



PLANNING STATEMENT

Land to the west of Chilgrove Drive, North of Camp Road and adjoining former RAF Upper Heyford, Upper Heyford, incorporating former MOD gymnasium

EP Barrus Ltd

November 2014

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 DP9 Ltd has been instructed by EP Barrus Ltd to submit an application for a new purpose built facility, comprising new warehouse / manufacturing premises / offices and training school (Class B1/2/8).
- 1.2 A pre-application meeting with Planning Officers at Cherwell took place on 15th July 2014 to discuss the proposal, and the final design and detailed justification for the proposal set out in the accompanying documents respond to feedback from the Council.
- 1.3 This document provides a description of the proposals and evaluation of the development proposed. A summary of relevant national, regional and local planning policy is provided, together with an assessment of the proposals against these policies. This statement should be read and considered in conjunction with the following documents submitted in support of the application:

Document	Prepared By
Existing/Proposed floor plans	Lyons Sleeman Hoare
Existing/Proposed elevation plans	Lyons Sleeman Hoare
Design and Access Statement	Lyons Sleeman Hoare
Transport Statement	Royal Haskoning
Acoustic Report	Resound Consulting
Ecology Assessment	Ecology & Habitat Management Ltd
Energy Assessment	Method Consulting
BREEAM Pre-Assessment	Method Consulting
Flood Risk Assessment	Clarkebond
Ground Investigation Report	Clarkebond
Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment	Hyland Edgar Driver
Need Assessment	DP9

- 1.4 This Statement is structured as follows; Section Two considers the existing site and surrounding area, and the relevant planning history; Section Three describes the development proposal; Section Four sets out a summary of relevant national, regional and local planning policy; Section Five assesses the proposals against the provisions of the Development Plan and other planning policy and material considerations; and Section Six draws together the Statement into a series of conclusions.

2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

Site and Surrounding Area

- 2.1 The site is located at the junction of Camp Road and Chilgrove Drive, on the edge of the former RAF Upper Heyford airbase. The existing site is 5.7 hectares that is currently lying fallow. The southern part of the site was previously used as a gymnasium for the former air base.
- 2.2 The adopted and emerging Local Plan is silent on the existing use of the site, and there is no specific policy allocation.
- 2.3 The site lies directly adjacent to the former RAF Upper Heyford airbase to the north west; Chilgrove Drive to the east; Camp Road to the south with mobile homes plot beyond; and to the west is another field that has now been identified for residential use in the emerging Local Plan, with existing residential properties beyond.
- 2.4 Having regard to its historical association with the air base, being the site of the former MOD gymnasium; the current and evolving extended policy boundary; and the practical effect of Camp Road and Chilgrove Drive as defining a logical boundary, the site should fall within the settlement boundary of Upper Heyford.

Planning History

- 2.5 We have undertaken a desk top planning history for the site. This identifies no recent planning history, but records demonstrate that an MOD gymnasium was located on the southern part of the site.
- 2.6 There have been a number of applications for the redevelopment of the adjacent former RAF Upper Heyford air base over the last 10 years. These culminated in a 2010 outline application for the provision of up to 1,075 residential dwellings and 26,704 of B1, B2 and B8 uses, with other assorted uses also approved.
- 2.7 The principle of major development at Upper Heyford is therefore established.

3.0 APPLICATION PROPOSAL

3.1 This application is for the creation of a new purpose built facility for Barrus, comprising:-

'The erection of 22,000 sq. m of Class B1, B2, and B8 floorspace, comprising office and training school, manufacturing, storage and distribution, and warehouse buildings with associated service yard and access, with some matters reserved'

3.2 The development will be undertaken in two phases, as follows:-

Phase 1

- 9,844 sq. m warehouse
- Service yard for loading and unloading of HGVs and parking provision for six cars, 4 HGV lorries, 8 trailers and a bicycle shelter
- New vehicular access at northern end of site off Chilgrove Drive
- Improved visibility splays onto Camp Road
- New landscaping treatment around the boundary of the site

Phase 2

- 9,137 sq. m manufacturing and storage facility
- 3,000 sq. m two-storey office and training school
- New vehicular parking area incorporating car parking, motorcycle spaces and a bicycle shelter.
- New vehicular access onto Camp Road.

Land Uses

3.3 The proposal is for a bespoke, purpose built facility comprising a mix of Class B1, B2 and B8 uses in a single site, tailored to meet the existing and future requirements of Barrus. The Upper Heyford area already has a significant employment area within the former RAF air base, and the Council are looking to expand this further, so the use will be in keeping with the surroundings.

