 (1,662 sq.m) to a Class C1 use
- 4) Class A1 provision of up to 1,400 sq.m of floorspace, comprising of new build.
- 5) Class A3-A5 provision of up to 1,713 sq.m of floorspace in total, comprising :-
  - (a) Building 455 1,177 sq.m
  - (b) Building 457 224 sq.m
  - (c) Building 103 312 sq.m)
- 6) Provision of 1 no. Primary School on 2.2 hectares.
- 7) Class B1 provision of up to 5,821 sq.m of floorspace in total, comprising:-
  - (a) change of use of Building 100 557 sq.m
  - (b) change of use of Building 125 897 sq.m
  - (c) change of use of Building 123 1,847 sq.m
  - (d) change of use of Building 488 up to 1,500 sq.m
  - (c) erection of new build up to 1,020 sq.m
- 8) Mixed Class B2/B8 provision of up to 20,833 sq.m of floorspace in total, comprising change of use of :-
  - (a) Building 80 2,198 sq.m
  - (b) Building 151 3,100 sq.m
  - (c) Building 172 5,135 sq.m
  - (d) Building 320 3,600 sq.m
  - (e) Building 345 3,600 sq.m
  - (f) Building 350 3,200 sq.m
- 9) Class B8 provision of up to 50 sq.m. involving change of Use of Building 158.
- 10) Change of Use of Structure 89a (10 sq.m) to a petrol filling station (sui generis use).
- 11) Provision of playing pitches and courts, sports pavilion plus incidental open space including NEAPS and LEAPS.
- 12) Provision of all infrastructure to serve the above development including the provision of the requisite access roads and car parking to District Council standards.
- 13) Removal of boundary fence to the south of Camp Road and partial removal of the fence to the north of Camp Road.

- 14) Removal of buildings and structures within New Settlement Area as detailed in separate schedule;
  - 15) Landscaping alterations including the removal of identified trees within the Conservation Area (see separate schedule) and planting of new trees and off-site hedgerows and access track.
- 2.3 Although the current application only relates to revised proposals for the New Settlement Area the importance of achieving a comprehensive solution for the whole of the Base has been fully taken into account and the proposals for the Flying Field will be shown to be fully integrated with the new NSA scheme.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

- 3.1 There are two principal strands involved in the consultation and evolution of the Masterplan proposals. The two elements are complementary and have informed the preparation of the Masterplan, but are reported separately in this Statement.
- 3.2 The first element involves consultation with stakeholder interests. This has variously involved meetings and direct liaison with Cherwell District Council, Oxfordshire County Council, English Heritage, the Environment Agency, and other government agencies and authorities as appropriate. A summary of the various issues raised and incorporation into the scheme is set out in Section 4 of this statement.
- 3.3 The second element was that of engagement with the local community. Pre-application consultation on the sensitive redevelopment of RAF Upper Heyford has been a long term exercise which commenced nearly 10 years ago. More specifically, consultation on the revised proposals incorporating the retention of more of the existing dwellings was commenced with the distribution of "Housing Needs Survey" in March 2010 to all residents at Heyford Park. This provides an accurate picture of the demographics on site and records information relating to the needs and aspirations of the local residents. The survey was followed by a public exhibition event held on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2010 and also an open day event concerning the refurbishment of the bungalows held in October 2010. A summary of the results of this survey is set out in Section 5 of this Statement.

