

Redevelopment of MOD Bicester: Historic Environment

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 This note has been prepared following the submission of an outline planning application, supported by an Environmental Statement (ES), for the redevelopment of land within MOD Bicester, Oxfordshire.
- 1.1.2 Since submission of the ES, three responses have been received from Cherwell District Council (CDC) which have addressed historic environment issues and these are:
- Comments by Linda Rand, 13 January 2012;
 - E-mail from Claire Sutton-Abbott, 17 May 2012; and
 - Letter from Nigel Bell, 20 August 2012.
- 1.1.3 The responses each contain a number of comments and requests for information relating to the historic environment assessment. It is taken that the final response dated 20 August 2012 represents the definitive request for information from CDC. This note has therefore been prepared to address this, though informed by the previous comments where required.
- 1.1.4 A consultation response has also been provided by the Government Historic Estates Unit, English Heritage (dated 20 December 2011) and this has also been referenced.
- 1.1.5 Policy and guidance with respect to the historic environment has developed since submission of the ES. In particular, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has replaced Planning Policy Statement 5 and English Heritage has published guidance¹ on the assessment of effects on the settings of heritage assets.
- 1.1.6 Finally, since submission of the ES, English Heritage has completed an initial assessment of Graven Hill and C Site (Appendix A) and has determined that two buildings within these sites should be considered for designation as listed buildings. No decision has been made on a recommendation for listing, but it has been agreed that these will be retained within the proposed development prior to a decision on designation.

¹ English Heritage 2011

1.2 Purpose of the Note

1.2.1 This note has been prepared to address comments provided by CDC. In particular it seeks to:

- Assess the effects of the loss of buildings within the site, taking account of:
 - Changes in policy;
 - The initial assessment prepared by English Heritage; and
 - The planned retention of buildings under consideration for listing.
- Revise the assessment of effects on off-site designated assets in light of new English Heritage guidance.

1.2.2 It is intended that this updated assessment will be used in the determination of the application for outline planning permission.

1.3 Scope

On Site Assets

1.3.1 This note assesses the significance of the following effects within the site boundary:

- The loss of buildings which have not been considered for designation; and
- Effects of changes within the settings of retained buildings which are under consideration for listing.

1.3.2 The ES identified other heritage assets within the site boundary which will be affected, including sub-surface deposits of archaeological interest. Mitigation measures were proposed and no further comments have been made with respect to these assets. Therefore no further information on these is provided in this note.

Off Site Designated Assets

Listed Buildings

1.3.3 This note includes an assessment of effects on the following Grade II listed buildings as a result of potential changes to their settings:

- Wretchwick Lodge (LB 243388);
- Wretchwick Farm (LB 243386 and 1046522);
- Langford Park Farm (LB 1369739);
- Miropa: 16, Green Lane (LB 243402);
- Methodist Chapel (LB 243401);
- Manor Farmhouse (LB 243403);

- Wood Farm Cottage (LB 243404).

1.3.4 This takes account of the published English Heritage Guidance.

1.3.5 There are no Grade I or II* listed buildings whose settings could be affected.

Scheduled Monuments

1.3.6 CDC have not made any specific comment with regard to scheduled monuments within the vicinity of the site and in their response of 20 December 2011 English Heritage confirmed that:

“..we do not consider that the development with [sic.] have a significant impact on the setting of the nearby scheduled monuments (Alchester Roman town and the deserted medieval village of Wretchwick).”

1.3.7 This concurs with the conclusions of the EIA and there is no need for further assessment.

2. Policy and Guidance

2.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

2.1.1 Since submission of the MOD Bicester ES the NPPF has replaced Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment. Provision for the historic environment is given principally in Section 12 of the NPPF, which directs Local Planning Authorities to set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. In doing so, they should recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance. This requirement is framed by a presumption in favour of sustainable development and the policy recognises that the historic environment has a role to play in urban design (Section 7), promoting healthy communities (Section 8) and protecting Green Belt land (Section 9).

2.1.2 The Framework seeks to ensure that the treatment of the historic environment in planning supports the principles of sustainable development as defined in the Framework. It continues to recognise that heritage assets, including those which have not been designated, are an irreplaceable resource, and promotes an integrated approach to the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment with other facets of the broader natural and built environment. The principles set out in the NPPF also apply to the consideration of the historic environment in relation to the other heritage-related consent regimes for which planning authorities are responsible. Management of change within the historic environment is set within a wider context of sustainable development, recognising the potential value of the historic environment to place-making, regeneration, quality of design, minimising waste and sustainable land use, as well as acknowledging the contribution of the historic

environment to knowledge and understanding of the past. In order to manage change within the historic environment the NPPF sets out a significance-based approach to planning decisions, requiring sufficient evidence of the assessment of the significance of a heritage asset to be weighed against the benefits of the proposal in delivering sustainable development.

Significance of Heritage Assets

2.1.3 The NPPF removes the presumption in favour of preservation that has characterised heritage policy to date. Emphasis is instead placed on granting planning permission unless substantial harm to or loss of a heritage asset can be demonstrated to result from the proposals. This should be weighed against policies set out in the local development plan but where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole. (NPPF para 14).

2.1.4 The NPPF policy sections relevant to the historic environment are principally concerned with the conservation and enhancement of those parts of the historic environment that have significance because of their historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest. These are referred to as heritage assets.

2.1.5 Annex 2 of the NPPF defines heritage assets as:

A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

2.1.6 Conservation is defined as:

The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.

2.1.7 Annex 2 of the NPPF defines heritage significance as:

The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

Designated Heritage Assets

2.1.8 The NPPF defines designated heritage assets as including World Heritage Sites², Scheduled Monuments³, Listed Buildings⁴, Protected Wreck Sites⁵, Conservation Areas⁶, Registered Parks and Gardens⁷ and Registered Battlefields⁸.

² Inscribed by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee for Outstanding Universal Value.

³ Designated under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.

⁴ Designated under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

⁵ Designated under the Protected Wrecks Act 1973.

⁶ Designated under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

- 2.1.9 By legal definition, scheduled monuments are considered as being of national importance. As the process of scheduling is ongoing, and because the scheduling process does not set out to designate all assets which meet the criteria for scheduling, there are further features which are not scheduled but which may also meet the established criteria⁹ and may also be of national importance.
- 2.1.10 All listed buildings are given equal protection by law and are of special architectural or historic interest, and are given relative grading as Grade I (greatest interest), II*, and II. Buildings listed at Grade I are described by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)¹⁰ as being ‘of exceptional interest’, those listed at II* are ‘particularly important buildings of more than special interest’ and those listed at Grade II are of “special interest, warranting every effort to preserve them”. The process of the identification of buildings of historical and architectural interest is ongoing and buildings and structures that meet the guidelines set by DCMS¹¹ and English Heritage¹² but are not currently listed may be present.
- 2.1.11 Sites included in the Register of Parks and Gardens by English Heritage are graded using the same scale. Therefore, by inference it may be considered that Grade I registered historic parks are also ‘of exceptional interest’ and Grade II* historic parks ‘of more than special interest’. Conservation Areas are defined on a local authority basis.

Non-Designated Heritage Assets

- 2.1.12 The identification and the assessment of the significance of non-designated heritage assets relies on professional judgement and reference to the definitions in Annex 2 of the NPPF and the values set out in Conservation Principles. The NPPF acknowledges that heritage assets may be identified by a local planning authority including through ‘local listing’ (Annex 2).
- 2.1.13 Information on a wider range of elements of the historic environment is held by local authorities on their Historic Environment Records (HERs) and by English Heritage as part of the National Monuments Record (NMR). In addition, some local authorities maintain lists of buildings of heritage interest that merit consideration in planning decisions (usually referred to as a ‘Local List’).

Heritage Consents and Planning Determinations

- 2.1.14 Under the relevant legislation, specific consent is normally required for works which affect scheduled monuments or listed buildings. NPPF (para. 132) states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated

⁷ Designated by English Heritage under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953.

⁸ Designated by English Heritage on a non-statutory basis.

⁹ Scheduled Monuments: Identifying, protecting, conserving and investigating nationally important archaeological sites under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, Annex 1.

¹⁰ DCMS 2010. Principles of Selection for Listing Buildings, pp. 7.

¹¹ DCMS 2010. Principles of Selection for Listing Buildings, pp. 9-16.

¹² Detailed selection guidance is available for the range of listable buildings and structures from the English Heritage Website [www.english-heritage.org.uk].

heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be.

- 2.1.15 The effect of a proposed development on the heritage significance of designated heritage assets should be considered with reference to a scale of total loss, substantial harm or less than substantial harm and weighed primarily against the public benefit of the scheme.
- 2.1.16 NPPF draws a distinction between designated and non-designated heritage assets in terms of effects on their significance¹³:
- Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional;
 - Substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional;
 - For applications that affect directly or indirectly non designated heritage assets, a balanced judgment will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset. Non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest that are demonstrably of equivalent significance to scheduled monuments, should be considered subject to the policies for designated heritage assets.
- 2.1.17 NPPF requires developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible. However, the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted¹⁴.
- 2.1.18 Mechanisms to record and advance understanding of the significance of a heritage asset may involve, for example, archaeological excavation or historic buildings recording and can be secured using a planning condition or legal agreement.

Effects on Significance

- 2.1.19 Significance is defined as “the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest¹⁵”. Existing guidance stresses the conservation of the significance of heritage assets, recognising that heritage assets and significant places that are actively used are more sustainable than those that are artificially fossilised, that change is an inevitable process that should be actively managed, that significance is not necessarily dependent on the preservation of a feature as is and can be enhanced through sensitive management. Rather than just characterising the potential physical effects of development, any assessment needs to understand the effects on the

¹³ NPPF paras. 132-135.

¹⁴ NPPF para. 141.

¹⁵ PPS5 Annex 2

significance of heritage assets and/ or significant places to advise on their conservation.

2.1.20 English Heritage¹⁶ has published guidance to provide a framework for further assessing significance based on values associated with the heritage interests. This guidance recognizes that significance is the sum of the archaeological, architectural historic or artistic interest, but also clarifies the underpinning philosophy, as explored in Conservation Principles. This states that these interests contribute to values that can be grouped under the following headings:

- *Evidential* value: the potential of a place to yield evidence about the past;
- *Historical* value: the ways in which the past can be connected to the present through a place through association with or illustration of the past;
- *Aesthetic* value: the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place either through design or fortuitous development over time; and
- *Communal* value: the meanings of a place to the people who relate to it through social, spiritual or commemorative values attached to a place.

2.2 Heritage Significance and Setting

2.2.1 Guidance on the assessment of effects on the setting of heritage assets has been prepared by English Heritage¹⁷, and whilst this was primarily prepared in support of PPS5, it remains largely relevant and the definition of setting has not changed. It is important to note that policy and guidance requires an assessment to consider the extent to which a development proposal may affect the significance of a heritage asset, and as defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF, that significance may derive from its setting as well as physical fabric.

2.2.2 The setting of a heritage asset is defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF as:

The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

2.2.3 Therefore changes to setting are not necessarily of any consequence in policy terms as what needs to be understood is how and to what extent the significance of an asset may be affected. This requires an understanding of the nature of the asset's setting and the contribution that this makes to its significance. Views of or from an asset (whether designed or not) may be an important aspect to its setting, but there are other attributes which need to be considered.

2.2.4 The English Heritage guidance includes a list of potential attributes that may be relevant in considering whether changes in setting could affect the significance of a

¹⁶ English Heritage 2008 *Conservation Principles*

¹⁷ English Heritage 2011

heritage asset, including physical surroundings, experience of the asset and associative attributes, and these need to be considered in each case.

3. On Site Assets

3.1 Assets under Consideration for Designation

Introduction

3.1.1 There are two assets within the site which are under consideration for designation as listed buildings. These are:

- Six air raid shelters adjacent to Storage Hangar D2, Graven Hill; and
- The 'Bolero' group of Romney and Iris huts, C30 and C31 at C Site, Arncott.

3.1.2 In each case, English Heritage has completed an initial assessment on the buildings and prepared a consultation report. It is understood that no recommendation has yet been made on their possible listing.

3.1.3 However, in anticipation of a possible recommendation for listing a draft condition has been agreed which would ensure that both assets will be retained whilst a decision is made on designation. The draft condition states:

Heritage assets subject to consideration for designation

That no works of demolition are permitted to the following buildings:

- a. Storage hangar D2 and the group of adjacent free-standing air-raid shelters*
- b. The 'Bolero' group of Romney huts, C30 and C31, including the MOWP break hut, the railway siding, and the rail gantry crane.*

Air Raid Shelters adjacent to Storage Hangar D2

Description

3.1.4 Storage Building D2 is rectangular in plan with brick walls and a steel girder-framed gabled roof. The roof would originally have been clad with corrugated asbestos sheeting, but this has been replaced by plastic-coated corrugated metal sheeting and clear plastic panels.

3.1.5 The windows may have originally been Crittal galvanised steel, but uPVC double glazing has now been installed. In addition, the original large rolling riveted steel framed doors clad with corrugated steel sheeting have been replaced by roller shutter doors. Door and window openings have concrete lintels, though a number of these have been bricked-up or altered.

- 3.1.6 The building retains its complete original row of six 50 person capacity surface air raid shelters to the east of the building. These are all of brick construction with flat reinforced concrete roofs. Each has two diagonally opposed entrances (originally with timber doors or slat gates) at opposing ends of each long wall, protected by brick blast walls.

Statement of Significance

- 3.1.7 The Central Ordnance Depot at Bicester was one of a number of depots planned and built to serve the growing needs of the wartime British Army. It was a principal supply depot for the British and American forces in the build up to the European campaign of 1944-45.
- 3.1.8 Whilst there have been significant modifications to the fabric of Building D2, it is notable in the retention of a group of six external air raid shelters in close proximity to the building. These illustrate the use and importance of the building, with the proximity of the shelters allowing staff to continue working for the longest possible period in the build-up to a raid before moving to the shelters.

Effects of the Proposed Development

- 3.1.9 As has been noted, it has been agreed the Building D2 and its six associated shelters will be retained whilst a decision on possible designation is made. This retention can be secured through the condition agreed with English Heritage attached to any outline planning permission.
- 3.1.10 The illustrative masterplan shows that in a redeveloped site, the area of Site D would be used for a mix of storage and light industrial uses, with the area around Building D2 used for storage. This would represent a continuation of the current storage and distribution role, albeit in a civilian rather than military context. It is anticipated that the current buildings would initially be let until market demand for redeveloped floorspace emerges. The ES assumes that any new buildings would be no greater in height than the current maximum height of approximately 10-11 m in this area. It is therefore anticipated that if the air raid shelters are listed, and if Building D2 is retained, it would continue to be used for storage and distribution. Surrounding buildings are likely to be replaced as demand requires, but these would be comparable in size and function to the current.

Effects on Significance

- 3.1.11 The proposed use of this area is entirely consistent with its historic character. If the air raid shelters are listed, their setting shall be protected by the retention of Building D2. The proposed civilian storage and distribution use for this area would allow the continued use of the building, ensuring its maintenance within an appropriate setting.

The 'Bolero' Group, C30 and C31

Description

- 3.1.12 The 'Bolero' group comprises two groups of six huts each. C30 is a group of six Romney huts, built around tubular steel frames, each with an offset entrance with a single sliding door clad in corrugated steel sheeting. C31 is a group of Iris huts, also

with a tubular steel frame, and a central entrance with double doors. For both types, the huts are of eight standard units each, clad in corrugated steel sheeting and built on concrete footings.

- 3.1.13 They are served by a rail siding which is straddled by a steel loading gantry. A standard single-storey Ministry of Works Planning (MOWP) tea break hut is also located between Buildings C30 and C31.

Statement of Significance

- 3.1.14 Operation Bolero was the name given to build-up of American forces in the UK during WWII. This was a major logistical enterprise, requiring investment in accommodation, hospitals and depots. The Central Ordnance Depot at Bicester was selected as an existing military depot whose capacity could be increased in order to serve American as well as British forces and this was achieved through the construction of temporary huts, such as C30 and C31.
- 3.1.15 The Bolero huts were returned to British control in 1946 and their basic construction meant that many were soon surplus to requirements and removed. Buildings C30 and C31 is one of a limited number of surviving hut groups at Bicester.