Design

- 3.4 The proposals have been carefully designed to be compatible with the neighbouring Conservation Area and the setting. The Design & Access Statement, prepared by Lyons Sleeman Hoare, explains the design process and the proposals for the site, and how they have been evolved to meet the specific requirements of Barrus.
- 3.5 The proposal will be undertaken in two phases, with the first phase including a single span industrial building, measuring 9,844 sq. m. This will be constructed of insulated ribbed vertical plastisol coated cladding panels in a two tone green colour, to blend in with the surroundings. There will also be an insulated roof covering.
- 3.6 Phase 2 will comprise a 9,137 sq. m production facility, which will house the relocated facilities from the existing Bicester site. This is likely to be the same materials and colours, although the details of the elevational treatment will be dealt with at a later stage.
- 3.7 A further two-storey building will be constructed to the south of the production facility which will comprise the offices and a training school, measuring 3,000 sq. m. Again the elevational treatment will be dealt with by the submission of Reserved Matters at a later stage.

Landscaping

- 3.8 Given the site is located on the edge of a settlement boundary and its proximity to the Upper Heyford Conservation Area, a Landscaping and Visual Impact Assessment has been prepared to address the impact of the proposal on the surroundings.
- 3.9 This includes significant landscaping proposals around the entire boundary of the site to screen the near and distant views of the site, and improve the views into and out of the area.

Parking

- 3.10 The Phase 1 proposal includes car parking provision within the service yard for six cars and 4 HGV lorries and 8 trailers. The proposal also includes a bicycle shelter to accommodate staff that wish to cycle to work.

- 3.11 The Phase 2 proposals will provide car, motorcycle and bicycle parking for staff and visitors, which will be accessed off Camp Road.

Sustainability

- 3.12 The proposal incorporates rainwater storage tanks, which will reuse the collected water within the development. Photovoltaic panels will also be incorporated on the boundary of the service yard at the north of the site, which is in accordance with the policy requirements for minimising greenhouse emissions.

Meetings with Cherwell District Council (CDC)

- 3.13 A meeting was held with officers to discuss the proposals. Feedback received during the meeting was positive, and officers confirmed the Council would be keen to see Barrus remain and expand within Cherwell, and not to lose a significant local employer from the district. In order to support the proposals, officers advised that it would be necessary to demonstrate a clear need for the proposals, and to demonstrate that there are no existing and proposed employment sites which are suitable or available to accommodate these needs. The feedback received from CDC can be summarised as follows:

- Robust report justifying why existing employment allocation sites are not suitable for the proposal;
- Assessing any landscaping or visual impact of the proposal on the existing surroundings;
- The assessment of existing and proposed vehicular movements should be justified within the transport statement.

- 3.14 Barrus has commissioned extensive analysis to address these and all other relevant planning issues, and the accompanying Need Assessment explains the Company's urgent need for purpose built space and their efforts over the last four years to meet them in Cherwell, culminating in their purchase of an option for the application site. This demonstrates a compelling case, and an exceptional set of circumstances which justify the grant of planning permission for this site.

4.0 PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

4.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) states that the determination of planning applications should be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this instance, the Local Plan was adopted in November 1996, and so is no longer consistent with the adopted National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

4.2 Paragraph 214 and 215 of the NPPF state that *For 12 months from the day of publication, decision-takers may continue to give full weight to relevant policies adopted since 2004, even if there is a limited degree of conflict with this Framework.* The Adopted Development Plan comprises the Saved Policies of the 1996 Local Plan, and Saved Policy H2 of the Oxford Structure Plan, but both are out of date.

Therefore, at this stage there is no up to date development plan, and in these circumstances, the key policy considerations are set out in the NPPF.

National Policy

4.3 National planning policy is set out in the NPPF, adopted on 27 March 2012 which replaces all previous Planning Policy Statements and Guidance Notes. In respect of the proposed development, the NPPF therefore covers conservation and heritage, transport and sustainability.