#### **4. STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 Full details of the evolution of the masterplan proposals are set out in the Design and Access statement which accompanies this planning application.
- 4.2 Shortly after the North Oxfordshire Consortium (NOC) acquired this site in the late 1990s, a consultation group involving regular meetings with District and County Council officials, was set up. This was known as the Upper Heyford Steering Group and involved a series of regular meetings where NOC set out its emerging proposals for the redevelopment of the base. These meetings took place regularly between 2001 and 2008.
- 4.3 Following the appeal which took place in 2002, NOC reconsidered its whole approach to the redevelopment of the base with a view to providing a “lasting solution” and restricting new built development to the New Settlement Area identified in the non-statutory Local Plan at that time. During that period the District Council was content to see temporary uses occurring both in existing buildings in the New Settlement Area and in buildings on the wider flying field. These temporary uses included the occupation of the existing military dwellings on the base. Each proposal for the occupation of the new building was accompanied by a temporary planning application which was granted by the Planning Authority for a period of time – usually five years.
- 4.4 With the designation of the whole of the Upper Heyford Air Base as a Conservation Area in April 2006, this required a different approach to be taken by NOC as there was a presumption in favour of the retention of all buildings and structures contributing to the character of the Conservation Area. This included buildings on the Flying Field as well as buildings within the New Settlement Area. Notwithstanding this the proposals emerging from NOC at that time involved the removal of most of the buildings within the New Settlement Area apart from those specifically identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal for retention, including a proportion of those dwellings identified for “possible retention”. The decision was taken to proceed with a scheme which involved replacement of most of the existing dwellings, particularly the bungalows on the south side of Camp Road, leaving only a total of some 70 existing dwellings to be retained. This scheme proceeded to Appeal, although primarily the issues at debate related to the Flying Field. There were no specific Reasons for Refusal dealing with the proposals for the New Settlement Area and the Planning Authority was broadly satisfied with the level of new build/retention. In the



event that English Heritage were also satisfied with the overall level of building retention. This is reflected in Statements of Common Ground agreed by both parties during the course of that Appeal in 2008/2009.

- 4.5 When the Dorchester Group acquired NOC in late 2009 the decision was made to re-examine the possibility of retaining the existing roads and services by making use of differing arrangements for their maintenance. This approach allowed the retention of more of the dwellings within the new scheme thereby improving the sustainability credentials overall. The current application incorporates this principle thereby reducing the number of new build by some 240 dwellings (and consequently increasing the number of retained buildings by some 240 dwellings when compared with the currently approved scheme).
- 4.6 The Masterplan that has been prepared to accompany this outline application has been the subject of a large number of detailed discussions with the District Council to ensure that the revised proposals enhance and protect the character of the existing Conservation Area, whilst at the same time producing new dwellings which provide a satisfactory living environment for new residents. Meetings have been held on design issues over the period from the autumn of 2009 to September 2010 and the Masterplan has evolved in response to various comments received from Cherwell District Council.
- 4.7 As part of these discussions the views of English Heritage have been sought on a regular basis particularly as regards the retention of the additional 253 bungalows, but also on the other elements of change, particularly the introduction of a “Village Green” on the site of the former parade ground. English Heritage’s views on the effect on other important buildings have also been sought during the evolution of the Masterplan. At a joint meeting of CDC, English Heritage and NOC held on 13<sup>th</sup> September, English Heritage representatives indicated that the scheme was such that it would not attract any objection from that body.
- 4.8 One of the key issues relating to discussions with stakeholders involves the operation of the Section 106 obligation. NOC proposals in general terms are similar to the original Planning Permission albeit the disposition of the uses is slightly different. Moreover the retention of more of the existing dwellings means that the phasing arrangements for the provision of affordable housing will need to change and these continue to be the subject of further negotiations. However as the overall scheme is broadly similar to the consented scheme, then the Section 106 arrangements are

likely to be similar in form but may vary in terms of timing and also in applying the general principle that on-site provision should be facilitated wherever this is possible and appropriate.

## 5. COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

5.1 In terms of community consultation specifically, the two principal elements have involved a household survey which was undertaken in March 2010, and a public consultation exhibition undertaken in May 2010. An open day was also held in October 2010.

### Household Survey

5.2 The number of completed and returned Questionnaires totalled 148 of a possible 315. This equates to a 47% response rate, which in public consultation terms is very high.

5.3 The responses to the Questionnaire highlight some of the revised proposals in the Masterplan, and important issues that directly support the retention of the existing dwellings on site. Of particular interest are the findings relating to the following themes:

- When given the choice of whether the participants would prefer to remain in their existing dwellings at Heyford Park, a resounding 91% responded with “yes”. Clearly, this finding strongly supports the proposals to secure the permanent residential use of these dwellings.