Effects of the Proposed Development

- 3.1.16 Buildings C30 and C31 are located within the southern part of C Site. As shown on the proposed land use plan, ES Figure 3.5, this area will not be altered in the proposed development and these buildings will be unaffected.

Effects on Significance

- 3.1.17 Neither Buildings C30 and C31, nor the immediately surrounding buildings will be affected by the proposed development. There will therefore be no effect on the heritage significance of these buildings as a result of the proposed development.

Other Military Buildings

- 3.1.18 In addition to the buildings described above, Graven Hill and C Site contain a range of buildings which were built for the storage and distribution of military supplies, as well as associated functions. These are listed in ES Table 10.6 and 10.7 and are also described and assessed by English Heritage (see Appendix A). The buildings within the site include:
- Large storage buildings;
 - Temporary storage buildings (e.g. Romney huts);
 - Air raid shelters;
 - Workshops;
 - Offices; and
 - Recreation facilities in the form of a club house and a theatre.
- 3.1.19 The storage buildings were laid out in a dispersed pattern as a form of passive air defence, though at the height of its use, the intervening spaces were also used for open

air storage. The storage hangars are built to a variety of designs, but all are basically rectangular in form with brick walls and steel frames. The roofs would originally have been clad in corrugated asbestos sheeting, but these have been replaced by coated steel sheeting. Other alterations include the replacement of many windows in uPVC and the replacement of the original rolling steel framed doors with roller shutter doors. A number of the storage hangars are taller in order to accommodate travelling cranes for heavy lifts. Air raid shelters were provided either as integral to the main building or as separate rectangular brick shelters, or a combination of both. In some cases, it can be seen that external air raid shelters have been removed.

- 3.1.20 Heating was provided by boiler houses linked to the storage hangars by a system of insulated pipes raised on concrete posts.
- 3.1.21 The site was also served by the Bicester Military Railway. The rail network formed a circular arrangement enclosing Graven Hill and also linked the other sites of the ordnance depot. Individual buildings were provided with their own rail sidings. Initially, rails were laid on concrete sleepers though these were found to be unsatisfactory and many were replaced by timber sleepers. The replaced concrete sleepers were used in the construction of improvised passenger platforms, and one of these survives at Graven Hill.

Statement of Significance

- 3.1.22 The ordnance depot was built as part of an expansion of the military supply infrastructure that was initiated in the mid 1930s and accelerated on the outbreak of WWII. New depots were needed to manage the supply of stores and munitions to the expanding army, with additional capacity then also needed to supply the rapid build-up of American forces in 1942-44.
- 3.1.23 The Bicester depot played an important role in the supply of the British and American armies in the build-up to the Normandy invasion and subsequent European campaign. It also handled large quantities of stores returned after the end of the war.
- 3.1.24 The depot includes a range of buildings which were built during WWII and have remained in use since that time. Inevitably, many of these show signs of alteration with the replacement of cladding, new (generally uPVC) windows, alterations to window and door openings and the replacement of main doors with modern roller shutter doors. Other buildings built during WWII have been removed and a number of additional buildings have been built.
- 3.1.25 As described above, two buildings (or building groups) have been identified as being potentially suitable for designation and it is anticipated that English Heritage will make a recommendation in due course. None of the other buildings can be considered as potentially meeting the criteria for designation, and none has been identified by the local authority on a 'local list' or similar. However, given the historic interest of the site and the range of surviving buildings, the depot may be considered as a heritage asset.

Effects of the Proposed Development

- 3.1.26 If the air raid shelters adjacent to Building D2 are not listed, the proposed development will involve the eventual demolition of all current buildings at Graven

Hill. At C Site in Arcott the development will involve the demolition of Buildings C1, C4, C7, C9 and C60 in order to be replaced by the proposed Fulfilment centre.

- 3.1.27 As stated in the ES, a programme of recording would be needed to create a record of the buildings prior to their demolition. This would be secured through a condition on any outline planning permission, the principle of which has been agreed by English Heritage in a letter dated 20 December 2011, stating:

Recording of standing buildings and structures

In accordance with the recommendations given in [PPS 5, Policy HE12¹⁸], a record should be made of the site prior to development, in order to enhance public understanding of its layout, infrastructure and historical significance.

No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of recording in accordance with a written scheme which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The recording brief will need to look at the site as a whole, including the context of the whole depot, as well as examining certain buildings and structures in greater detail.

The development shall not be occupied until the recording has been completed in accordance with the programme set out in the written scheme, and the provision made for publication and dissemination of the results and archive deposition has been secured.

- 3.1.28 In each case, the level of detail for the recording would reflect the nature and significance of the individual building. This recommendation for recording in advance of development is also included within Part B of the English Heritage report on the site (see Appendix A). This recommends:

- Level 1¹⁹ record of all buildings across the site to be completed in the first instance;
- Completion of a more detailed Level 2 record of some buildings (to include D2, D3, D7, D9, E1, E2, E5, E14, E15, the Garrison Theatre and the Ordnance Support Unit complex) with interior photographs taken whilst the buildings are still in use; and
- Level 3 record with a full measured survey of the air raid shelters adjacent to Building D2.

- 3.1.29 The building recording would be supplemented by more detailed documentary research, in particular with an examination of documents held at the National Archives, Kew.

¹⁸ Relevant policy now set out in NPPF Paragraph 141

¹⁹ English Heritage 2006

Effects on Significance

3.1.30 The proposed development will involve the loss of a number of buildings within MOD Bicester.

3.1.31 Paragraph 135 of the NPPF states that:

The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

3.1.32 Paragraph 141 of the NPPF states that local authorities should:

....require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible.

3.1.33 Therefore the loss of non-designated buildings in advance of development, with appropriate and proportionate provision for recording as set out above is consistent with the NPPF.

4. Off Site Designated Assets

4.1 Listed Buildings

Wretchwick Lodge (LB 243388)

Building Description

4.1.1 This is a small late eighteenth or early nineteenth century single storey cottage of colour-washed limestone. It is a cottage ornée, built in the picturesque style with a thatch roof extending at the front to form a veranda supported on four wooden posts.

4.1.2 The cottage is single storey and square in plan, being set within a small domestic garden behind a wooden picket fence. It is located to the immediate south of the A41, on the northern edge of MOD Bicester.

Setting

Physical Surroundings

4.1.3 Wretchwick Lodge was built as an isolated road-side cottage within agricultural land on the south side of the Bicester to Aylesbury road and for much of its existence it retained this aspect. Late nineteenth century OS maps show the cottage within a small enclosed area with a belt of woodland to the northwest. Land to the south and east was more open, with a regular field pattern toward Langford Lane to the south. The

- 4.1.4 The earliest military activity in the vicinity of the cottage appears toward the end of the nineteenth century, with the construction of a 600 yd rifle range to the immediate west. This is likely to have been for the use of the local volunteer militia and its use appears to have continued into the first half of the twentieth century.
- 4.1.5 A much greater change occurred to the surroundings of the cottage with the construction of the Central Ordnance Depot in 1941-43. Initially, there appears to have been no depot buildings within the vicinity of the cottage, though an open area used for the storage of artillery (the gun park) was located to the immediate southeast. The gun park was served by its own rail siding and would have been an area of considerable noise and activity. The former gun park remains as an open storage area, currently used for container storage.
- 4.1.6 In the period 1944-45 a group of Romney huts, also served by the rail siding, was built to the immediate south, at a distance of approximately 85 m. Though no doubt initially considered as temporary, this group of buildings is still present.
- 4.1.7 An analysis of aerial photographs from 1944 onwards shows that there was initially relatively limited screening between the cottage and the depot, with a single hedge and some hedgerow trees. This situation continued until the early 1970s, when a more substantial tree belt was established to envelope the cottage to the south. This belt remains in place, and as shown in ES Figure 11.6 (Graven Hill Photo Viewpoint 4) maintains an effective screen between the cottage and the depot.
- 4.1.8 The A41 is not a dual carriageway, but it is a busy road with fast-moving traffic. This tends to create a sense of severance from the land to the north of the cottage, which is exacerbated by the fact that the road is at a higher level, perhaps indicating that the modern road surface has been built up. The sense of enclosure of the cottage is furthered by the presence of a wooden picket fence approximately 1.5 m in height.

Experience of the Asset

- 4.1.9 As noted above, Wretchwick Lodge is a road-side cottage and is still experienced as such. However, this experience is heavily influenced by the nature of the busy A41. Most of those passing the cottage will do so fleetingly in cars and also the cottage is set below the level of the road and behind the picket fence, meaning that from the road-side, little more than the outline of the roof is visible.
- 4.1.10 The development of the ordnance depot to the south has severed Wretchwick Lodge from land in this direction. The scale and nature of the depot is such that it is entirely separate from the cottage. In summary therefore, twentieth century changes have tended to isolate the cottage from its surroundings. This has been due to the development of the depot, the tree screening between it and the cottage, and the modernisation of the A41.

Associative Attributes

- 4.1.11 Wretchwick Cottage was built in the picturesque style of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This style was particularly popular in estates and within

parkland settings. However, this does not seem to have been the case with Wretchwick Lodge and it appears to have been built as a road-side cottage.

Statement of Significance

- 4.1.12 Wretchwick Cottage was built in the eighteenth or early nineteenth century as a small road-side cottage in the picturesque style. It was built during a period of agricultural improvement in the area, with a process of enclosure of fields and the establishment of new farming units, and the style adopted for this cottage perhaps referred back to an 'idyllic' image of the past.
- 4.1.13 As an historic building in the picturesque style the cottage is of historical value and also of aesthetic value. Twentieth century developments have left the external fabric of the cottage intact but have tended to isolate it from its surroundings. As a result of this, the setting of the cottage currently makes only a very limited contribution to its heritage significance. The presence of a container storage area to the immediate southeast has the potential to have a significant negative influence on its setting but this is limited by the current screening.

Effects of the Proposed Development

- 4.1.14 The proposed development will not result in any change to the cottage itself and so its historic and aesthetic value will be retained. The proposed land uses in the proximity of Wretchwick Cottage are illustrated in ES Figure 3.1. This shows that a woodland buffer would be maintained along the site boundary to the south, with a residential area to the south of this, and offices to the southwest, with a strip of green open space between them to the immediate south. The residential blocks to the south will be up to four storeys (13.5 m) in height and the office block would be a similar height.
- 4.1.15 The mature tree screening is likely to ensure that the new buildings would not be visible from the curtilage of the cottage, they would be likely to be seen in the background of views of the cottage, including from the A41. The new buildings will clearly be seen to be larger than the cottage, but this is inevitable given its small scale and is certainly the case with the current depot buildings.

Effects on Significance

- 4.1.16 The cottage will remain set within a woodland belt and with the busy A41 on its north side. The new buildings to the south are likely to be seen in views of the cottage from the A41 and will clearly be significantly larger than it. The proposed development will involve change to the setting of the asset, though the current setting makes little contribution to its heritage significance. The new buildings have a potential to introduce a new negative aspect to the setting of the asset (similar to the current container storage as noted above) though this can be mitigated through careful design of the new build, with the high quality architectural design envisaged in the Design and Access Statement. Therefore any harm to the significance of the asset will be less than substantial.

Wretchwick Farm (LB 243386 and 1046522)

Building Description

- 4.1.17 There are two listed buildings east of Graven Hill (D Site) which comprise the current Wretchwick Farm, and these are a farmhouse and a barn. The Victoria County History²⁰ records that the farm was established in the seventeenth century as one of a number of farms in the manor of Wretchwick which were built as part of a process of agricultural enclosure. They are located to the east of the Graven Hill site and south of the A41.
- 4.1.18 The current farmhouse is early eighteenth century in origin with later eighteenth and early nineteenth century alterations. It is L-shaped in plan and of limestone rubble construction with brick dressings and some wooden lintels. There are two storeys plus an attic with a plain tile roof and brick gable stacks. The house front faces to the east with a central door featuring a twentieth century porch. The roof has three gabled dormers with leaded casement windows.
- 4.1.19 The barn approximately 50 m south of Wretchwick Farmhouse is also listed. It is early eighteenth century in date and of coursed limestone construction. It has been converted for residential use.

Setting

Physical Surroundings

- 4.1.20 Wretchwick Farm is located within gardens and a farmyard, the limits of which are defined by belts of trees to the north and west, and by farm buildings to the south.
- 4.1.21 The farmhouse is set some distance from the public highway, and is reached along a drive off a minor road to the south of the A41. The drive covers a distance of approximately 275 m, and the farmhouse is also around 45 m to the south of the A41.
- 4.1.22 The gardens surround the farmhouse and comprise lawns with occasional trees. The former farm yard is to the south of the house and comprises a range of farm buildings, including the listed barn, and these have been converted for residential use. Lawned gardens surround the barns and are enclosed by low stone walls.
- 4.1.23 The farmhouse and barn complex is surrounded by a number of grassed paddocks, two of which also contain ponds. An arable field lies to the south, whilst the A41 is on the northern side with further arable fields beyond this. A belt of trees surround the paddocks on most sides, and certainly along the A41 to the north and the minor road to the east. This means that the farmhouse and barns are not readily visible from publicly accessible areas.
- 4.1.24 The Bicester depot is located to the west, and Building D9 is approximately 155 m to the west of the farmhouse and barns. Whilst there is tree screening along the western edge of the Wretchwick Farm property, the height and bulk of Building D9 results in it being visible in the background of views across Wretchwick Farm, and this is shown in ES Graven Hill Photo Viewpoint 8 (Figure 11.8). Other major buildings of the depot are also located along its eastern boundary with buildings D6, D5, D2 and D7

²⁰ VCH 1959

extending in a line to the south. There is currently some, but only limited, tree screening along the eastern boundary of the depot. The only other building in the area of a similar scale to the Bicester depot buildings is a group of poultry sheds which are part of Wretchwick Farm and which are located approximately 550 m south of the farmhouse.

Experience of the Asset

- 4.1.25 The asset is not readily visible from publicly accessible areas, but sits within an area of paddocks and is the focus of this area. There is some visible distraction as a result of the presence of Building D9 to the west.

Associative Attributes

- 4.1.26 As previously noted, the current Wretchwick Farm was established as one of a number of new farm units during the seventeenth century. This was part of the process of enclosure of the manor of Wretchwick, which has helped to shape the current agricultural landscape of the area.

Statement of Significance

- 4.1.27 The farm house and buildings date to a period of agricultural improvement in the eighteenth century following the enclosure of agricultural land in the area. It is located alongside contemporary farm buildings which form a coherent group and one of these has also been listed. The barns have been converted to residential use and this has affected the character and layout of the farm to some extent.
- 4.1.28 As an historic building, the farmhouse is of historical value and it is also of some aesthetic value.

Effects of the Proposed Development

- 4.1.29 The proposed land uses in the proximity of Wretchwick Farm are illustrated in ES Figure 3.1. This shows that a woodland buffer would be maintained along the site boundary to the west of Wretchwick Farm, with the peripheral road and residential development of up to three storeys beyond this (approximately 10.8 m in height). The development would also involve the demolition of Building D9, a large storage building of approximately 10 m in height which is visible from within the farm at a distance of approximately 155 m from the house. The edge of the new residential area will be set slightly further back, at approximately 200 m from Wretchwick Farmhouse.
- 4.1.30 Views of an existing large storage building on the outskirts of the site where boundary vegetation is absent will be replaced with views of residential built form of a similar height to the current buildings. This will introduce a finer grain of built elements that, interspersed with tree planting, will screen and filter views into the site. These views will be reduced (heavily filtered) with the maturation of structural planting along the eastern boundary of the site

Effects on Significance

- 4.1.31 The proposed development will not result in any change to the farm itself and so its historic and potential evidential value will be retained. In addition, the attached agricultural land will be retained and so this context for the farm will be unaffected.