4.4 At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision making, the NPPF states that this means:

- *Approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and*
- *Where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies out-of-date, granting permission unless:*
 - *Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or*
 - *Specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.*

- 4.5 There are no specific policies in the framework which suggest that development on the site should be restricted. Specifically, it is not Green Belt, AONB, or SSSI and contains no designated heritage assets, although it adjoins a Conservation Area. As such, there is a clear presumption in favour of development. Within this context, any application should be considered positively, subject to other material considerations.
- 4.6 In this case, the need to secure the viable long term future of one of the Districts key employers, and underpin local employment which supports the sustainable settlement at Upper Heyford, are additional important material considerations.
- 4.7 The NPPF focuses on the delivery of sustainable development. In particular, the core planning principles include, amongst others, to “*drive and support development*”. In determining planning applications, the NPPF acknowledges that the planning system is plan-led, and that Local Plans should be the starting point for the determination of any planning applications.
- 4.8 In terms of employment the NPPF states that under paragraph 18, the Government is committed to securing economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity, building on the country’s inherent strengths, and to meeting the twin challenges of global competition and of a low carbon future.
- 4.9 It goes on to state that investment in business should not be over-burdened by the combined requirements of planning policy expectations. Planning policies should seek to address potential barriers to investment, including a poor environment or any lack of infrastructure, services or housing. Paragraph 57 identifies the importance of achieving high quality and inclusive design, including individual buildings and private spaces.
- 4.10 In terms of conservation and heritage the NPPF states that under paragraph 131, local planning authorities should take account of, amongst other issues, the desirability of new development to make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Paragraph 137 states that local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably.

- 4.11 In these circumstances, in the absence of any up to date development plan policy restricting development on the site, there is a clear presumption in favour of planning permission, subject to other material considerations. The need to support the growth of an important local employer, and safeguard their long term future in the District, and the absence of any other more suitable, viable and available opportunities are both important material considerations in support of the proposals.

The Development Plan

- 4.12 The most recent Adopted Development Plan comprises the Saved Policies of the 1996 Local Plan, and Saved Policy H2 of the Oxford Structure Plan. However, both are materially out of date.
- 4.13 Cherwell has also produced the ‘Non-Statutory Cherwell Plan 2011 (December 2004)’ which was intended to review and update the 1996 Local Plan, but as set out at paragraph 4.1 above, these are no longer consistent with the adopted NPPF.

Oxfordshire Structure Plan (2011)

- 4.14 Policy H2 ‘Upper Heyford’ is the only policy that remains extant, pending the adoption of the Cherwell Local Plan. It states

“Land at RAF Upper Heyford will provide for a new settlement of a maximum of about 1000 dwellings and necessary supporting infrastructure, including a primary school and appropriate community, recreational and employment opportunities, as a means of enabling environmental improvements and the heritage interest of the site as a military base with Cold War associations to be conserved, compatible with achieving a satisfactory living environment”

Cherwell Local Plan (1996) Saved Policies

- 4.15 Although the plan is out of date, we have identified the following policies that have been saved.
- 4.16 Policy EMP4 ‘Employment generating development in the rural areas’ states that proposals for employment generating uses will normally be permitted in rural areas if it is within or adjoining settlements, for a minor extension to an existing acceptable employment site.

- 4.17 Policy C28 'Layout, design and external appearance of new development' states that control will be exercised on all new development to ensure that layout, design and external appearance are sympathetic to the character of the urban or rural context.
- 4.18 Policy C33 'Protection of important gaps of undeveloped land' states the Council will seek to protect any undeveloped gap of land which is important in preserving the character of a loose-knit settlement structure.
- 4.19 Policy ENV12 'Development on contaminated land' sets out the criteria for permitting development on land which is suspected to be contaminated.

Non-Statutory Cherwell Plan (2004)

- 4.20 This Plan is not part of the statutory development plan but is approved as an interim planning policy for development control purposes. However, as this plan is 10 years old, it is also materially out of date.
- 4.21 Chapter 2 of the Plan relates to Upper Heyford and acknowledges the need to protect the heritage significance of the former RAF air base. In order to do this, the Plan sets out four policies that seek to encourage residential and employment uses into the area, subject to including landscaping and environmental improvements.
- 4.22 Policy UH3 states that development will only be approved if it can be demonstrated that HGV movements on the surrounding rural road network would not compromise the safety of road users or the quality of the rural environment.
- 4.23 Policy TR3 states that Transport Assessments and Travel Plans should accompany applications that are likely to generate significant levels of traffic.
- 4.24 Policy EN1 states that the Council will take into account the likely impact of development on the natural and built environment and will seek to enhance the environment wherever possible.
- 4.25 Policy EN34 seeks to conserve and enhance the character and appearance of the landscape through the control of development.
- 4.26 Chapter 10 sets out the design requirements for developments, including the requirement to be of high quality and compatible with its surroundings.