5.4 In further support of this finding, the majority of participants (75%) plan to remain in residence at Heyford Park for a period of more than 10 years and also a large proportion want to stay in their existing home. 63% of participants would want to move to another property on Heyford Park itself if they had to leave their existing dwelling. This highlights the local resident’s commitment and attachment to the retention of the existing dwellings on site for the foreseeable future. These findings would also indicate that there is already a strong and stable community attachment to Heyford Park which further supports the proposals to secure a scheme, based on the retention of permanent residential use within the existing dwellings.

5.5 Dorchester Group is keen to offer local residents the opportunity to buy a share of, or all, of their current property. A total of 68% of participants to the Questionnaire agreed with the Dorchester Group’s vision stating that they would be interested in such a proposal. This desire is further confirmed by the questionnaire results which state that of those who have insufficient funds but would therefore be eligible for affordable housing, 66% would prefer to own all or part of their home. The respondents to the questionnaire appear keen to support the Dorchester Group’s proposals and in line with the above findings, such results would support the

revisions to the scheme retaining as many existing properties as possible combined with a new build programme of about 750 dwellings in a slightly revised layout.

- 5.6 On the basis of the evidence provided by the March 2010 Housing Needs Survey it would indicate that the local residents are largely in favour of remaining on the Site. The proposals by the Dorchester Group to retain the majority of the existing dwellings and offer the opportunity to residents to own all or part of their existing property are broadly supported by the local residents.
- 5.7 There is clearly a strong community commitment to the dwellings at Heyford Park and with many participants comments in the questionnaire relating to the need for further investment in the form of home-refurbishment funds, the welfare benefits for the elderly/disabled of living in the bungalows and the desire for improved community facilities on site would add weight to the suggestion that people wish to remain in their properties in the long term and to see their community thrive.
- 5.8 Therefore, the findings of the community consultation exercise indicate very significant support for the proposal to secure the permanent use of the existing dwellings for residential use at Heyford Park as part of a revised Master Plan.

#### Consultation Event May 2010

- 5.9 In conjunction with the Housing needs Survey an exhibition outlining NOC's revised proposals was undertaken in mid May 2010. This event was held from 1500 hrs to 2000 hrs and a large number of local residents and elected members were invited to give their views on the evolving Masterplan. A circular advertising the exhibition was distributed to all residents who were tenants at the Base. Separate letters were sent to all Ward members and relevant Cabinet members together with the relevant Parish Councils for the area. Over six NOC representatives were on hand to explain the proposals to visitors and a questionnaire was available to enable residents to set out their views in writing. There were no objections to the proposal and other comments have been taken into account in the emerging Master Plan.
- 5.10 In addition to this event NOC continued with the tradition established in 2007 of sending a Newsletter to all residents explaining the revised proposals for the site and the expected timetable for the submission of the revised scheme. The latest Newsletter was sent out in September 2010, a copy of which is attached at Appendix A. In addition NOC maintains regular contact with tenants' representatives to ensure that they are made aware of all schemes and changes as quickly as possible. This

process has continued throughout the consideration of the application for the permanent retention of this revised comprehensive Masterplan for the NSA.

Bungalow refurbishment open day, 6<sup>th</sup> October 2010

- 5.11 In order to illustrate how the retained bungalows could be refurbished to a high standard, Dorchester Group held an open day event to which local residents and elected members were invited to visit to inspect two illustrative refurbished properties located on Trenchard Circle. The event was well attended and favourable comments were received on the standard that could be achieved.

## **6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.1 The latest application involving a revised Masterplan for the NSA has been the subject of on-going discussions with the main public sector stakeholders. Local residents have been kept fully informed of the revised proposals and have overwhelmingly supported the most significant change which involves the retention of virtually all existing dwellings. This support merely re-iterates the Council's own findings on local resident's views preferring dwelling retention when it undertook consultation on its own Revised Comprehensive Planning Brief for Upper Heyford in 2006/07.

**APPENDIX A**

**HEYFORD PARK NEWSLETTER, SEPTEMBER 2010**