- 4.1.32 There will be some change in views of the farm with the removal of the large storage building and this will remove a negative element to the setting. New development will be set further back than the current Building D9 and the boundary screening will be strengthened. In the longer term this will have the effect of enhancing the farmhouse and barns as the focus of its setting, and will therefore have a positive effect on its heritage significance.

Langford Park Farm (LB 1369739)

Building Description

- 4.1.33 The current farmhouse is eighteenth century in origin with early nineteenth century alterations. It has two parallel ranges, one of two storeys and an attic and the other of one storey plus attic. Construction is of limestone rubble with wooden lintels and some rendered walls. The roof is of old plain-tile and concrete plain-tile roofs with brick stacks.
- 4.1.34 There is a range of farm buildings south of the farmhouse, and though none of these are separately listed they are within the curtilage of the house. The curtilage of the farmhouse provides its principal setting, though the immediately surrounding agricultural land makes some contribution to this.
- 4.1.35 The Victoria County History²¹ for Oxfordshire records that Langford Farm is unusual for farms in this area as it appears to have Medieval origins, with references to a farm at this location as early as the thirteenth century. In contrast, other farms within this area date to the enclosure around the seventeenth century. By 1851, the farm is recorded as extending to 500 acres and employing 14 men.

Setting

Physical Surroundings

- 4.1.36 Langford Farmhouse is immediately surrounded by gardens comprising a lawned area with mature trees. A group of farm buildings are located to the south, arranged around a farmyard, and whilst some of these were present in the nineteenth century, others appear to be twentieth century in origin.
- 4.1.37 Beyond this, the farm is set within a group of enclosed agricultural fields, which are likely to derive from the seventeenth century enclosure of this area. The fields are generally regular in pattern and the field boundaries are marked by mature hedgerows. Langford Stream flows a short distance to the north of the farm.
- 4.1.38 Whilst the farm has retained its immediate agricultural context, the character of the wider surroundings altered considerably during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. By 1880 the railway line had been laid approximately 140 m to the west of the farm and this line continues to be in use. This bisected a number of the enclosure period fields surrounding the farm and severed it from part of the meadows alongside Langford Stream.

²¹ VCH 1957

- 4.1.39 The perimeter of MOD Bicester runs alongside the farm, and the nearest of the larger storage buildings (Building E1) is located approximately 150 m to the southeast of the farm buildings. There is limited screening along this part of the Bicester depot and therefore the storage buildings, which are approximately 9 m in height, are readily visible from the area of the farm.
- 4.1.40 By 1970, a sewage works had been built to the west of the railway and this has subsequently been extended to cover much of an area enclosed by Langford Stream and the route of the railway. The modernised A41 is also located approximately 300 m to the north.

Experience of the Asset

- 4.1.41 Langford Farm may still be experienced as a late eighteenth or early nineteenth century farmhouse, alongside a coherent group of farm buildings some of which date to this period. It also retains a group of agricultural fields in the immediately surrounding area. However, the extent of this has been curtailed by surrounding developments such as the railway, A41, sewage works and the Bicester depot. This has disrupted the surrounding enclosure period field pattern and isolated the farm from much of the agricultural land within which it was established.
- 4.1.42 Due to these surrounding developments, the farm is only accessible via a private access road and the farm is not visible at all from publicly accessible areas.
- 4.1.43 The large storage buildings of the Bicester depot are visible and prominent from the area of the farm.

Associative Attributes

- 4.1.44 Langford Farm appears to have early origins, and there are references to a farm in this area as early as the thirteenth century. However, the current farm buildings are later, and may date to a period of agricultural improvements following the enclosures.

Statement of Significance

- 4.1.45 The possible early origins of the farm suggest that there may be a potential for the survival of archaeological remains of an earlier farmhouse within the site. However, the current farm house and buildings date to a period of agricultural improvement in the eighteenth century, following the enclosure of agricultural land in the area.
- 4.1.46 As an historic building, the farmhouse is of historical value and it is also of some aesthetic value. With the possible early origins of the farm, there may also be evidential value in the farm.

Effects of the Proposed Development

- 4.1.47 The proposed land uses in the proximity of Langford Farm are illustrated in ES Figure 3.1. This shows allotments within the current pasture land to the west, with sports pitches to the immediate south. The current buildings of E Site would be demolished to create an area of open space and amenity grassland along the northern edge of the site, with a two storey (approximately 8.1 m in height) residential area and primary school beyond this. Therefore the current pasture land to the west and south would remain as open space. Also to the south, the closest extent of built development would move from 230 m from Langford Farm house (the current

distance to Building E1) to 350 m, which would be the approximate distance to the edge of the residential area. The two storey housing will be slightly lower in height than the current storage buildings.

- 4.1.48 The listed building comprises the farmhouse only, with a range of farm buildings within its curtilage to the south. The proposed development is therefore unlikely to be visible from the house itself, but would be from the area of the farm buildings.
- 4.1.49 The site of the farm itself will be unaffected, as will the access along the private road to the east.

Effects on Significance

- 4.1.50 The proposed development will not result in any change to the farm itself and so its historic and potential evidential value will be retained. Some of the pasture land adjoining the farm will change in use to allotments and sports pitches and so this will erode the extent of its agricultural context to some extent. However, this has also been considerably affected by twentieth century development and some agricultural land will be retained to the east. In balance with this, the extent of built development within the depot site will be set further back from the site of the farm, with large storage buildings replaced by smaller domestic scale development. Overall therefore, any effects on the heritage significance of the asset will be neutral.

Methodist Chapel (LB 243401)

Building Description

- 4.1.51 This is a Methodist chapel built on Green Lane, Upper Arcott to accommodate an expanding Methodist congregation during the first half of the nineteenth century. A datestone set into the front of the chapel records its construction as 1834. The chapel is a simple and unadorned structure built to a rectangular plan. It is built of limestone rubble with wooden lintels and a Welsh-slate roof. The side facing on to the road has a two tier, two window arrangement and there are panelled double doors to the side entrance. The interior has simple mid/ late nineteenth century pine bench pews and fittings.

Setting

Physical Surroundings

- 4.1.52 The chapel is located on Green Lane and looks out across The Green in Upper Arcott. Nineteenth century OS mapping shows Upper Arcott as a small rural village with a dispersed pattern of settlement along the line of Norris Road/ Mill Lane and along Green Lane. The chapel was one of a series of buildings facing across The Green.
- 4.1.53 Upper Arcott has expanded during the twentieth century, particularly with the construction of housing for workers at MOD Bicester. This has included new houses along the southern part of Green Lane. However, The Green has been retained as an area of open space and the chapel continues to face across this area. This area has remained at a relatively low density of development, with a range of mostly detached and semi-detached houses with gardens. These include twentieth century and earlier buildings, with a variety of materials, including stone, brick and render.

- 4.1.54 There appear to have always been properties to the rear of the chapel, and in particular the earlier cottage called Miropa (described below). The chapel appears not to have had a strong relationship to the open agricultural land which lay to the west. C Site of the Central Ordnance Depot was built from 1941 to the immediate west of Upper Arccott. Historic aerial photographs show that there was initially limited if any screening along the eastern edge of the depot, and so the large storage buildings are likely to have been visible and prominent from Green Lane. There is currently tree screening along the boundary of the depot which limits the visibility of buildings. ES Figure 11.25 (C Site Photo Viewpoint 7) illustrates this, showing some visibility of the existing buildings within C Site from The Green, though there is a greater degree of screening when the trees are in full leaf.

Experience of the Asset

- 4.1.55 The Chapel fronts on to The Green within Upper Arccott and is primarily experienced within this context, as part of a group including historic buildings set around The Green.
- 4.1.56 There is some limited visibility of the existing buildings of C Site but these are not a prominent part of the experience of the asset and this area does not make a contribution to its setting.

Associative Attributes

- 4.1.57 The chapel appears to have been established as part of a nineteenth century non-conformist religious revival. The Victoria County History²² records that in 1823 a farmer in Arccott called Richard Croxton applied to have his house registered as a place of worship, and that this was the earliest recorded Methodist congregation in the area. It appears that the congregation must have grown rapidly as the current chapel was built in 1834 and registered as a Wesleyan Methodist chapel and then enlarged in 1847.

Statement of Significance

- 4.1.58 There are approximately 5 000 surviving Methodist chapels within England and approximately 10% of these are listed. The building is representative as a small rural chapel which was built to serve the needs of a growing Methodist congregation. It was built during a period which saw a rapid growth in the non-conformist movement and considerable effort was put into the construction of chapels to serve this. By the middle of nineteenth century, the Gothic style had become predominant in Methodist architecture. However, the chapel at Arccott is simple and plain in contrast, perhaps reflecting the preference for functionality, or reflecting a local vernacular of relatively unadorned stone construction.
- 4.1.59 As an example of a small rural chapel from the first half of the nineteenth century the building is of historical value, particularly in light of the recorded retention of pine pews and other internal fittings.

²² VCH 1957

Effects of the Proposed Development

- 4.1.60 The proposed development will involve the demolition of the existing buildings which are located closest to the chapel at the western edge of C Site (Buildings C1 and C4). Currently, Building C1 is located at a distance of 140 m from the chapel and Building C4 at a distance of 90 m. Buildings C1 and C4 are each approximately 9-10 m in height. A larger and taller building would then be built to the rear of Green Lane, at a distance of approximately 110 m. The height of the new building will be 14.9 m to the external eaves with a maximum ridge height of 18.6 m, but this will be partially off-set by a reduction of the ground level by 4 m at this point. The set back of the ridge line would mean that visually, the eaves would be seen from ground level and not the ridge. This means that the 4 m reduction in ground level would correspond to an eaves height of 10.9 m above current ground level. Also, a screening bund, planted with trees, will be built at the eastern edge of C Site.
- 4.1.61 Whilst the current Buildings C1 and C4 are aligned at an angle to the asset and do not form a continuous roofline, the new building will be aligned along the boundary of C Site and will be seen as a continuous structure with a length of 320 m.
- 4.1.62 Section B of ES Addendum Figure 2 comprises a cross section which illustrates the proposed change in relation to this part of Green Lane. This actually shows a section from the rear of Miropa Cottage, which is located directly behind the chapel. Sections F and C also show views to the north and south of the chapel, across to the current locations of Buildings C1 and C4. Taken together, these serve to illustrate the visibility of the proposed new building taking account of the planned screening and in comparison with the existing buildings. This illustrates that the perceived height of the new building from Green Lane would be broadly comparable with the existing buildings.

Effects on Significance

- 4.1.63 The proposed development will not result in any physical alteration of the chapel and so its key historic and architectural interest will not be affected.
- 4.1.64 The development will take place entirely within the existing boundary of C Site and so will not alter the association between the asset and those attributes of its setting which make a positive contribution. In particular, it will not result in the severance of the asset from its setting within The Green. There will be no change in land use within the area and C Site would remain fenced off from and separate to the buildings along Green Lane.
- 4.1.65 As noted above, the new building will be taller and of a greater mass than the current Buildings C1 and C4. It would be set further back from the asset, and the ground level will be reduced by 4 m and this will result in the perceived height of the new building being comparable to the current. Also, a screening bund will be built and as the proposed planting on this matures it will be more effectively screened. Nevertheless, the new building will be a large structure, extending for some 320 m along the eastern edge of C Site. This will result in the building being of greater prominence in views from The Green, particularly before the tree screening fully develops. This will result in some distraction in this view of the chapel which will result in a degree of harm to the significance of the asset. Taking account of the mitigation measures which have been incorporated in the scheme, this harm will be less than substantial.

Miropa: 16, Green Lane (LB 243402)

Building Description

- 4.1.66 Miropa is a late seventeenth or early eighteenth century house of colourwashed limestone rubble and wooden lintels. It has a thatch roof with brick gable stacks and comprises one storey plus an attic.
- 4.1.67 The southeast facing front has two irregularly placed doorways and three casement windows and there are three half dormer windows at the attic level.

Setting

Physical Surroundings

- 4.1.68 This house is located within an enclosed garden to the rear of the Methodist chapel in Upper Arcott. It is reached via a driveway running to the side of the chapel and the lawned front garden is enclosed by a low stone wall and hedge. A further lawned garden is located to the rear and this is enclosed by hedges and trees, with a belt of trees along the boundary with C Site to the rear.
- 4.1.69 Miropa is one of a small number of detached properties located within the rear of the plots between Green Lane and C Site. This is an area of low density development with gardens enclosed by trees and hedges.
- 4.1.70 Historic OS mapping indicates that in the nineteenth century Miropa was located in an area backing on to open agricultural land. C Site of the Central Ordnance Depot was built from 1941 to the immediate west of Upper Arcott. Historic aerial photographs show that there was initially limited if any screening along the eastern edge of the depot, and so the large storage buildings are likely to have been visible and prominent from the rear of the cottage. There is currently tree screening along the rear of the garden comprising a single row of coniferous trees which partially screens and filters views of the existing buildings of the depot from the garden.

Experience of the Asset

- 4.1.71 Miropa cottage retains its position on the edge of the historic settlement of Upper Arcott. Whilst the form of the historic core of the village has been retained, there has been a degree of twentieth century expansion and infilling within the settlement. The buildings surrounding the asset are therefore a mix of historic (largely eighteenth and nineteenth century) and twentieth century with a range of building materials including stone, brick and render.
- 4.1.72 The construction of C Site from 1941 will have severed the relationship of the cottage with the open agricultural land which had been located to the west. The scale and form of the depot clearly do not relate in any way to the character of the cottage and the form of the planting along the boundary contributes to a sense of enclosure around the cottage. The setting of the cottage in relationship to the form of The Green therefore makes a positive contribution to its heritage significance, whilst the land within C Site does not. There is a potential for the existing buildings to result in a negative contribution, but this is limited by the screening which is in place.

Associative Attributes

- 4.1.73 The cottage formed part of the historic settlement of Upper Arccott. There are no other significant historic or cultural associations.

Statement of Significance

- 4.1.74 The asset is a seventeenth century cottage and is one of a number of buildings which formed part of the historic settlement of Upper Arccott. As an historic building, the house is of historical and also of aesthetic value.

Effects of the Proposed Development

- 4.1.75 As Miropa lies behind the Methodist chapel, the changes involved in the proposed development with respect to this asset will be similar to those described above, though Miropa is closer to the site boundary. This will involve the removal of the current Buildings C1 and C4 and their replacement with a larger and taller building. A screening bund, planted with trees, will be built at the eastern edge of C Site behind the rear garden of Miropa, as illustrated on Section B of ES Addendum Figure 2. The current Building C1 is approximately 120 m from Miropa and Building C4 is approximately 70 m. The new building will be approximately 90 m from the asset. However, in contrast to the existing buildings, the new building will form a continuous roofline, extending along the eastern boundary of C Site for a distance of 320 m.
- 4.1.76 Section B comprises a cross section which illustrates the proposed change from the rear of Miropa Cottage. Sections F and C also show views to the north and south of the cottage, across to the current locations of Buildings C1 and C4. Whilst Section C is taken directly from the rear of 34 Green Lane to Building C4, the distance from Miropa to Building C4 is similar. Taken together, these sections serve to illustrate the visibility of the proposed new building taking account of the planned screening and in comparison with the existing buildings. This illustrates that the perceived height of the new building from Miropa would be broadly comparable with the existing buildings. Nevertheless, as with the Methodist Chapel, the new building will form a continuous roofline with a total length of 320 m to the west of Green Lane and this will make it more prominent in the view on the approach to the cottage from Green Lane.