Emerging Local Plan 2006 – 2031

- 4.27 The emerging Local Plan was originally submitted for Examination on 31st January 2014. The Examination was suspended in June 2014 as major changes were required in respect of housing matters. Focused Modifications to the Local Plan were published in October and consulted on, and have now been submitted to the Secretary of State. This document is therefore a material consideration as it provides Cherwell's most up to date policies, but only attracts limited weight given it has yet to be subjected to EIP.
- 4.28 Paragraph B.13 states that 41% of employment in the District is located in Banbury, 20% in Bicester, 14% in Kidlington and 25% in the rural areas. Overall the levels of economic activity are high, with 82% of the working age population economically active. Upper Heyford is a former RAF base which has consent for over 1,000 dwellings (including the existing homes) but which also has just under 1,000 jobs already located within the existing buildings with more to come as part of the sites redevelopment.
- 4.29 As such it is one of the larger employment locations within Cherwell and provides a good range of jobs and premises from engineering and scientific activities to specialist storage activities. The provision of new local employment opportunities in this area, as part of a sustainable new settlement, is supported in principle. While the site is located on the edge of the policy area as currently defined, it would form a natural extension of the area, establishing a defensible boundary to the new settlement. The Focussed Modifications include an extension to the Policy Area to include land immediately to the West of the application site. The application site would represent a more logical rounding off to this area.
- 4.30 Paragraph B.21 echoes the NPPF by stating the provision of a sufficient number and variety of available employment sites and the formation of planning policies which allow employment generating development to come forward in sustainable locations is critical to enabling existing companies to grow and to provide for new company formation. Employment sites are also needed in order to respond to inward investment including the planned electrification of the railway, new routes and stations in the District.

4.31 Paragraph B.29 identifies the types of employment development the District wants to attract and will concentrate on:

- Advanced manufacturing/high performance engineering
- The Green Economy
- Innovation, research and development
- Retailing
- Consumer services

Supporting the continued growth of Barrus within the District clearly accords with this objective.

4.32 Paragraph B.42 seeks to ensure employment is located in sustainable locations, to avoid problems such as traffic on rural roads and commuting, employment development in the rural areas will be limited. This accords with the Council's strategy for focusing new housing development at Banbury and Bicester, ensuring housing and employment are located in the same place.

4.33 Emerging Policy SLE 1 'Employment Development' provides criteria for three different employment issues. The first provides criteria for the loss of employment land for alternative uses, and is therefore not of relevance for our proposal. The second looks at sites within Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington, and so is also not of relevance to our proposal.

4.34 The final criteria within SLE 1 relate to employment within rural areas. The modifications to the draft policy states that new employment proposals within rural areas on non-allocated sites will be supported if they meet the following criteria:

- *They will be outside of the Green Belt, unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated.*
- *Sufficient justification is provided to demonstrate why the development should be located in the rural area on a non-allocated site.*
- *They will be designed to very high standards using sustainable construction, and be of an appropriate scale and respect the character of villages and the surroundings.*

- *They will be small scale unless it can be demonstrated that there will be no significant adverse impacts on the character of a village or surrounding environment.*
 - *The proposal and any associated employment activities can be carried out without undue detriment to residential amenity, the highway network, village character and its setting, the appearance and character of the landscape and the environment generally including on any designated buildings or features (or on any non-designated buildings or features of local importance).*
 - *The proposal will not give rise to excessive or inappropriate traffic and will wherever possible contribute to the general aim of reducing the need to travel by private car.*
 - *There are no suitable available plots or premises within existing nearby employment sites in the rural areas.*
- 4.35 Policy SLE 1 goes on to state that justification for employment development on new sites in the rural areas will need to be provided. This should include demonstrating a need for and benefits of employment in the particular location proposed and explaining why the proposed development should not be located at the towns, close to the proposed labour supply.
- 4.36 Policy BSC 5 ‘Area Renewal’ seeks to support area renewal proposals that direct investment to improve the physical and community fabric of the District, to improve social outcomes, improve health and well-being, educational attainment and employment outcomes.
- 4.37 Policy ESD 1 ‘Mitigating and adapting to climate change’, which seeks to mitigate the impact of development on the district.
- 4.38 Policy ESD 2 ‘Energy Hierarchy and allowable solutions’ sets out how the Council will seek to reduce carbon emissions.
- 4.39 Policy ESD 3 ‘Sustainable construction’ sets out the requirement for all non-residential development to achieve a BREEAM rating of ‘Very Good’ and all development should reflect high quality design.

