**Village Centre**

This is a reserved matters application where, in the normal way, only limited if any account can be given to the comments matters of principle. However, in this long process of re-developing the Cold War airbase (including the withdrawal of the previous application for this area and reconsideration being given again to the heritage centre that appears in the application site) the Council should be in close contact with the owners to ensure, together, that the overall development follows the principles paid down in Local Plan policy V5.

The Council should put an end to the piecemeal treatment of the site, taking place in the absence of the promised conference, or the masterplan, and heritage impact assessment required by local plan policy V5. A thorough check should be made about the legality of the submission of reserved matters.

Whatever the Council and developer might think about the appropriateness of World Heritage Site status, there are 3 international conventions and a Culture White Paper which should be applied to the development proposals being made on this site.

There are any number of references and requirements within policy V5 which individually and/or together explain the reasons why a ‘comprehensive integrated approach’ is necessary and how proposals considered in the absence of a comprehensive plan could not reasonably comply with this development plan policy.

- Proposals need to demonstrate how they would, …“enable environmental improvements and the heritage interest of the site as a military base with Cold War associations to be conserved,” In practice this heritage interest has been described as having been‘diluted’, ‘destroyed’ and ‘cleansed’.

- if, 1,500 jobs are to be created, many of these could be associated with the tourism and heritage aspects of the site once these have been properly investigated,

- if a hotel, is thought appropriate then, again, the Heritage Impact Assessment (see below) must be carried out,

- heritage and tourism have particular characteristics in terms of “Access and Movement” that would need to be explored as part of the ‘comprehensive integrated approach’,

- “Proposals must demonstrate that the conservation of heritage resources, landscape, restoration, enhancement of biodiversity and other environmental improvements will be achieved across the whole of the site … In order to avoid development on the most historically significant and sensitive parts of the site,” .This can only be demonstrated through a comprehensive plan.

- “The areas proposed for development adjacent to the flying field will need special consideration to respect the historic significance and character of the taxiway and entrance to the flying field, with development being kept back from the northern edge of the indicative development areas. The release of greenfield land within the allocated site Policy Villages 5 will not be allowed to compromise the necessary environmental improvements and conservation of heritage interest of the wider site.” Again a comprehensive plan would be necessary to establish that these principles are being respected.

- “The reinstatement of the historic Portway route across the western end of the extended former main runway as a public right of way on its original alignment”. This incursion into the flying field will need to be treated with great sensitivity in accordance with a plan showing land uses and public access.

- “A Travel Plan should accompany any development proposals”. Heritage and tourism could make up a substantial part of the overall traffic and must be taken into account through the preparation of such a Plan.

- a comprehensive plan is necessary to demonstrate, “The preservation of the stark functional character and appearance of the flying field beyond the settlement area, including the retention of buildings of national interest which contribute to the area’s character.” (actually of international interest).

- “The achievement of environmental improvements within the site and of views to it including the removal of buildings and structures that do not

make a positive contribution to the special character or which are justified on the grounds of adverse visual impact, including in proximity to the proposed settlement, together with limited appropriate landscape mitigation, and reopening of historic routes.” The conservation officers have rightly expressed concern that the site should be considered as a whole and that most if not all features would have served some historic purpose which might justify their retention and protection.

- The integration of, “ The conservation and enhancement of the ecological interest of the flying field through appropriate management and submission of an Ecological Mitigation and Management Plan…”, will require integration with the heritage management plan.

- The requirement that, “Visitor access, [is] controlled where necessary, to (and providing for interpretation of) the historic and ecological assets of the site, “ is a matter that can only be properly provided for with a ‘comprehensive integrated approach’.

- A heritage impact assessment (see below) is necessary to understand how tourism could contribute to the, “Provision of a range of high quality employment opportunities…”,

- A comprehensive approach is necessary to understand how, “ New and retained employment buildings should make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area and should be located and laid out to integrate into the structure of the settlement.”

- a master plan is required if, “A full arboricultural survey should be undertaken **to inform the masterplan**! (emphasis added).

- Although the policy states that, “New development should reflect high quality design that responds to the established character of the distinct character areas where this would preserve or enhance the appearance of the former RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area.”, the conservation officers and Historic England are now both seeking to adopt a more holistic approach giving rise to the need for a comprehensive plan.

- “Management of the flying field should preserve the Cold War character

of this part of the site, and allow for public access. New built development

on the flying field will be resisted to preserve the character of the area

Landscape/Visual and **Heritage Impact Assessments** **should be undertaken as part of development proposals and inform the design principles for the site**. Proposals should demonstrate an overall management approach for the **whole site**. (emphasis added)” None of these requirements can be met without a comprehensive plan of uses, management principles and public access. Access for commercial purposes has already interfered with the (limited) heritage use being made of the site.

- Unfortunately, “Proposals … for a heritage centre given the historic interest and Cold War associations of the site,” have been approved without any heritage assessment, contrary to the advice of Historic England and this development plan policy and now under reconsideration by the owners.

In short, most of the requirements set out in the development plan policy V5 rely on the preparation of a master plan and the basis of the comprehensive integrated approach. It is hard to imagine any circumstances in which the provisions of this development plan policy should or could be overridden. The owners have had nearly 8 years to have produced and/or the Council to have required this necessary information/evidence.

The absence of a “comprehensive integrated approach”, makes it impossible to make sensible and constructive comments on these submissions.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Scharf