Effects on Significance

- 4.1.77 The proposed development will not result in any physical alteration of the cottage and so its key historic and architectural interest will not be affected.
- 4.1.78 The development will take place entirely within the existing boundary of C Site and so will not alter the association between the asset and those attributes of its setting which currently make a positive contribution to its heritage significance. In particular, it will not alter the relationship of the cottage with its setting within the historic core of Upper Arccott. There will be no change in land use within Green Lane and C Site would remain fenced off from and separate to the buildings along Green Lane. Any former relationship between Miropa and former agricultural land to the west will remain severed, but this situation will be unchanged from the current.
- 4.1.79 In order for the significance of the asset to be harmed, it would therefore be necessary for the mass of the new building to be of significantly greater mass and prominence as

seen in views of or from the asset in a way which would result in competition or distraction to such an extent that this would impair an ability to appreciate the asset within its setting. As noted above, the new building will be taller and of a greater mass than the current Buildings C1 and C4, but would be set further back from the asset, with reduced ground levels and increased screening. The perceived height of the new building would therefore be comparable to the current and as the proposed planting matures it will be more effectively screened. However, the new building will be a large structure, extending for some 320 m along the eastern edge of C Site. This will result in the building being of greater prominence in views along the approach to Miropa from Green Lane, particularly before the tree screening fully develops. This will result in some distraction in this view of the asset which will result in a degree of harm to the significance of the asset. Taking account of the mitigation measures which have been incorporated in the scheme, this harm will be less than substantial.

Manor Farmhouse (LB 243403)

Building Description

- 4.1.80 The Victoria County History²³ records that Manor Farmhouse is likely to have been the original manor house. It has a datestone with the date 1679, and was remodelled in the early nineteenth century.
- 4.1.81 It is built of coursed squared limestone rubble with some wooden lintels, plain-tile roof, with rubble and brick stacks. The house is L-shaped in plan with the main body of the house facing the road having two storeys. A projecting rear wing is of two storeys and an attic. The front has a central panelled door and with windows to either side. There is a gable stack on the right hand side of the main block of the house and a seventeenth century double stack on a rubble base with diagonal brick shafts at the junction of the ranges.

Setting

Physical Surroundings

- 4.1.82 The farmhouse fronts on to Ploughley Road with a farmyard containing a range of farm buildings extending to the rear. Beyond these is a narrow belt of wooded land leading on to the line of the Bicester Military Railway as it enters into C Site.
- 4.1.83 Manor Farmhouse is part of the historic hamlet of Lower Arcott, the extent of which is shown on nineteenth century OS maps. This was a small, dispersed linear settlement arranged along the southwestern side of Ploughley Road and it also includes the Grade II listed Wood Farm Cottage. Prior to the development of C Site in the mid twentieth century, Lower Arcott was entirely surrounded by agricultural land.
- 4.1.84 Manor Farmhouse faces directly out on to Ploughley Road, with views to the agricultural land extending out from the northeastern side of the road and this visual connection makes some contribution to its setting and the significance of the asset.

²³ VCH 1957

- 4.1.85 Most of the buildings along Ploughley Road are relatively modern in date, with Manor Farmhouse and Wood Farm Cottage surviving as historic buildings. More broadly, the surrounding street and fieldscape between Lower and Upper Arccott has been heavily altered by the development of C Site, other parts of the military depot and the Bicester Military Railway. Therefore, some of the historic agricultural context for Manor Farmhouse has been lost, though due to its location the extent of this is not readily apparent from the area of the farm. There has been some continuity in terms of the layout, density and scale of settlement within Lower Arccott, though the houses in closest proximity to Manor Farmhouse are modern bungalows of later twentieth century date.
- 4.1.86 The current buildings of C Site are a minimum of 250 m from Manor Farmhouse and cannot readily be seen from the vicinity of the farm.

Experience of the Asset

- 4.1.87 The farmhouse can be understood and appreciated as an agricultural building on the edge of the historic settlement of Lower Arccott. Its road side location on the northern edge of the settlement gives it a degree of local prominence, reflecting its status as a former manor house. It also clearly relates to the surrounding fieldscape and can be seen within this agricultural context.
- 4.1.88 The proximity of C Site has affected this to some extent, with the military railway resulting in severance from agricultural land to the west.

Associative Attributes

- 4.1.89 The house may have been the manor house for the area and the current building is seventeenth century in origin.

Statement of Significance

- 4.1.90 Manor Farmhouse is a seventeenth century farmhouse and is recorded as a possible former manor house for the area. Given its historic origins, there may also be a potential for surviving archaeological remains of an earlier house. As an historic structure it is of historic and potential evidential value. In addition, as a building of some local historic interest and prominence within the settlement of Lower Arccott the farmhouse is of historical value and also of some aesthetic value.

Effects of the Proposed Development

- 4.1.91 The proposed development will involve the demolition of Building C9, which is currently the closest of the C Site buildings to Manor Farmhouse and a new and larger building will be built to the south. This will have the effect of moving the closest building within C Site to a distance of approximately 480 m from the current 250 m.

Effects on Significance

- 4.1.92 The proposed development will not result in any physical alteration of Manor Farmhouse and so its key historic and architectural interest will not be affected. The development will take place entirely within the existing boundary of C Site and so will not alter the association between the asset and those attributes of its setting which make a positive contribution. As a result, the current local prominence of Manor Farmhouse and its relationship with its surrounding agricultural context will not be

affected. It will not result in the isolation of the asset, or result in any changes to key views.

- 4.1.93 Whilst the new building will be taller and of a greater mass than the current Building C9, it will be set further back from the asset at a distance of approximately 480 m compared to the current 250 m for Building C9. Current tree screening would also be maintained and an additional belt of screening added within C Site.
- 4.1.94 Overall therefore, the heritage significance of the asset will not be harmed as a result of the proposed development.

Wood Farm Cottage (LB 243404)

Building Description

- 4.1.95 Wood Farm Cottage is a seventeenth century house with early to mid eighteenth century alterations. It is built of random and coursed squared limestone rubble with some ashlar dressings and a concrete plain-tile roof with a rubble and brick ridge stack. The building is of one storey plus an attic and the roof has four low dormers. A seventeenth century stack on a rubble base is a particular feature of the house. The cottage is ranged along Ploughley Road, with an entrance to a subsidiary block at the northern end. At its front, the house faces directly onto Ploughley Road, whilst there is an enclosed garden to the rear comprising a lawn enclosed by shrub and tree borders and with a paddock beyond this.
- 4.1.96 The cottage therefore has historic interest as a seventeenth century domestic building with a number of interesting architectural features.

Setting

Physical Surroundings

- 4.1.97 Wood Farm Cottage is part of the historic hamlet of Lower Arccott, the extent of which is shown on nineteenth century OS maps. This was a small, dispersed linear settlement arranged along the southwestern side of Ploughley Road. Two of the buildings currently located within Lower Arccott were present in the nineteenth century, and these are Wood Farm Cottage itself and Manor Farm. Both are Grade II listed buildings and both front on to Ploughley Road. Prior to the development of C Site in the mid twentieth century, Lower Arccott was entirely surrounded by agricultural land.
- 4.1.98 Wood Farm Cottage faces directly out on to Ploughley Road, with views to the agricultural land extending out from the northeastern side of the road and this visual connection makes some contribution to its setting and the significance of the asset.
- 4.1.99 Most of the buildings along Ploughley Road are relatively modern in date and Wood Farm Cottage and Manor Farm are the principal surviving historic buildings. More broadly, the surrounding street and fieldscape between Lower and Upper Arccott has been heavily altered by the development of C Site, other parts of the military depot and the Bicester Military Railway. Therefore, much of the historic agricultural context for Wood Farm Cottage has been lost. However, there has been some continuity in terms of the layout, density and scale of settlement within Lower

Arcott. The modern buildings, such as the Tally Ho Hotel have been built to reflect the historic surroundings in terms of scale and use of materials.

- 4.1.100 As shown on ES Figure 11.22 (C Site Photo VP2) the roof level of the current Building C9 can be seen from this part of Ploughley Road at a distance of approximately 105 m, though this is also screened by the trees to the rear of the properties and running along the boundary of C Site. In general therefore, the construction of C Site and the growth of trees along its boundary has severed the visual connection between Lower Arcott and agricultural land in this direction. The visibility of Building C9 may be seen as a negative attribute in the setting of Wood Farm Cottage, though any harm is effectively limited by the tree screening.

Experience of the Asset

- 4.1.101 As noted above, Wood Farm Cottage can be seen and understood as an historic domestic building within the historic settlement of Lower Arcott. Whilst it is located alongside more modern buildings along Ploughley Road, their layout scale and use of materials allow a continued appreciation of the asset in its immediate locality. This immediate context, and the agricultural land to the northeast provide the setting in which the asset can be appreciated and contributes to its significance.
- 4.1.102 The development of the military depot to the south and west has clearly severed the Lower Arcott settlement from agricultural land in these directions. The scale and nature of these developments mean that they are seen as being separate to Wood Farm Cottage and their presence does not make a contribution to the significance of the asset.

Associative Attributes

- 4.1.103 As previously noted, Wood Farm Cottage forms part of the historic settlement of Lower Arcott. It is therefore associated with Manor Farm, at the north end of the settlement. There are no other significant historic or cultural associations.

Effects of the Proposed Development

- 4.1.104 The proposed development will involve the demolition of an existing building at the northern end of C Site (Building C9). A larger and taller building would then be built further back from Ploughley Road, at a distance of approximately 315 m. The intervening space would be occupied by tree belts, a section of the Bicester Military Railway and an area of hardstanding.
- 4.1.105 Section D of ES Addendum Figure 3 comprises a cross section which illustrates the proposed change in relation to this part of Ploughley Road. Whilst this has been prepared from the Tally Ho Hotel, this is adjacent to Wood Farm Cottage and can clearly be taken as representative. The cross section shows that the new building would not be more visual intrusive than the current Building C9, and that as the proposed tree belt develops, a greater degree of screening will be achieved. Importantly, the proposed development would involve the built development of C Site being located further back from Wood Farm Cottage by approximately 210 m.
- 4.1.106 As previously noted and illustrated in Section D, the new building will be 18.6 m to ridge height compared to approximately 9-10 m for the current building C9, but this will be compensated for in the greater distance. This shows that the new building

would not result in a greater degree of visual intrusion into the setting of Wood Farm Cottage.

Effects on Significance

- 4.1.107 The proposed development will not result in any physical alteration of Wood Farm Cottage and so its key heritage significance as a domestic building of historic and architectural interest will not be affected. Its setting makes some contribution to its heritage significance, with particular reference to the presence of the cottage within the historic settlement of Lower Arcott and its proximity to agricultural land to the northeast. The development will take place entirely within the existing boundary of C Site and so will not alter the association between the asset and those attributes of its setting which make a positive contribution. It will not result in the isolation of the asset, or result in any changes to key views. There will be no change in land use within the area and C Site would remain fenced off from and separate to the buildings along Ploughley Road. C Site is seen as very much separate to the cottage and does not currently make a positive contribution to its setting, and this situation will not be affected.
- 4.1.108 The new building will be taller and of a greater mass than the current Building C9, but would be set further back from the asset by a distance of approximately 210 m. Current tree screening would also be maintained and an additional belt of screening added within C Site. In order for the significance of the asset to be harmed, it would therefore be necessary for the mass of the new building to be of sufficiently greater mass and prominence as seen in views of or from the asset to result in competition or distraction to such an extent that this would impair an ability to appreciate the asset within its setting. A review of Section D does not suggest in any way that this is likely to be the case. The greater height of the new building will be balanced by its greater distance from Ploughley Road. Within the strengthened and additional tree screening the contribution of land within C Site to the setting and significance of the asset will remain broadly neutral. Overall then, there will be no material change to the heritage significance of Wood Farm Cottage.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1.1 The proposed development will involve the loss of a number of buildings which have formed part of the Central Ordnance Depot, Bicester. No buildings would be demolished if designated for their historic interest. A programme of recording would be undertaken in advance of demolition and this approach is in accordance with NPPF and agreed by English Heritage.
- 5.1.2 Potential effects on listed buildings and scheduled monuments within the vicinity of the site have also been considered. Some changes to the settings of these have been identified and there will be some harm to the heritage significance of Miropa Cottage and the Methodist Chapel at Upper Arcott. However, with the mitigation measures which have been incorporated into the proposed development, it is considered that this would involve less than substantial harm to the heritage significance of these assets.

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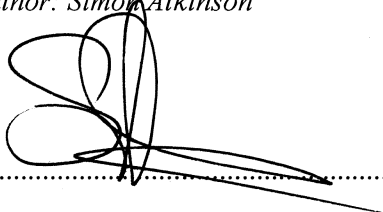
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Appendix A

English Heritage Initial Assessment

38 Pages

DEFENCE DISPOSALS ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE: OXFORDSHIRE

Part A: Information for transfer to AMIE database and uploading to PastScape

Site name:

Ambrosden - Bicester Central Ordnance Depot (COD), Graven Hill, Sites D & E.

Summary:

Central Ordnance Depot (COD), Bicester.

This huge depot consists of a complex of sites clustered around two hills - Graven Hill and Arncott Hill - to the south-east of Bicester. On completion in 1943, the depot covered an area of over 12 square miles, with nearly 50 miles of railway track. It was planned as the main supply base for the British Army's operations during the Second World War and became an important supply base for the United States forces in Europe, under Operation Bolero. At its peak in 1944, more than 20,000 people were employed here. The site has continued to function as a supply depot ever since; although its functions have changed over time and some areas have fallen out of operational use. However, numerous storage hangars and much of the original infrastructure remain. It is the outstanding example in the UK of a bulk storage depot built during the Second World War, designed to be fully integrated into rail and road transport networks and is the precursor of the modern commercial distribution depots dotted around the motorway network.

Central Ordnance Depot Bicester is split into two main sites - Graven Hill Depot and Arncott Depot. These two depots are further sub-divided into six distinct functional sites, A, B, C, and F at Arncott, and D and E at Graven Hill; this document is concerned with the latter two sites. Completed in 1943, the depot at Graven Hill was operated by a mixture of soldiers, Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS), and civilian staff; military personnel were originally housed in temporary Nissen huts, later to be replaced by permanent barrack blocks - St.David's Barracks (completed 1958). The complex was served by the Bicester Military Railway, fed from the Oxford to Bletchley railway line.

Various offices, workshops, and small stores supported four large storage hangars at E Site (Small Arms) and the eight storage hangars and workshops at D Site (Armaments). Parts of D site and the sorting sidings were built on relatively poor-quality agricultural land that was subject to winter flooding, necessitating raised ground levels and open drainage channels on the lower ground. Passive air defence (PAD) provision took the form of integral office block air-raid shelters in the small items stores, attached and detached complexes of surface air-raid shelters associated with the storage hangars, emergency water supply (EWS) static water tanks, and fire-hydrant pump garages. Before completion, the storage capacity was increased by the addition of nine rail-served Romney hut 'Bolero' store complexes to support the U.S. Army's preparations for the invasion of Europe. A short time later, a further 'Bolero' complex - the self-contained Ordnance Support Unit and a Gun Park (now used for container handling) was also built on the north-eastern side of the site.

Staff recreation facilities were limited to a club house and changing facilities, playing fields, and a camp theatre / cinema.

After 1945, COD Bicester remained the premier ordnance depot for the British Army, although since the 1960s, the functions associated with the different parts have changed, and since the 1980s, there has been a gradual diminution in rail traffic in favour of palletised or containerised road haulage.

The Romano-British settlement of Alchester is situated a short distance to the west of the western boundary and the site is traversed by the Akeman Street Roman road, although its exact route remains conjectural. The deserted medieval village of Wretchwick is situated a little to the north east. The depot is reputed to be the site of a battle between the Danes and the Saxons in AD 871. Substantial earthwork entrenchments also exist on the eastern edge of Gravenhill Wood (outside of disposal area). It is unclear when these substantial earthworks were excavated, or what they represent; a number of suggestions have been made including Iron Age, Dark Age, or medieval field boundaries, or possibly an English Civil War fortifications.

Area: (Hectares) Approx. 237 hectares	NGR: SP 58872 20364 (feature centre)
Parish: Ambrosden	NMR/HER Nos: 502243, 1329566, 1363495, 1411454, 1475538, 1475678, 1475752
Location: Bicester, Oxfordshire	Street/House number: Westacott Road
Type/Period/Form: Road / Roman Depot / mid-twentieth century / extant buildings Barracks / mid-twentieth century / extant buildings Barracks / twenty-first century / extant buildings Marshalling Yard / mid-twentieth century / extant Road / mid-twentieth century / extant / roadways Prisoner of War Camp / mid-twentieth century / extant buildings / footings X3 Railway / mid-twentieth century / extant buildings and permanent way	
Designated heritage assets Currently no designations exist within the depot site. Bordering the depot to the west is the scheduled site of Alchester Romano-British settlement (UDS 1066365, HOB UID 338885) and to the north east, Wretchwick Deserted Medieval Village (UDS 1015549, HOB UID 338883). Given the close proximity of these two scheduled sites, it seems likely that there is a possibility of new archaeological features and objects being discovered within the site.	