- 4.40 Policy ESD 4 ‘Decentralised energy systems’ seeks to encourage decentralised heating or heating and power systems in all new developments.
- 4.41 Policy ESD 5 ‘Renewable Energy’ states that the Council supports renewable and low carbon energy provision wherever any adverse impacts can be addressed satisfactorily.
- 4.42 Policy ESD 6 ‘Sustainable Flood Risk Management’ sets out the requirement for Development proposals to be assessed according to the sequential approach and where necessary the exceptions test as set out in the NPPF. It goes on to state that Flood Risk Assessments should be prepared for any proposal within Flood Zone 1 if it is over 1 hectare.
- 4.43 Policy ESD 7 ‘Sustainable drainage systems’ states that all development will be required to use sustainable drainage systems (SUDS) for the management of surface water run-off.
- 4.44 Policy ESD 13 ‘Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement’ states that development will be expected to respect and enhance local landscape character, securing appropriate mitigation where damage to local landscape character cannot be avoided.
- 4.45 While Upper Heyford is not currently defined in draft Policy for Villages 2, it is clearly identified as a suitable location for significant employment uses, and the site forms a logical extension to the current draft policy area. The site is not within the Green Belt or any special protection area, and in the absence of an up to date adopted plan, there are no allocated employment sites and no clear justification for any policy preference between the draft allocations and the proposal site.
- 4.46 Policy ESD 15 ‘The urban-rural fringe’ states that *“Proposals for development on the edge of the built up area must be carefully designed and landscaped to soften the built edge of the development and assimilate it into the landscape by providing green infrastructure that will positively contribute to the rural setting of the towns. Existing important views of designated or attractive landscape features will need to be taken into account. Proposals will also be considered against the requirements of Policy ESD 13: Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement. In addition, green buffers as indicated on the Policies Maps will be maintained to:*

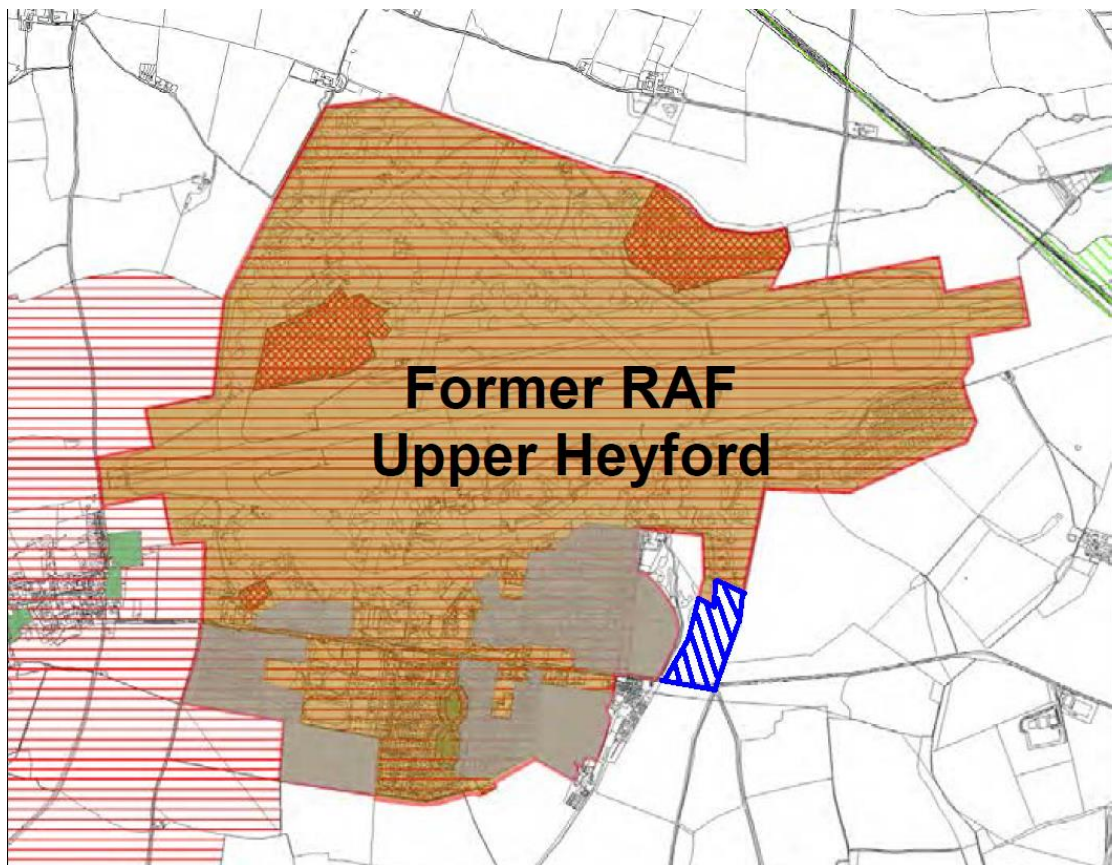
- *Maintain Banbury and Bicester’s distinctive identity and setting;*
- *Protect the separate identity and setting of neighbouring settlements which surround the two towns;*
- *Prevent coalescence and protect the gaps between the existing/planned edge of the towns and surrounding settlements;*
- *Protect the identity and setting of landscape and historic features of value that are important to the identity and setting of the two towns;*
- *Protect important views*