Undesignated heritage assets and environmental designations

The presumed route of the Roman road Akeman Street passes through the site east to west from Wretchwick Farm to Langford Lane.

In A.D. 871 Graven Hill was reputedly the site of a battle between the Danes and Saxons.

A substantial unidentified 'arrowhead' plan earthwork is situated at the eastern end of Gravenhill Wood, part of which forms the boundary at the eastern tip of the woodland. A number of plausible suggestions have been made as to what this feature represents, including an Iron Age defensive ditch, a medieval boundary, or an un-finished Civil War period 'Royalist' artillery fortification.

No statutory environmental designations exist within the disposal site, although the Gravenhill County Wildlife Site is located within the arc of the site on land associated with St. David's Barracks that is not subject to disposal. This includes Gravenhill Wood, designated by Natural England as 'Ancient Woodland'.

In addition, the Bicester Wetland Reserve that is managed by the Banbury Ornithological Society is close to the north western boundary of the site, beyond the railway line.

Landscape and Settlement Context

Graven Hill Depot is built around the base of an isolated hill within the Ray River catchment area and is situated on former clay-loam farmland. The storage areas of D and E sites are built on a surface geology of glacial sands, silts, gravels, and clays that overlay Jurassic-period marine sedimentary rocks of the Oxford Clays and Kellaways formations; while the higher ground of Graven Hill comprises of Jurassic Cornbrash and Great Oolite Series rocks.

Akeman Street Roman road ran along the north-eastern side of Graven Hill, before it curved round the northern side of Graven Hill, crossed a ford and entered Alchester Roman settlement by the east gate. Part of E Site over-lays a former 600-yds rifle range, dating from the latter half of the 19th century. The range was aligned north - south with target butts set into the slope of the hill (SP 59084 20668), a little to the south east of the Garrison Theatre. It would appear that this rifle range was reduced to a 100 yds range once the depot was built.

The impermeable clays result in rapid run-off of rain and flooding in winter; consequently, the storage hangars and the associated barracks were built on the lower slopes of Graven Hill with all structures and infrastructure situated above the 65m contour line, with the exception of some of the Bolero stores. Parts of 'D' site and the sorting sidings were built on relatively poor quality agricultural land that was subject to winter flooding, this fact necessitated the raising of ground levels by infill and the digging of open drainage channels on the lower ground. The 1885 Ordnance Survey map shows the field boundaries around the hill radiated in south westerly (West side), north westerly (North side), and south easterly (South & East sides) directions. The majority of the field enclosures had areas of between 4.25 to 4.85

hectares (10.5 to 12 acres), although some were up to 9.71 hectares (24 acres) in size. The boundaries appear to have been predominantly low hedges with trees, but on the western side of the hill some were formed by drainage ditches. Extensive ridge and furrow plough earthworks are visible in most of the fields around Graven Hill on aerial photographs taken throughout the 1940s and 50s (e.g. - US 7PH GP LOC 267 10-4-44 F24" frame 5033), and although these features have been gradually reduced by changes in farming practices introduced since the 1960s, some fields retain these features.

An avenue formed by a track flanked by a pair of parallel tree-lined field boundaries, aligned South-east – North-west, ran from the northern edge of Ambrosden Park and terminated against Graven Hill to the east of the site of Mount Pleasant. A fragment of which survives abutting the boundary fence in a wooded area south east of the concrete hard standing for the former Bolero Store D35. The track leading to Mount Pleasant ran on the western side of the westernmost of these two boundaries. Only two field boundary alignments within the depot site have survived its construction and these are situated in the grassed area south of the circular road on the north eastern edge of Graven Hill.

Langford Lane is aligned north-west – south-east and follows the western side of a drainage ditch outside of the western side of the depot. A number of paths branching from these two roads rose up to the apex of Graven Hill. The route of Langford Lane appears to be of some antiquity, branching to Merton village; however, the true alignment of the lane appears to head south-east bridging the River Ray at Astley Bridge Farm, thence continuing around the southern boundary of Arncott Depot (where it has been diverted), and then onto Muswell Hill.

The construction of Graven Hill had a minimal impact on the built environment, resulting in the demolition of only one farm house of an unknown date called Mount Pleasant (SP 58618 20151), its associated farm buildings & yard (SP 58736 19845) on the south western side of the hill, together with some isolated field shelters (SP 58704 19666 and SP 58308 20121). A fold yard and sheds (SP 51038 20318) associated with Wretchwick Farm situated on the south-eastern side of Gravenhill Wood were also demolished. Although virtually all field boundaries within the depot were removed, the majority of Gravenhill Wood, with the exception of the site of St.David's Barracks (built 1958) remained intact.

Sites associated with Graven Hill Depot

The Graven Hill Depot comprising of Sites D & E is a part of the Central Ordnance Depot Bicester; Sites A, B, C, and F located some two miles to the south east at Arncott Hill form the larger part of the depot. Various ancillary groups of buildings are associated with Graven Hill.

Work commenced in 1954 on the building of St. David's Barracks, situated on the western side of Graven Hill within the circumference of the Bicester Military Railway. It was completed in 1958 to replace the wartime Nissen hut camps that were in the fields on the slopes of Graven Hill. Four rectangular-plan, fair-faced brick-built barrack blocks with flat concrete roofs have since been replaced by seven modern 'Y'-plan single-occupancy roomed multi-storey barrack blocks, as a part of the SLAM (Single Living Accommodation) project and the site continues to be used by the

Pioneer Corps.

The disused and boarded-up Rodney House social club and playing field is sited outside of the main perimeter fence, a short distance to the north of the depot adjacent to the A49. The complex was built in 1943-44, and comprises of a pair of parallel inter-linked Ministry of Works and Planning (MoWP) 'Standard' huts forming a 'hollow-square' plan, a store hut, and a combined fair-faced brick-built boiler house and header tank tower. The southern range of Rodney House once faced out over a lawns enclosed by an extended D-plan looped pathway, that allowed access to four 24-ft span Nissen huts that were laid out in a 'spread finger' plan at the apex of the pathway. The Nissen huts together with two ablution blocks, a pair of unidentified huts, and a changing room have all been demolished.

Ambrosden Camp was built on land adjacent to Ambrosden village, situated between Graven Hill and Arncott Depots. The Nissen huts here were carefully laid out in a pattern that merged with the field boundaries and the adjacent village layout, using artificial ground patterning to disguise its function from the air, rather than physically camouflaging the structures with paint, netting, or false features. The land where the camps stood was used during the late 1950s to build three estates of Married Quarters that served as accommodation for soldiers and officers working at both the Graven Hill and Arncott Depots. The streets of Other Ranks Married Quarters (ORMQs), located on the northern side of the old village were all named after trees – Alder Drive, Ash Lane, Briar Furlong, Birch Road, Chestnut Row, Elm Close, Elm Lane, Hawthorn Roads (East & West), Oak Lane, Rowan Close, Sycamore Road, Willow End, and Willow Road. The Officers Married Quarters (OMQs) are situated on the eastern side of Ambrosden and have a range of un-related street names – Akeman Avenue, Allectus Avenue, Brincote Close, Glebe Close, and Langton Avenue.

Schools, playing fields, a garrison families club and youth centre, and a garrison amenity centre have all been built to cater for the needs of the soldiers and their families. The amenity centre comprises of St Barbara's Roman Catholic church, a NAAFI (now a Spar shop), medical centre, gymnasium, open air swimming pool, education centre, tennis courts, and a basket ball pitch. The St Barbara's Catholic church was notable at its opening on 15th December 1967, as it was the first Catholic church built for the armed forces since 1854, and the complex was hailed as a good example of the 'Two for the Price of One' principle being encouraged by the Treasury at that time.

History and description of the site

The site of Graven Hill has a long history of occupation and use, probably as far back as the Iron Age. The Romano-British settlement of Alchester is situated a short distance to the west of the western boundary, and the site is possibly traversed by the Akeman Street Roman road that linked Watling Street to the Fosse Way; although its exact route remains conjectural. Nearby, the village of Ambrosden is also reputedly built on the site of a Roman villa of Ambrosius Aurelianus, a 5th-century Romano-British leader who fought the Saxons. The depot is reputedly the site of a battle between the Danes and the Saxons in AD 871 (some accounts state AD 873).

The deserted medieval village of Wretchwick is situated a little to the north east of the depot beyond the A41(T) road. A very substantial earthwork entrenchments also exist on the eastern edge of Gravenhill Wood (outside of the disposal area). As yet the function and date of this earthwork is un-determined.

The first modern military feature to be built at Graven Hill was the 600-yds rifle range constructed on the northern side of the north-eastern end of the hill. The range was built during the latter half of the 19th century to permit target practice for the volunteer movement in the Bicester area. It appears to have continued in use as a rifle range up until the building of the depot, when only the last 100-yds were retained as a range. Originally, firing points were established in a northerly direction at 100-yds intervals out from the targets to a 600-yds post near to the A41, to the north of the site of Wretchwick Lodge. The covered way of the target gallery was sunken and built into the side of the hill, with a low earthen glacis supported by a 'battered' concrete wall. A 'lean-to' brick walled target store was built at the western end of the covered way and an earth bank to the rear (south side) of the covered way acted as a stop-butt to catch bullets that had passed through the targets. The covered way and the target store still exist, although the covered way has been infilled with earth borrowed from the stop-butt. The line of the covered way can still be delineated by the crest of the 'battered' covered way wall that shows just above ground-level. (SP 59083 20670)

The origins of the establishment of the Central Ordnance Depot (COD) at Bicester date back to the mid-1930s when concerns grew over the likelihood of a war breaking out with Germany. The War Office was acutely aware of the limited infrastructure (five ordnance depots) available to support the existing British Army, let alone to allow for any degree of expansion in the size and capability of the British armed forces. A number of new depots were proposed; some created by adapting pre-existing sites, including the extensive underground stone quarries at Corsham, Wiltshire. By the time the British Army was mobilised in 1939, work on the large storage site at COD Donnington in Shropshire was well underway, but it was necessary to establish numerous temporary depots on race courses and similar sites as a stop-gap until more permanent depots could be built.

The answer took the form of a project, code-named 'X Depot', to build a modern depot situated centrally in the southern half of England, with the capacity to handle large volumes of goods rapidly, and using both rail and road links for the intake and distribution of stores. Early in 1941, Colonel G.W. Palmer was appointed Commandant (Designate) of 'X Depot' project and was given permission to chose its location and layout. Eight sites were considered, but Bicester was chosen for a number of reasons:

- 1) The use of relatively poor land that was subject to winter flooding, thus negating the need to take large tracts of productive farmland.
- 2) Close proximity of a sizeable civilian workforce was available at nearby Bicester, Banbury, and Oxford.
- 3) Adjacent to the LMS (LNWR) Oxford to Bletchley railway line.
- 4) Natural camouflage given by the presence of Graven Hill, and Arccott Hill.
- 5) Low-level bombing made difficult by the presence of the two hills.
- 6) Central location away from other potential targets.

Early in 1941, Lt. Colonel J.P. Haugh was appointed Commander Royal Engineers (CRE), and was given the responsibility for over-seeing what was then, the largest military building project in the country. The initial survey was completed during May 1941, and during the following month, requisition notices were served on the owners of the necessary land, and the setting out of the depot commenced. The first work undertaken was to start laying the rail connection from the Oxford to Bletchley railway line and to commence the laying of the exchange sidings. The railway system was laid in very difficult muddy conditions by conscientious objectors drafted into the army, forming the Non-Combatant Corps (NCC).

Initially, accommodation was provided under canvas but gradually hutments using 16-ft span Nissen huts were built to provide the necessary temporary accommodation for the labour force and eventually for the garrison. These huts were scattered in the fields around the base of Gravenhill Wood and Arncott Hill and were only replaced in 1958 on the completion of St. David's and St. George's Barracks. None of these huts remain extant at Graven Hill (2011), although a gathered pile of broken concrete slabs near to the Circular Road may represent the remains of their footings.

Although most of the construction work was undertaken by the Royal Engineers and the Non-Combatant Corps, specialist civilian steel erectors were brought in to build the steel frameworks of the storage hangars. On completion in 1943, the Bicester Central Ordnance Depot became the main supply base for the British Army's operations in Europe and an Army Mobilisation Centre. It comprised two depot complexes, one encircling Graven Hill (D & E Sites) and the other (A, B, C, and F Sites) surrounding Arncott Hill.

The various store buildings on both sites occupied an area of 6,739,000 square feet, with a further 5,177,000 square feet of open storage, served by approximately 24 miles of roads, and nearly 50 miles of railway track, all contained within 21 miles of perimeter fence. The combined area of the two sites amounted to 12.5 square miles, and the buildings were dispersed with large grassed areas between them, as a passive air defence (PAD) measure to minimise the effects of enemy bombing and to reduce the risk of fire spreading between buildings; although at times of peak capacity, the grassed areas were also used for open storage. The Armaments and Small Arms sub-depots (Graven Hill D and E Sites) alone had 491,000 square feet of covered storage and by 1944 over half of the country's total output of small arms were stored at Graven Hill; this included thousands of 9-mm Sten machine carbines (sub-machine guns) and the total output of 6-pounder anti-tank guns.

The number of personnel working at the depot has fluctuated throughout its life, but the peak was reached during the latter part of 1944, when 20,000 troops and women from the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) were employed together with the supporting garrison. A proportion of this total were U.S. troops responsible for the issuing of supplies from the 'Bolero' Stores Buildings D30-35 and E30-32 which were built to support the invasion of Europe. The 'Bolero' stores at Bicester played an important and considerable role in supplying the US army in Europe both before and after D-Day. The materials and equipment held by the US Army in the Bolero Stores arrived by rail from the Inland Sorting Depot (ISD) at Kirkby, Liverpool, with over 100,250,000 cases of stores being received in 14,000 wagon loads by May 1945.

Three groups of Romney huts in the Bolero complex and two groups of accommodation huts were used post-war as Prisoner of War Camps. PoW Camp 657 was located at Bolero group D35, PoW Camp 1011 was located at Bolero group D30, but PoW Camp 553 which was known as 'Bolero Camp' was an altogether more complex site; it included Bolero groups E30-E31, the Ordnance Support Unit, together with former Nissen accommodation huts to the south of storage hangar E2, and to the north-west of storage hangar D6.

The depot at Graven Hill was divided into two sites, with D site responsible for the storage and despatch of small arms (handguns rifles, machine guns etc) and E Site for armaments etc. Immediately post-war and well into the late 1950s, the main function of the depot was to support the activities of the Central Ordnance Depots at Chilwell and Donnington, and the Vehicle Organisation of the Royal Army Ordnance Corps (RAOC). With the ending of National Service and the consequent reduction in size of the Army, a major re-organisation of the depot's activities became necessary.

In 1961 COD Bicester was chosen to undertake a new role to support the smaller 'Regular Army'. It assumed the responsibilities for 'General Stores' from COD Didcot, and Clothing from COD Branston. The changes required the handling of 150,000 tons of stores, a complete revision of the depot organisation, and an increase in staff and facilities to cope with the new role. In April 1961 the Commandant COD Bicester became the Commander, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Sub District, administering 2,000 troops and Women's Royal Army Corps (WRAC) and in excess of 4,000 civilian personnel, some 20% of whom had previously served in the armed services.

The necessary changes took until 1964; part of the process was the building of a new Provisions Control and Accounts Office, a civilian staff canteen, and a military Medical Reception Centre. Over the next year building work commenced on a new Headquarters Office Block, and an Officers' Mess. The need to maintain long-term civilian staff loyalty was also addressed by the Ministry of Defence, by subsidising the building of 810 houses in conjunction with the Urban District Council in Bicester.