Development proposals within the green buffers will only be permitted if they would not conflict with these objectives.”

- 4.47 Policy ESD 16 ‘The character of the built and historic environment’ states that *“new development will be expected to complement and enhance the character of its context through sensitive siting, layout and high quality design. All new development will be required to meet high design standards. Where development is in the vicinity of any of the district’s distinctive natural or historic assets, delivering high quality design that complements the asset will be essential”*. It then goes on to provide specific criteria that new development should achieve.
- 4.48 Policy Villages 5 ‘Former RAF Upper Heyford’ states there is a requirement for approximately 120,000 sq. m of new employment floorspace within Class B1, B2 and B8 to accommodate 1,500 new jobs in the area as part of the redevelopment of the site to ensure it retains its heritage interest. While outside the policy area as currently defined, we consider the proposals will form a logical extension to the area, and contribute to the overall objective of creating a sustainable new settlement, subject of course to design and their effects on the appearance and setting of the conservation area.
- 4.49 The focused changes to the Local Plan recognise Upper Heyford as a proposed strategic site for new rural settlement and include the provision of 2,361 new homes; an increase of 1,601 from the submission plan. In recognition of the heritage and environmental constraints within the former air force base, the focused changes identify an area of land directly to the west of the proposed site, as an extension to the proposed settlement boundary.

4.50 Cherwell have accepted the principle of extending the settlement boundary, as shown by the grey areas on Map 1 below, to include the land directly adjacent to the application site. Therefore, we suggest that a more appropriate settlement boundary would be the road at Chilgrove Drive, instead of the suggested watercourse, which would provide a logical rounding off of the boundary, as is evident from Map 1 below, which shows the extended boundary hatched in blue.

Map 1: Proposed Upper Heyford Settlement Boundary



4.51 As set out above, given the Plan has not yet completed the Examination in Public, and is the subject of continued objections, it should be afforded little weight at this stage.

5.0 ASSESSMENT

5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, requires proposals to be determined in accordance the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This section assesses the proposals against the development plan and other relevant planning policy at national and local level, and confirms that the development plan is currently absent/silent and out of date, and as such there is a presumption in favour of the proposals; the proposal is in accordance with the emerging Development Plan, having regard to the exceptional circumstances of this case; and if the proposals were judged to not be fully in accordance with the emerging development plan, any non-compliance will be more than off-set by benefits of the proposal. In this section we consider:-

- The principle of the development;
- Design;
- Heritage, Landscape and Visual Impact;
- Flood Risk and Surface Water Runoff;
- Transport;
- Land contamination;
- Sustainability.

Principle of Development

5.2 There is strong support in national, regional and local planning policy for economic development in all forms, and a presumption in favour of development unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.3 The principle issues in this case are, first; whether there are any existing employment sites, or proposed allocations which are suitable, viable and available to meet the specific needs identified by Barrus in order to maintain and expand their presence in Cherwell; and second, if there are no existing or proposed employment allocations which are suitable, viable and currently available, are the application site and the specific proposals appropriate in all other respects.

5.4 The Need Assessment, prepared by DP9, sets out the specific criteria for Barrus operational requirements going forward, and assesses the existing and emerging

employment allocation sites against these criteria to ascertain whether any of these are suitable for the proposals. The assessment concludes that none of the six employment sites identified in the emerging local plan within the defined area of search are suitable, viable or available to Barrus to meet its immediate and long term needs. The Need Assessment also assesses the principle of employment use in this location, which concludes that the site is appropriate due to size, location and cost based on the company's requirements.