Since that time, the basic role of COD Bicester of ordering, stocking and issuing Clothing and General Ordnance Stores to support the Army has changed very little, although the methods of handling and accounting have. As the Army has continued to reduce in size, the function of some of the storage hangars and workshops have been rationalised and some have been adapted to permit temperature controlled storage. Sites D and E are currently 'non-explosive' areas.

Access to the Graven Hill site is provided by two road gates, the northern gate off Westacott Road, (E Site) and the eastern or Pioneer Road Gate (D Site). The section of road that leads into the depot from the Pioneer Road gate was re-named Anniversary Avenue in May 1992 to commemorate the 50th year of the Bicester Garrison. The two road gateways are flanked on either side by a police post and a clocking-in room, both being low single-storey fair-faced brick structures with flat concrete roofs. The self-contained former Ordnance Support Unit site is accessed by separate road and rail gateways to the east of Westacott Road, while the Bicester International Freight Terminal that occupies the former gun (artillery) park

associated with the Unit is accessed by a gateway off Pioneer Road. Two further railway gates also exist into the site, one from the exchange sidings alongside the Oxford – Bletchley Line, and the other in the south-east corner of the site, allowing rail access to Ambrosden and the Arcott Depot.

Apart from a number of small ancillary structures, the principal buildings on E & D Sites are the twelve large single-storey steel-framed storage hangars (Bldgs. E1 – E3, E15, D1 – D7, and D9), a small storage/despatch hangar (D8), a modern temporary store, three unidentified stores (E4 - E5 and D10), locomotive depot, motor transport garage (E6), railway headquarters (D19), a central heating boiler house and associated coal store and oil tanks (E14), the training block (D3), an electrical sub-station, twelve square-plan static water tanks, and a modern fire station.

Seven different designs of storage hangar have been used; all are rectangular in plan, steel girder-framed with brick walls. E1 differs in plan as it has a lower rectangular-plan range attached to the western elevation that acted as a small items store and office; this range gives the structure an overall 'T' plan. No internal inspections were permitted during the survey.

Storage hangars D1, D2, D4, D5, D8, E1, E2, E3, and E15 have large road and rail doorways in the outer bays of both sides of the structure. The doorways were originally closed with large rolling bolted steel-framed doors clad with corrugated steel sheeting. All of these doors have been replaced by roller shutter doors, and some have been blocked-up. D6, D7, and D9 are all served by combined road and rail doorways. All of the storage hangars have low single-storey flat concrete roofed latrines and small office blocks attached to one or more elevations. In addition most have an air-raid shelter at each end of the attached blocks.

The roofs of all of the storage hangars at Graven Hill Depot would originally have been clad with corrugated-asbestos cement sheeting, and the side panels and windows were glazed with 'Georgian' wire reinforced glass to reduced splintering. The panels were set high under the eaves or in the gables, both for daylight illumination and as a passive air defence measure - to allow any bomb shattered glass blasted at a high velocity to travel horizontally over the heads of any workers beneath. The asbestos cement cladding of all of the roofs of the storage hangars on D and E sites have been re-clad by plastic coated corrugated metal sheeting and glazed panels with clear plastic sheeting. Likewise most Crittal galvanised steel windows have been replaced by uPVC double glazing.

The three most common designs of storage hangar are twelve bays wide and have 'ten-bay' steel girder-framed depressed gabled roofs, with a 'cat-slide' lean-to roof over the outer road access bays. Storage hangars D8 and E15 are of differing floor lengths and areas, but they have a similar roof arrangement. Storage hangar D9 (currently Clothing, Textiles, and Ceremonial) has a totally different design of roof and a different arrangement of glazing.

Three of the storage hangars in D Site - D6, D7, and D9 (formerly D11) are all tall single-storey structures designed to allow the use of travelling cranes for heavy lifts. These loads included artillery pieces, and in May 1944 alone, some 3,600 gun

barrels for 6-pounder and 17-pounder anti-tank guns were received and stored as 'reserve stock' in D6.

Two smaller designs of storage sheds are also to be found at the depot E4, E5 and D10. The two designs are unusual and noteworthy; they differ from the storage hangars in having reinforced concrete framed construction with brick walls, and reinforced concrete shell roofs. The roof design probably indicates that these particular buildings may have been used to store inflammable materials like oil, paints, and lubricants, and needed to be proof against 2-kilogram incendiary bombs. Remarkably, the concrete has been finished to a high-standard with chamfered and stopped detailing; an un-necessary flourish during wartime conditions.

The Training Building D3 is identical in design to the attached range on storage hangar E1 and has an integral internal air-raid shelter in the north-west corner. As in storage hangar E1, the shelter functioned as offices with internal rolling steel blast doors and hinged steel blast shutters protecting windows in the external wall. The shutters would have been kept open during daylight hours, but they would have been closed upon an air-raid warning, or at night as a black-out requirement.

Apart from the integral shelters mentioned above, all of the air-raid shelters at the depot were 'Double' 50 person capacity surface shelters, i.e. a shelter design built above the ground surface (due to the wet ground), with sufficient width internally to permit two rows of 25 people to be seated or standing opposite each other. Some of the storage hangars have two air-raid shelters attached integrally to one of the external walls; whereas, others have additional free-standing groups of shelters built a short distance to one side, reflecting the larger workforce in that particular hangar.

The shelters are low single-storey, rectangular-plan, brick-built structures with flat mono-pitched re-inforced concrete roofs that have raised verges on three sides. As no reinforcing bars are visible, it is impossible to tell whether or not the shelters were built using reinforced brick construction. Access was obtained by two diagonally opposed timber doors or slat gates protected by brick blast walls, at opposite corners of the structure. There was no heating and the only provision to comfort were two brick chemical closet recesses; it is possible however that there was only a plain bucket provided in each. Very unusually, the shelters have a wide-splayed observation loop in the side walls.

In case the water supply was disrupted by bomb damage, twelve sunken square-plan Emergency Water Supply (EWS) static water tanks were built at strategic locations around the depot. Some were served by a small brick cubicle that housed a water pump, all originally had a timber and steel framework that allowed fire hoses from a hydrant to be laid directly into them. The former fire section building (D14) survives on D Site (SP 59146 19975), it comprises of a single Turner's curved asbestos cement hut, divided into a fire-pump garage and a crew room; a small latrine cubicle is built to the rear.

The tallest building at the Graven Hill Depot is the Boiler House (Bldg. E14) (SP 58162 20308). This is one of three such boiler houses built at COD Bicester, which supplied heating to the storage hangars via a system of insulated pipes supported on

concrete posts. The boiler house is associated with two steel oil tanks and a coal yard. During the 1980s an automated coal unloading system was introduced using British Rail 'Railfreight HEA bottom discharge wagons. This arrangement fed the coal to a conveyor system that carried it into the boiler house at high level. Ash could also be brought out of the boiler house using the same conveyor system working in reverse, or it could be blown along a pipe system into a small silo to permit over-head loading into road tankers.

All of the buildings associated with Operation Bolero at Graven Hill have been demolished with the exception of the Ordnance Support Unit complex near Wretchwick Lodge, one Romney hut (Bldg. E31), and one Ministry of Works and Planning (MOWP) 'standard' hut that was used as a tea-break room in Bolero Group E31. The Ordnance Support Unit comprises seven miscellaneous huts of differing types, one circular-plan static water tank, and a row of eight rail-served Romney huts. The footings of the demolished Bolero complexes E30 – E32, and D30 - D35, have been retained and are being used for the storage of engineering equipment, container boxes, palletised loads, and vehicle parking.

The Bicester Military Railway (BMR) was the primary mode of transport at the Central Ordnance Depot Bicester. Work on surveying the land for the rail system commenced in April 1941 and the 2.6 miles of railway that circled Graven Hill had been pegged out ready for construction by August 1942. Track laying was well underway by the following month. Initially the entire track was to be laid using 'philplug' concrete sleepers and the rails were held in place by simple bearing plates and 'dog' spikes. These sleepers were found to be unsatisfactory and were replaced by different types of concrete sleeper; including those manufactured by Stent that can still be found at a number of points on the railway, especially within the spurs leading into the storage hangars. Elsewhere on the system, once it was realised that the concrete sleepers were highly visible at night, it was intended to replace them with conventional timber sleepers; however, limitations on the supply of timber dictated that some of the concrete sleepers were retained and these were painted with a thin coat of black bituminous paint to tone them down.

The concrete sleepers that were gathered up after replacement were not wasted and they were put to a number of alternative uses, including the building of passenger platforms. Six passenger platforms were built around the Graven Hill depot – Langford Farm Halt (demolished), E2 Platform (demolished), Westacott Platform (partially demolished), D6 Platform (demolished), Queens Platform (demolished), and Graven Hill Platform. Fragmentary remains of the Westacott Platform can still be found to the west of the level-crossing gates on Westacott Road, and Graven Hill platform adjacent to the running line within the Sorting Sidings complex is the only fully extant example left. In addition to these improvised passenger platforms, a purpose-built ramped two-road loading / unloading bay was built in the gun park for the handling of artillery pieces.

The scale of the operations during the Second World War can be appreciated when it is realised that up to seventeen steam locomotives were working virtually around the clock to receive, sort, deliver, recover, and despatch wagons to the various storage hangars and sidings. During 1944 with the build up to D-Day and the supply of the invasion forces in Europe, 78,623 wagons were received and 77,896 were

despatched through the exchange sidings; together with 135,034 internal movements, this gives a grand total of 291,554 wagons being handled during one year.

Initially all train movements were controlled by a manual 'Regulator' system, using a block system whereby the drivers of any train had to stop at a phone cabin and ring for permission to advance into the next section, all controlled from the railway control office at Graven Hill and the regulator building at Arccott. Eventually in 1947, two redundant locking lever frames, rodding, and semaphore signals were obtained from the defunct Cairnryan Military Railway and installed at Bicester to control major rail movements on the running lines at Graven Hill and the 2-mile section to Arccott depot that ran through Ambrosden. The lever frames were installed in two new two-storey structures that resembled a civilian signal box called 'Blockposts'; the example at Graven Hill was called 'A' Blockpost and it housed a 16-lever interlocking frame (SP 58417 19846).

In 1960 a two-road locomotive shed with inspection and ash pits was built together with associated locomotive yard sidings at the north western end of the Sorting Sidings. The locomotive shed was designed to hold up to six locomotives and originally this structure had a flat central roof flanked by a row of smoke ventilators over each road, with a single pitch roof dropping to the side walls. This arrangement was to allow the smoke and steam to escape up through the roof. With the withdrawal of steam locomotives and introduction of diesel locomotives in 1965, these vents were removed and replaced by simple electrically driven extraction fans, and the roof was altered to a gabled design.

During the 1980s, the old Romney hut C1 (Carriage and Wagon Shop) at C Site, Arccott was closed and the work was transferred to a new purpose-built two-road Carriage and Wagon Department workshop at Graven Hill. The workshop was constructed against the north eastern corner of the Graven Hill locomotive shed. The shed is a simple rectangular-plan steel framed structure clad with corrugated steel sheeting.

The original railway administrative centre was located at Arccott depot, but it was moved in 1978 to a new two-storey Railway Headquarters (Building D99) overlooking the southern end of the Sorting Sidings (SP 58361 19972).

Assessment of significance:

Historical

From the mid-1930s, the British government embarked on a prodigious military infrastructure building programme in response to the threat from Nazi Germany. This involved building new barracks, aerodromes, munitions factories, armament depots, reserve fuel depots, fuel distribution depots, storage depots, anti-aircraft batteries, equipment ammunition magazines, gunnery schools, etc. When the war broke out in September 1939, there was still a desperate need to increase the capacity of Ordnance Depots, not only to cope with the existing size of the army, but to allow for its very rapid growth. It is against this background that the historical significance of Graven Hill and the Central Ordnance Depot as a whole needs to be placed.

There were a number of wartime depots built for the three armed services across the whole of the British Isles. Some of these have been virtually obliterated, some have been maintained and modernised, while others have been abandoned, or have been given low-grade re-use. Although all of these sites had a common basic function, no two were the same; most have tightly packed storage sheds that would have been vulnerable to bombing and the spread of fire, together with limited rail and road exchange facilities, generally out in the open using adjacent sidings and loading ramps. COD Bicester differs dramatically from all of the other sites, as all of the storage hangars were purpose designed to permit the integrated handling of road and railway trucks under cover. Passive air defence was a major design consideration from the outset, with all of the buildings being dispersed to reduce the risks from bombing and the spread of fire.

The design, layout, and the level of the provision of air raid shelters at COD Bicester is significant. Air-raid warnings, not even a 'Red Warning' was observed at the depot, work would have continued right up to the last-minute when the 'Aircraft Over-head Warning' was given by the 'Jim Crow' bomb watchers. Consequently, the workforce needed to be able to access their air-raid shelters rapidly and at very short notice. These issues can be appreciated at COD Bicester by the tight grouping and close proximity of the shelters to the building they served, and by the opposed doorways at each end of the structures, that speeded up the rate of access. Most air-raid shelters elsewhere were built with only one entrance and an emergency exit to reduce the risk of a blast wave passing through them; this is not the case at Bicester. Ideally where a number of shelters are grouped together, they should also be in a dispersed pattern at differing angles to one and other to minimise the effects of blast and ground-heave; this was not the case at Bicester.

At civilian factories, only the wardens and fire watchers were expected to leave the safety of shelter should a situation arise. The presence of observation loops and the minimum of comforts in the air-raid shelters at COD Bicester indicate a different working arrangement for the military. Due to the strategic importance of the depot, those seeking refuge were not expected to linger in the shelter longer than necessary. The external situation would have been monitored and the moment that the bombing had passed, the workforce was expected to return to their work, even before the 'All Clear' had sounded. If the situation warranted it, all of the staff taking cover would also have been expected to leave the shelter during an air raid to attend to any problems that may have developed outside. The rare survival of a closely packed group of air-raid shelters in context with the building served, gives the shelters at Graven Hill considerable significance.

The Central Ordnance Depot Bicester was the primary supply depot for both the British and the American armies on the build-up to and subsequent to the invasion of Europe, during the Second World War. The invasion of Europe by the Allies is one of the most significant events in modern history and could not have been achieved without the supporting role of COD Bicester. The provision of the Romney hut 'Bolero' store groups for the US army was an essential component of the American preparations for D-Day and the sustaining of the advance into Germany thereafter.

The depot played an important role in handling the return of weaponry and stores

from the Homeguard subsequent to their stand-down in 1944, and after VE Day, it was involved in the preparations for the invasion of Japan, which fortunately failed to materialise consequent to the use of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Immediately post war, it handled and stored large volumes of returned ordnance stores, and the empty accommodation, particularly in the 'Bolero' groups was used to house large numbers of German prisoners of war who were returned to the United Kingdom from Canada and the United States of America. The prisoners undertook a wide variety of agricultural and reconstruction work, filling an acute labour shortage, pending the return to civilian life of the conscripts from the armed forces. The majority of the prisoners were finally repatriated by the British during 1947, having taken part in a de-nazification process.

As a whole, the Central Ordnance Depot Bicester is a historically and functionally significant complex. It can be considered as the mid-20th century equivalent to the historic 19th century ordnance depot at Weedon Bec, Northamptonshire. It functions both as a large-capacity store and as a high-volume distribution hub, using both rail and road transport systems. As such, it is the precursor of the modern logistics centres like the Daventry International Railfreight Terminal (DIRFT), near Rugby.

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Bicester

C.O.D. Graven Hill	1943	ABN/21
C.O.D. Arncott Camp Hall	1944	ABN/22
B.O.D. St. Georges Barracks	u/d	ABN/23
B.O.D. St. Davids Barracks	u/d	ABN/24

Photographic Recording from the P.S.A. Collection: Military

Bicester

P/G17392 OX. BICESTER ARNCOTT CAMP MESS		B
P/G09937 OX. BICESTER COD.	23 10 1964	B
P/G10336 OX. BICESTER COD.	28 07 1965	B
P/G10413 OX. BICESTER COD.	05 10 1965	B
P/G10503 OX. BICESTER COD.	23 11 1965	B
P/G10578 OX. BICESTER COD.	12 01 1966	B
P/G10605 OX. BICESTER COD.	14 02 1966	B
P/G10808 OX. BICESTER COD.	05 1966	B
P/G11006 OX. BICESTER COD.	28 06 1966	B
P/G11057 OX. BICESTER COD.	03 08 1966	B
P/G11065 OX. BICESTER COD.	03 08 1966	B
P/G11114 OX. BICESTER COD.	15 09 1966	B
P/G11176 OX. BICESTER COD.	13 10 1966	B
P/G11766 OX. BICESTER COD.	06 06 1967	B
P/G11915 OX. BICESTER COD.	15 08 1967	B
P/G12092 OX. BICESTER COD.	01 12 1967	B
P/G12641 OX. BICESTER COD.	08 08 1968	B
P/G12768 OX. BICESTER COD.	11 10 1968	B
P/G12941 OX. BICESTER COD.	08 01 1969	B
P/G13181 OX. BICESTER COD.	23 04 1969	B
P/G13328 OX. BICESTER COD. COMPUTER BUILDING	19 06 1969	B
P/G13678 OX. BICESTER COD. COMPUTER BUILDING	12 11 1969	B
P/G14172 OX. BICESTER COD. COMPUTER BUILDING	01 05 1970	B
P/G13803 OX. BICESTER COD. COMPUTER BUILDING	08 01 1970	B
P/G14495 OX. BICESTER COD. DRAINAGE	26 08 1970	B
P/G14634 OX. BICESTER COD. DRAINAGE / SEWERAGE	28 10 1970	B
P/G13934 OX. BICESTER COD. DRAINAGE / SEWERAGE	11 03 1970	B
P/G13714 OX. BICESTER COD. DRAINAGE PROGRESS	12 11 1969	B
P/G17364 OX. BICESTER COD. E SITE NEW BUILDING	27 09 1971	B
P/G14633 OX. BICESTER COD. ENGINE SHEDS	28 10 1970	B
P/G29901 OX. BICESTER COD. HAZARDOUS ITEMS STORE	10 01 1989	C
P/G30025 OX. BICESTER COD. HAZARDOUS ITEMS STORE	12 06 1989	C
P/G12463 OX. BICESTER COD. HQ. BUILDING	05 06 1968	B
P/G20760 OX. BICESTER COD. MQ.	04 10 1974	B
P/G23940 OX. BICESTER COD. MQ.	07 11 1978	C
P/G20311 OX. BICESTER COD. MQ. PROGRESS	29 05 1974	B

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P/G14360 OX. BICESTER COD. NEW BUILDING	03 07 1970 B
P/G11468 OX. BICESTER COD. OFFICERS MESS	31 01 1967 B
P/G11563 OX. BICESTER COD. OFFICERS MESS	01 03 1967 C
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P/G17177 OX. BICESTER COD. OIL TANK FARMS	04 08 1971 B
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P/G13504 OX. BICESTER COD. PHASE 14 PROGRESS	10 09 1969 B
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P/G09462 OX. BICESTER COD. REDEVELOPMENT	23 09 1963 B
P/G09308 OX. BICESTER COD. SITE	11 06 1963 B
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P/G14145 OX. BICESTER COD. WATER MAINS	23 04 1970 B
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P/G29793 OX. BICESTER REME. NEW ENGINE TEST HOUSE AND WORKSHOP	16 09 1988 C
P/G29792 OX. BICESTER REME. NEW ENGINE TEST HOUSE OPENING CEREMONY	15 09 1988 C

Vertical Aerial Photographs

<u>Sortie</u>	<u>Frame No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Library No.</u>
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13A/UK776	7 – 10	11-Feb-42	6426
	12 – 13		
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	69 – 71		
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US/7PH/GP/LOC60	1069 – 1073	07-Oct-43	6803
US/7PH/GP/LOC61	1036 – 1038		6805
	1040		
	1080 – 1085		
US/7PH/GP/LOC102	1001 – 1002	13-Dec-43	6820
US/7PH/GP/LOC174	1001	10-Feb-44	6866
US/7PH/GP/LOC234	1016	15-Mar-44	6904

US/7PH/GP/LOC267	1001 – 1009	FP	10-Apr-44	6914
	5001 – 5008	V		
	5011 – 5012	V		
	5028 – 5035	V		
	5038 – 5045	V		
US/7GR/LOC331	8035 – 8038		07-May-44	8200
	8053 – 8056			
US/7PH/GP/LOC326	8015 – 8020		30-Apr-44	8207
US/7GR/LOC389	3049 – 3056		13-Aug-44	8221
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	4064 – 4071			
	7026 – 7029			
	7033 – 7037			
	8013 – 8015			
	8017 – 8019			
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	4153 – 4158			
	4319 – 4319			
CPE/UK/2008	4118 – 4130		16-Apr-47	601
CPE/UK/2013	3200 – 3203		16-Apr-47	603
	3219 – 3220			
	4216 – 4219			
	4235 – 4239			
CPE/UK/2159	3079 – 3080		13-Jun-47	680
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	RS 4117 – 4121			
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540/360	5112 – 5114		12-Jun-50	3227
540/402	5010 – 5011		05-Aug-50	3210
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	4042 – 4085			
58/584	5059 – 5062		11-Oct-50	3280
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58/860		5004 – 5005	25-Apr-52	3551
82/983		23	11-Aug-54	8134
82/1005	F41	71 – 78	31-Aug-54	3993
	F44	171 – 179		
540/1400	F21	141 – 146	01-Sep-54	1563
	F22	141 – 146		
		155 – 161		
82/1201		72 – 75	01-Jan-55	8041
58/2153	F22	58 – 67	29-Apr-57	1776
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58/2236	V	10 – 11	02-Aug-57	399-
58/2293	F21	4 – 7	15-Oct-57	1790
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	F22	22 - 24		
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543/673	F41	14 – 18	24-Aug-59	2114
	F42	12 – 17		
	F43	12 – 15		
	F44	13 – 15		
58/4129		1 – 2	07-Feb-61	2010
FSL/6125		8042 – 8049	01-Jun-61	1118A
		9057 – 9064		
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		11096 – 11100		
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58/4627	F41	375 – 383	16-Aug-61	2195
	F41	389 – 397		
	F42	380 – 385		
	F42	389 – 397		
	F43	380 – 384		
	F43	388 – 396		
	F44	382 – 385		
	V	67 - 72		
58/4646	F41	215 – 217	28-Aug-61	2204
	F42	215 – 217		
OS/66042		9 – 15	29-Apr-66	11626
		18 – 23		
		37 – 43		
		50 – 55		
		71 – 76		
		89 – 94		
FSL/GLC/6631/3		320 – 322	30-May-66	2294

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Part B: Recommendations

Recommendations for further recording, research or investigation:

A full historical record and inventory of D and E Sites should be made prior to their development (see below), including sourcing and archiving of original site and building drawings. Data might be presented as a 'Characterisation' type study to present spatial information showing development against functional relationships.

If building drawings and site plans remain, whether on site or elsewhere, these should be evaluated and deposited in a publically accessible archive. If no original design drawings can be traced of the surface air-raid shelters, the best example in the group associated with D2 should be selected and a full measured survey (plan, end and side elevations, cross and short sections) be undertaken to English Heritage Recording Level 3.

A low-level oblique aerial photographic recording of the complex should be undertaken by English Heritage's aerial photography unit.

A photographic record to English Heritage Recording Level 1 should be made of the whole site. Certain buildings – D2, D3, D7, D9, E1, E2, E5, E14, E15, the Garrison Theatre and the Ordnance Support Unit complex - should be recorded to English Heritage Recording Level 2, to include interior photographs. Preferably the interior photographs should be taken while these buildings are still in use to aid future understanding, and should include views showing construction details. Attention should also be given to the recording of any graffiti and painted signage.

There is considerable scope for further historical documentary research work to be carried out on the operation of the COD, and the PoW Camps within the Bolero complex in D Site. The War Diaries held at the National Archives, Kew, that are listed in the '*References to further sources of information*' section of this template have not been examined as yet.

There may also be value in undertaking research in local authority records, the Historic Environment Record, and newspaper archives.

Any reports should be made publicly available through the local Historic Environment Record and the National Monuments Record.

Research is necessary to establish the function, significance, and rarity of the two designs of concrete 'shell roof' structures used at Graven Hill – Buildings E4, E5, and D10. N.B A small number of similar structures can be found at the Arccott Hill Depot.

Consideration also needs to be given to whether or not the depot was provided with anti-aircraft defences and a bombing decoy, and if so whether any features remain extant that have not been recognized.

Heritage assets which merit consideration for designation:

'It is recommended that English Heritage's Designation Department assess for national designation the group of six surface air-raid shelters situated to the north east of and associated with Storage Hangar – Building D2.

Nationally air-raid shelters as a class of building are severely at risk due to development of 'Brown-field' sites. Groups of air-raid shelters are particularly rare; consequently, any complete group surviving in context with the building they served should be considered as nationally significant. Shelter groups do survive elsewhere at hospitals and industrial complexes, but in general they are degraded due to the partial loss of individual structures, their poor condition, and lack of context.

The relationship and significance of Storage Hangar Building D2 to the shelters should be highlighted in, or considered as part of the assessment of the shelter group to maintain the setting and historical context. The six free-standing surface shelters and the two attached to D2 would indicate that the workforce in this building was substantial, as each shelter was capable of holding 30 to 50 persons. The shelters allocation associated with D2 at Graven Hill was specific to the numbers of staff of that particular building.

Although a number of individual or reduced groups of air-raid shelters still exist elsewhere across COD Bicester, the only similarly complete group of shelters are associated with Storage Hangar C1 and B1; however, these shelters are in much poorer condition and have therefore been discounted for the purposes of a designation assessment. Similar provision of shelters once existed with Buildings A1, B1, C1, C2, C32 (formerly C6), D1, and D3, but the majority have now been degraded or removed.

Recommendations for further management or planning guidance:

Any future development of D & E Sites, Graven Hill, Central Ordnance Depot Bicester should take into account the historic resonance the site has within the local community. The Bicester Military Railway is one of the most extensive internal rail systems in the British Isles and is considered as being highly significant by railway enthusiasts; consequently, its presence within any of the areas to be redeveloped should be considered with care in any master-planning.

Part C: Background information

Date(s) of site visits(s): 25 July 2011 21 November 2011	Attended by: Roger J C Thomas Roger J C Thomas, and Will Holborow
Record author: Roger J C Thomas	Date: 23 December 2011
Amended by: Jeremy Lake Will Holborow Wayne Cocroft	Date: 28 October, 21 December 2011 15 December 2011 16 December 2011
Validation by:	Date:

Notes:

- (1) Designated heritage assets are defined in PPS5 as 'World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area'
- (2) Heritage Assets are defined in PPS5 as 'A building monument, site, place, area or landscape positively identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions'. Undesignated heritage assets include many archaeological assets (see PPS5 HE9.6) and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).
- (3) See *Conservation Principles* (English Heritage, 2008) which describes a range of heritage values, arranged in four groups: evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal.



[Home](#) [Development Plans](#) [Planning Application](#) [News](#) [Community Consultation](#)

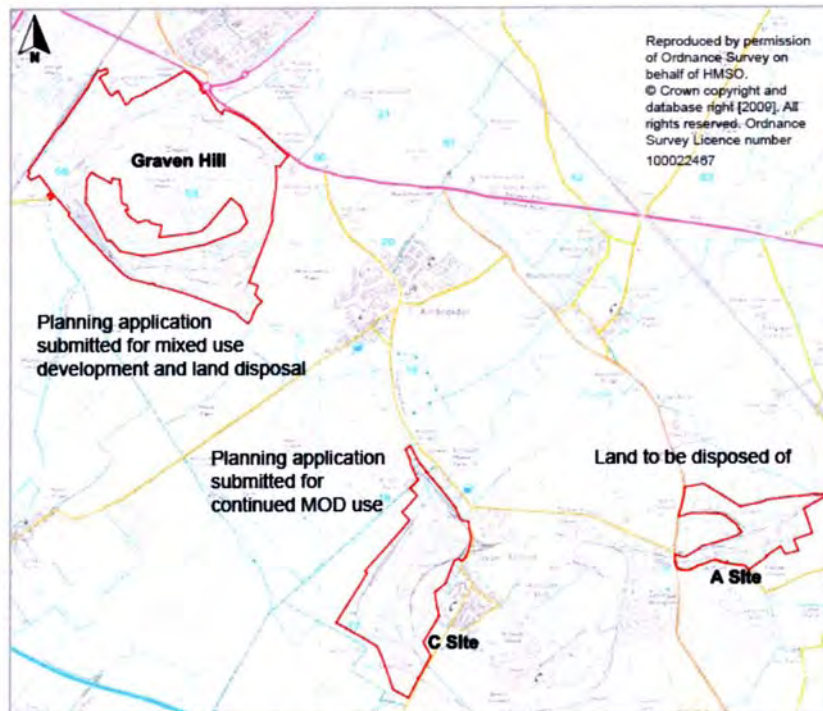
This website provides information on proposals for redevelopment of Ministry of Defence land at Bicester.

The website contains reports, working plans and copies of consultation material and feedback over the last year, plus the final masterplan for which an outline planning application has been made.

About the Proposed Development

The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) is responsible for Ministry of Defence (MOD) property and land holdings. DIO was formed on 1 April 2011 when the former Defence Estates (DE) organisation was brought together with other property and infrastructure functions within the department to form a single organisation. DIO manages the MOD's property infrastructure and ensures strategic management of the Defence estate as a whole.

The plans in Bicester arise due to the need for a more efficient approach to equipment storage & distribution within the MOD, which includes the activities that currently occupy A and C sites and D and E sites at Graven Hill at Bicester and other sites across the UK. The proposed scheme enables defence logistics support to be delivered to the front line more efficiently, whilst reducing the overall cost of Defence. St George's Barracks & St David's Barracks and their occupying units are not affected under these proposals. The plans relating to the Royal School of Military Engineering (RSME) and the relocation of the Defence Explosive Ordnance Disposal School onto B site are proceeding as planned.



Whilst the scheme is a departure from the Local Plan the benefits of the scheme are readily apparent and it should not be seen as a challenge, rather an opportunity:

- C site provides potential for the MOD to locate its logistics hub at the heart of its distribution network, using the value of surplus land to fund the transformation of the logistics function. This opportunity is well understood by the MOD with good connections to RAF Brize Norton and Marchwood Military Port in Southampton, and not only retains existing jobs but increases the number employed providing logistics support to the military by 200. However, there must be a 'Plan B'; the process of engaging a logistics provider, being conducted in parallel to this application, requires that any other potential locations proposed by bidders are considered and these will provide the necessary contingency should planning consent not be forthcoming.
- Graven Hill provides in its own right a flexible space for employment of 2,070 people. With buildings already in existence, there is scope for local business to expand and new business to move in without prohibitive cost of development, meaning that growth can begin from the outset. A clustering effect of the Defence Gateway is often seen around key MOD sites and initial market interest indicates that this is likely to be replicated here. Therefore the route to growth provided by this scheme is clear. The additional jobs will drive demand in the housing market not previously anticipated in the draft Core Strategy. The residential part of the scheme will increase Bicester's desirability as a residential location, as work-life balance is enshrined in the design with the strong links between established woodland, open space, people's homes & work, and onto the railway station & town centre. Protection of endangered species will see the ecological heritage of the site preserved and enhanced for the future.

DIO has sought to prepare a scheme that harnesses opportunities locally, regionally and nationally.