5.5 The Council has already accepted the principle of extending the Upper Heyford settlement boundary, by identifying the land adjacent to the application site for new housing development. Extending the boundary to Chilgrove Drive would provide a more logical settlement boundary, as is evident from the plan at paragraph 4.51 above. The current boundary, as proposed to be amended, appears arbitrary, and does not provide any compelling basis to differentiate between the application site and sites within the currently defined policy area.

5.6 The proposal would help the Council achieve its aims of increasing the employment provision to support Upper Heyford as a new settlement. In light of the increase in employment within the district, and the strengthening of employment provision within the new Upper Heyford settlement, the proposal will be in accordance with Policy H2 of the Structure Plan, Policy EMP4 of the adopted Local Plan (1996), Emerging Policies SLE 1, BSC 5, Villages 2 and Villages 5.

Design

5.7 The Design and Access Statement, prepared by Lyons Sleeman Hoare, accompanying this application sets out in detail the design and the materials proposed.

5.8 In line with adopted Local Plan policy C28, Chapter 10 of the non-statutory Plan and policy ESD 16 of the emerging Plan, the layout and design of the proposal for both Phase 1 warehouse, and the Phase 2 manufacturing and office units have been well designed to ensure a high quality working environment. The design of the buildings will also mirror the scale and form of the historic buildings on the former RAF air base.

- 5.9 The scale and massing of the proposal are in keeping with neighbouring hangar buildings, and as a consequence of the design, topography and proposed landscaping, the proposed buildings will not lead to any adverse impact on the landscape. The development will complement and enhance the character of the surroundings through quality design and landscaping.
- 5.10 The materials have been chosen for their functionality and to ensure the site is appropriate for the setting. The proposed buildings will be finished in tones of green, to blend in with the surroundings and reduce any impact on the existing landscape.

Heritage, Landscape and Visual Impact

- 5.11 The site lies adjacent to the Upper Heyford Conservation Area and the former RAF Upper Heyford air base is a historic site recognising the importance of the Cold War. As such and in line with the NPPF, adopted Local Plan policy C33, non-statutory Plan policies EN1 and EN34 and emerging Policy ESD 13, the impact of the proposed changes on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area have been taken into consideration in the proposed design.
- 5.12 A Landscape and Visual Impact Statement has been prepared by Hyland Edgar Driver, which shows views of the site from different vantage points to address the visual impact of the proposed buildings. This shows that in all but the longest views, the topmost level cannot be seen at all. The proposed development will not have any detrimental impact on the visual amenity of the area or the setting of the Conservation Area.
- 5.13 The written element of the report assesses the merits of the proposed design and its relationship with the Conservation Area. In light of the findings, it concludes that the proposed works will have a positive impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- 5.14 The development therefore addresses the requirements of the policies set out at paragraph 5.10.

Flood Risk and Surface Water Runoff

- 5.15 The Flood Risk Assessment, produced by Clarkebond, assesses the flood risks of the proposal on the ground water and surface water runoff and assesses the requirements for a sustainable drainage system (SUDS).
- 5.16 The report concludes that the effect of the impermeable surface can be managed in a sustainable way using SUDS, flood risk on site can be managed without either risk on site or increasing flood risk elsewhere within the catchment, and the site can be developed without adversely impacting existing surface water runoff.
- 5.17 Overall strategies exist to drain the site without increasing risk to downstream developments and as such there should be no objection to the development on drainage grounds.
- 5.18 Accordingly, the proposal accords with the requirements of emerging Local Plan policy ESD 6 and ESD 7.

Transport and Servicing

- 5.19 A Transport Statement has been prepared by Royal Haskoning in support of the planning application. The Assessment confirms that, as Barrus has existing premises at Upper Heyford, there would be no net increase in traffic on the road network as part of the Phase 1 proposal, as it is a relocation of premises.
- 5.20 The Assessment concludes that the HGV movements to the site will not increase significantly beyond the existing levels and will not compromise the safety of road users and is in line with Non-Statutory Plan Policy UH3.
- 5.21 As the proposal includes a Transport Assessment, it is in accordance with the Non-Statutory Plan Policy TR3.

Land Contamination

- 5.22 The Geo-technical Report, prepared by Clarkebond, states that the general risk of significant contamination is considered to be low. The report does set out recommendations for ground investigation and for remediation and risk reduction, which are in line with adopted Local Plan policy ENV 12.

Sustainability

- 5.23 The proposal incorporates PV panels on the north western side of the site, which are in line with recommendations set out in the Energy Statement provided by Method Consulting. This accords with the requirements of Policy ESD 2 and ESD 5 in the emerging Local Plan.
- 5.24 The proposals are therefore in line with national, regional and local sustainability policies for sustainable development.

The planning balance

- 5.25 The NPPF strongly supports economic development. The current and emerging Cherwell Local Plan policies also support proposals which contribute to employment and the local economy. Barrus is a key local employer and as the Need Assessment clearly demonstrates the pressing need for Barrus to secure a suitable, viable and available site to safeguard its long term future in the District. Paragraph 14 of the NPPF states that where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, proposals should be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The current development plan is materially out of date.
- 5.26 The planning application is supported by detailed analysis of traffic, design, landscape, conservation, noise, flood risk and ecology. This demonstrates that the proposals do not give rise to issues which would warrant refusal. The proposals are in keeping with the landscape setting and the setting of the Conservation area. As such, having regard to the NPPF, the application should be approved without delay.
- 5.27 We consider the proposals are in accordance with the emerging Local Plan, and the evidence shows a compelling case and exceptional circumstances which warrant approval of this application to meet a very specific local need. Even if it was concluded that the proposals do not fully accord with the emerging Local Plan, which in any event still carries limited weight pending the outcome of the ongoing Examination, we consider the proposals deliver a number of significant benefits which constitute important material considerations in favour of approval.

- 5.28 The proposals will enable Barrus to consolidate their operations on a single site, which will safeguard the long term future of the Company in Cherwell. Without an available and affordable solution to meeting its short and long term operational needs in the area, the Company will have no option but to relocate. By freeing up the existing site at Launton Road when phase two is developed, this will become available to other established occupiers who are currently constrained by their sites, as well as attracting new employment uses within the established employment area. As a consequence, the proposals will make a positive contribution to the supply of suitable and available employment land in the District and make a direct contribution to the local economy.
- 5.29 Barrus is a major employer within the district, providing highly skilled manufacturing jobs and employing 150 people across four sites, with 84% of the workforce being resident in Cherwell. The Company's distribution is already headquartered at Upper Heyford, albeit the current site is not appropriate for the long-term requirements of the Company in terms of size and layout. The proposed development will result in the retention of a significant local employer, and support the retention and growth of skilled engineering and manufacturing jobs within Cherwell. By providing a logical rounding off to the Upper Heyford Policy area, the proposals will also contribute to the growth of employment and development of the new community in line with key policy objectives.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 This report is submitted in support of an outline application, for 22,000 sq. m GIA of flexible B1/B2/B8 floorspace with some matters reserved. The development will come forward in two phases.
- 6.2 The objective is to secure consent for the full extent of the floorspace likely to be required, together with means of access, in order to secure the opportunity for the Company to consolidate onto a single site, in order to accommodate its planned growth and create more local jobs.
- 6.3 There are no more suitable or viable existing or allocated employment sites to accommodate the proposal within Cherwell. If Barrus is unable to secure this opportunity, the Company will have no option but to consider relocating from the District.
- 6.4 The site lies adjacent to the Council's proposed extension to the Upper Heyford settlement boundary, and would provide a natural rounding off of the settlement if approved. The Council has already accepted the need to expand the policy boundary, but the inclusion of this site (which previously included an MOD gymnasium) provides a more logical and defensible boundary.
- 6.5 The proposed employment uses are appropriate for this location, given the proximity to the former RAF Upper Heyford air base. The provision of additional local employment will be consistent with the aspiration for additional housing, to create a sustainable and balanced community at Upper Heyford.
- 6.6 The landscaping proposed as part of the proposal will have a positive impact on views both into and from the area, and will provide an appropriate level of screening of the buildings proposed. The proposal will not have a detrimental impact on the setting of the Conservation Area, or the amenity of existing and future residents.
- 6.7 The proposals are supported by a traffic assessment which demonstrates that there will be no net increase in traffic generation for the Phase 1 development as Barrus have existing premises at Upper Heyford that already use the highway network. The Phase 2 element can also be accommodated on the existing road network.

- 6.8 The inclusion of rainwater storage tanks and PV panels ensures the development provides an element of sustainable renewable energy for the scheme. Furthermore, the buildings will be fully compliant with the carbon emissions requirements in the emerging Local Plan.
- 6.9 There is a clear need for the proposals, which accord with the NPPF, and exceptional circumstances exist to support the grant of planning permission to safeguard the long term future of a key local employer in Cherwell. In these circumstances, there is a compelling case for the grant of planning permission in this case.