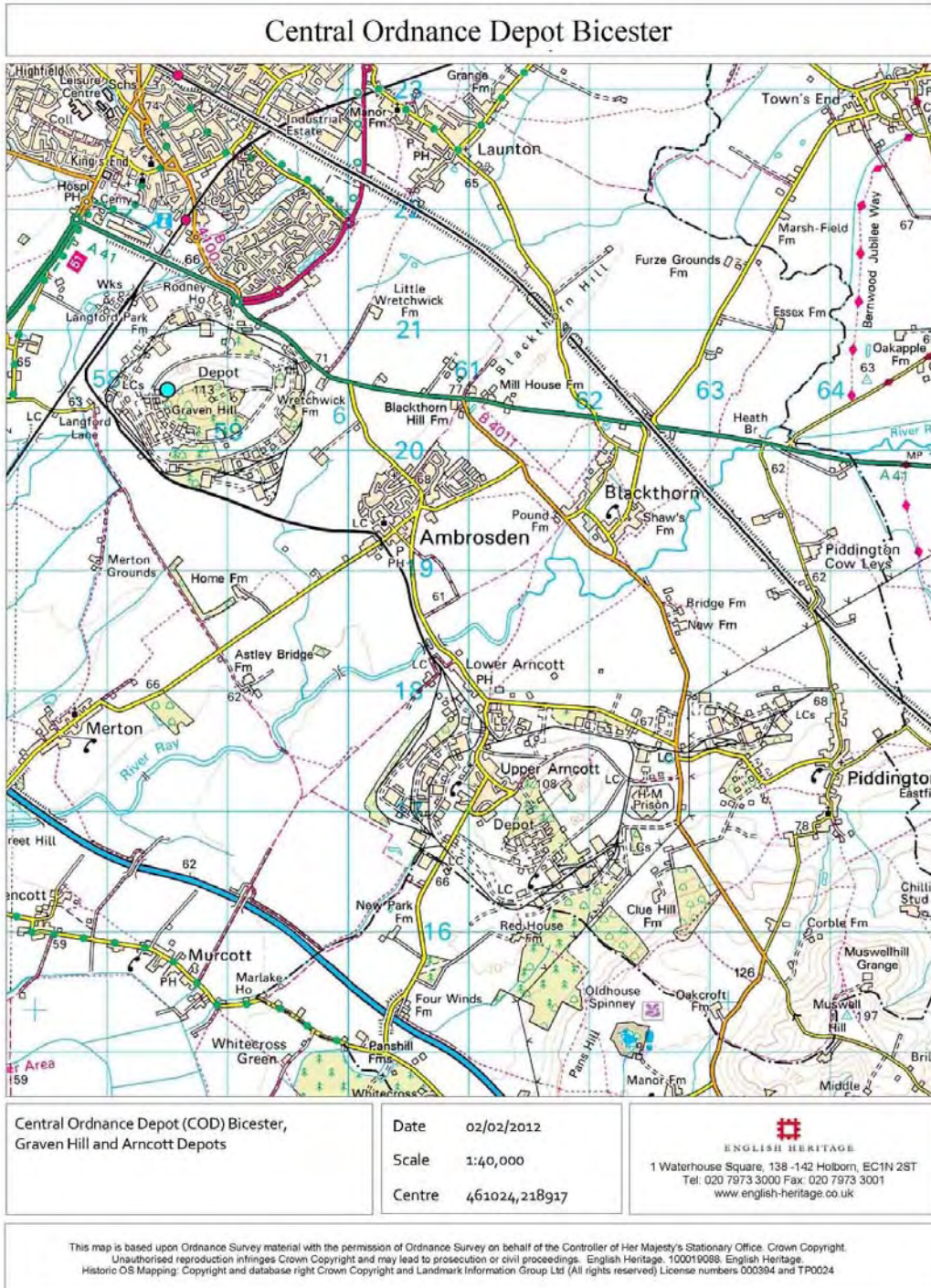
A planning application has been progressed ahead of the adoption of the draft Core Strategy as there is no indication of when the Examination in Public will take place and only when an application is submitted can it be properly considered with the benefit of all the evidence.

Since the first consultation event in September 2010 the decision has been made not to include A site in the planning application for the rationalisation of the estate. However, this site shall be considered in the overall masterplan for the estate rationalisation, which shall form part of the supporting documentation to the planning application.

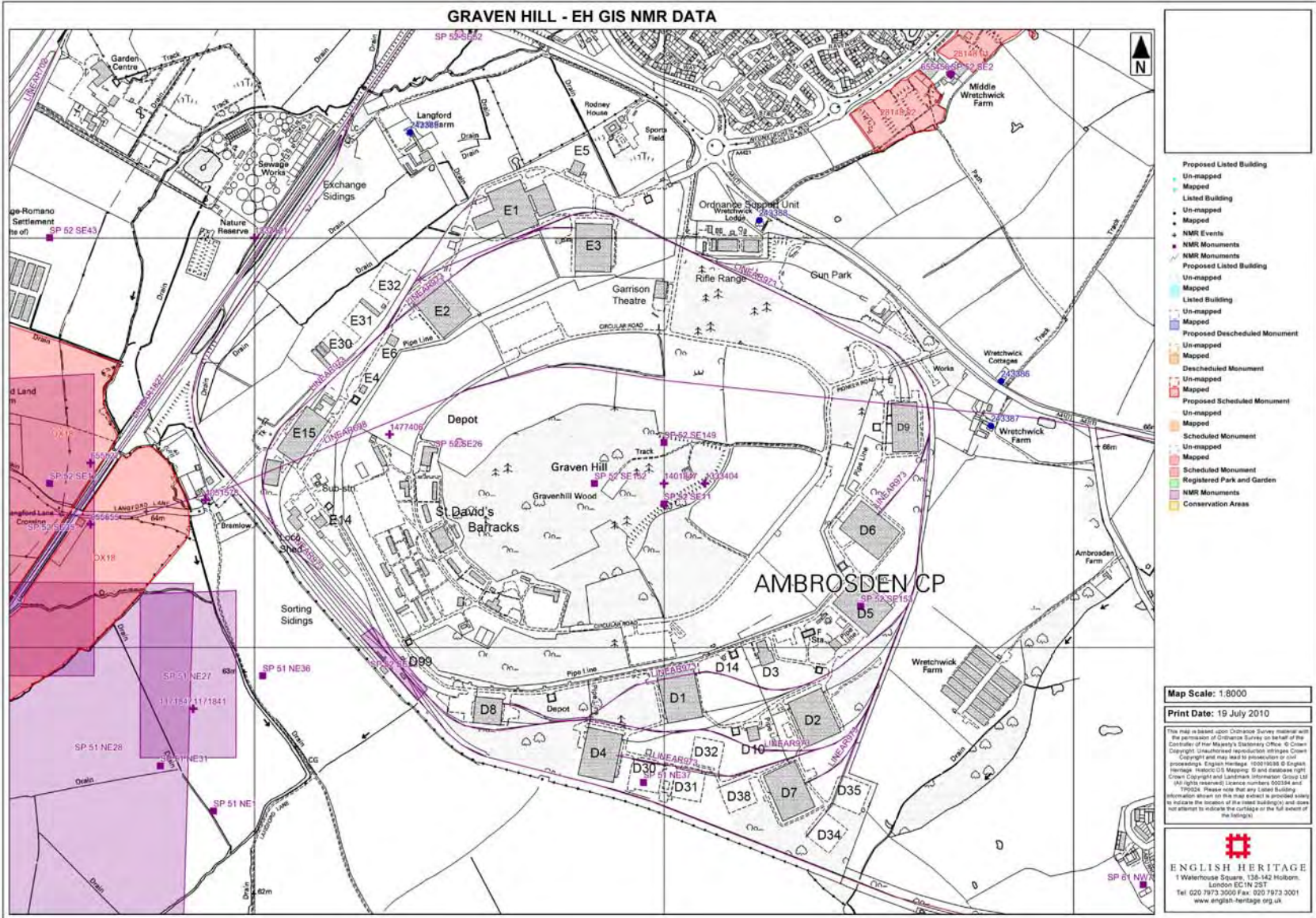
[Click here for more information on the plans.](#)

DIO submitted a planning application to Cherwell District Council for the redevelopment of Graven Hill and C site on 30th September 2011. Supporting documentation is available for inspection via Cherwell District Council's Online Planning Application Website - **PublicAccess** (Application Reference 11/01494/OUT) - or the documents can be **accessed directly via this link**.

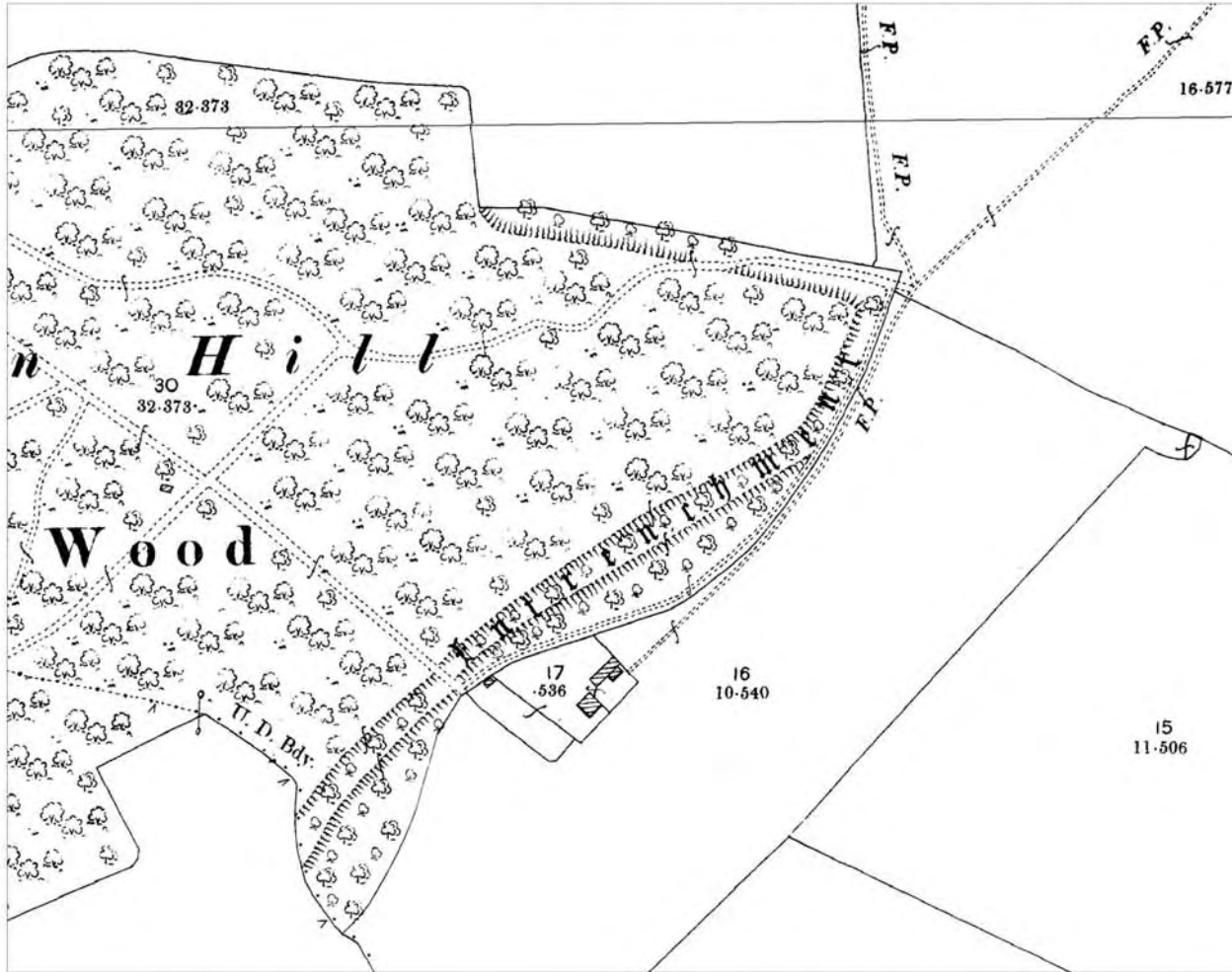
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Central Ordnance Depot Bicester, Graven Hill and Arcnott Depots



Graven Hill 1:2500 Epoch 2 1899




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Storage Hangar E3, east elevation showing attached offices, ablutions, and air-raid shelters.



Storage Hangar E1, showing rail access and the attached western range.



Storage Hangar E1, west range integral air-raid shelter, NB concrete roof line & blast shutters



Boiler House E14 and associated coal and ash handling equipment



Graven Hill Platform built of up-turned concrete sleepers



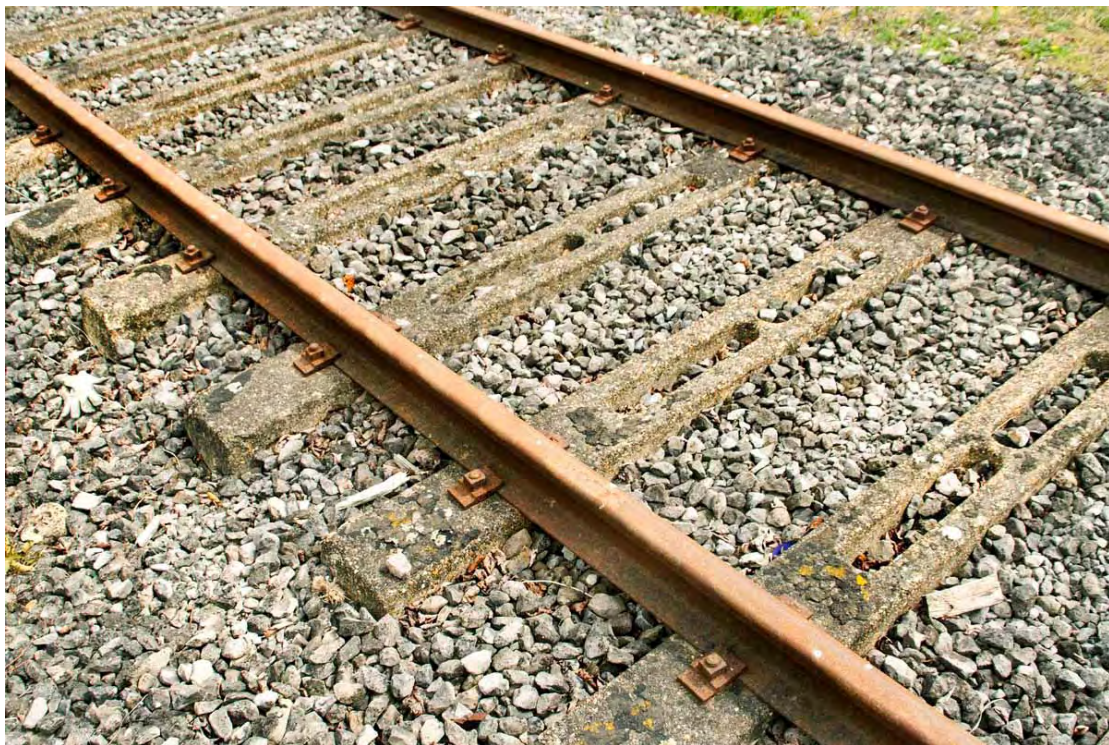
Westacott Platform, partially dismantled



Railway Headquarters D99.



'A' Blockpost later known as Graven Hill Signal Box



D Site, typical example of track laid on concrete sleepers using bearing plates and dog-spikes



Fire Section D14, Turner's curved asbestos cement hut fire-pump garage and associated latrine block.



Training Block D3, NB concrete roof line of the integral air-raid shelter & steel blast shutters



Storage Hangar D6, NB tall roof to allow the use of travelling cranes to lift heavy ordnance



Storage Hangar D2



Air-raid shelter group associated with storage hangar D2



Storage Hangar D9, north elevation, NB tall roof line, rail access, and attached air-raid shelter



Storage Shed D10, NB high-set windows and reinforced concrete shell roof



Ordnance Support Unit, Romney hut storage sheds



Garrison Theatre



Rodney House social club

Appendix B Photographs

1 Page



Plate 1: Air Raid Shelters at Building D2



Plate 2: Buildings C30 and C31



Plate 3: Break Hut at Buildings C30 and C31



Plate 4: Methodist Chapel, Upper Arcott