

3. THE APPLICATION SITE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

3.1.1 This chapter of the ES provides a description of the Application Site and its surrounding context.

3.2 APPLICATION SITE

3.2.1 The Application Site comprises 12.04 hectares of land at the former RAF Upper Heyford, which is located approximately 8.6km north-west of Bicester, 15.8km south-east of Banbury and 5km south-west of junction 10 of the M40, in Oxfordshire (see **Figure 1.1**). The Application Site itself comprises land formerly occupied by the Upper Heyford American High School which is situated to the south-west of Camp Road (see **Figure 1.2**).

3.2.2 The Application Site is located within the administrative boundary of Cherwell District Council and within the parish of Upper Heyford.

3.2.3 There is an existing site access from Camp Road. Camp Road provides access west to the village of Upper Heyford and east to the B430 which in turn provides access south (Ardley Road) towards Middleton Stoney and Bicester, and north (Station Road) towards the village of Ardley and Junction 10 of the M40 beyond. Junction 10 of the M40 motorway is circa 6.3km driving distance to the north-east and provides access north towards Banbury and Birmingham, and south towards Bicester, Oxford and London.

3.2.4 The former RAF Upper Heyford site was a military base owned by the Ministry of Defence that was leased by the United States Air Force from the 1960s until 1994. The Application Site falls within the 'residential area' of the former military base, an area that provided ancillary facilities such as a hospital, supermarket, petrol station, school and sports facilities for the serving the American Air Force personnel and their families.

3.2.5 The Application Site boundary is predominately defined by a chain-link fence topped by raked anti-climb barbed wire mounted on concrete posts, to a height of approximately 2.2m, with the exception of variations to the eastern boundary where it crosses through the former sports facilities.

3.2.6 The Application Site is occupied by:

- Six rows of single-storey classroom blocks, each row generally comprising of between eight to twelve individual classroom buildings, each constructed of rendered brickwork with fibre cement/asbestos profiled sheet roof (noting that the first row of circa 12 classrooms, nearest Camp Road, has been demolished);
- Central single-storey school building incorporating boiler house to rear, constructed of brickwork and fibre cement/asbestos profiled sheet roof with brick tower and chimney (Building 867);
- Gymnasium (Building 886) constructed of brickwork and profiled sheets infill wall panels and profiled sheet roof;
- Leisure Building (Building 515);

- Interconnecting internal access roads and footpaths; and
- Sports dug-outs (Buildings 567 and 566).

Other infrastructure within the Application Site includes:

- Water tower (Building UH74) located adjacent to the Application Site's entrance to Camp Road (this has been demolished);
- Electricity sub-station (Building UH6);
- Water tank (Building 597); and
- Some hardstandings including a large area to the south.

3.2.7 The remainder of the Application Site is generally given over to the former school grounds (predominantly grass) or former sports pitches with trees located primarily along/adjacent to the Application Site's boundary to the north and west, with some trees interspersed between some of the school units. Around the Application Site's perimeter to the north and west is hedgerow.

3.2.8 There is no public access to the site. The buildings are generally in a poor state of repair with broken windows/doors, damaged render with some partial demolition/damage to structural elements; the grounds are overgrown, the internal access roads are showing signs of breaking up and several of the footpaths no longer discernable. In summary, the Application Site is in a poor state and degrading, representing a health and safety risk as well as a local detractor to the environment. The Application Site has no 'active' use but is being used for storage of materials associated with the redevelopment of the wider former military site.

3.2.9 The Application Site falls within the RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area. There are no other statutory designations falling within the Application Site's boundary.

3.2.10 The non-statutory Cherwell Local Plan 2011, dated December 2004, identifies the Application Site as being subject to two policies falling under the heading of 'The Former RAF Upper Heyford'. Both these policies (Policy UH1 and UH2) provide for the implementation of a 'new village' at the former RAF Upper Heyford where proposals meet the stated criteria.

3.2.11 The emerging Cherwell Local Plan 2011 to 2031 (based on the Illustrative Cherwell Submission Local Plan) dated February 2015, identifies the site as being subject to **Policy Villages 5** 'Former RAF Upper Heyford'. As it stands, this emerging policy provides for the implementation of a settlement of approximately 1,600 new dwellings, supporting infrastructure including primary and secondary school provision, community, recreational and employment opportunities and enabling environmental improvements with the conservation of the heritage interest.

3.2.12 In the absence of any redevelopment of the Application Site, it is to be expected that the existing buildings would continue to degrade and that the grounds would continue to be overgrown and eventually colonise with scrub. As a whole, this detracts from the local area and could potentially attract antisocial behavior. Given the brownfield status (previously developed land) this would represent a loss of valuable resource.

3.3 APPLICATION SITE CONTEXT

3.3.1 The Application Site is situated to the south-west of the former RAF Upper Heyford military base. To the north of the Application Site (on the opposite side of Camp Road)

is the 'flying field' of the former military base comprising the take-off and taxi runways and associated aircraft hangars and facilities, with the 'technical area' (also to the north of Camp Road) comprising further aircraft hangars and supporting stores, maintenance workshops, operations rooms, offices and security buildings etc. to the north-east. To the east of the development dating from both the former military occupation (former barracks, married quarters, officers housing etc.) and more recently consented residential development. This area also contains a former petrol station, supermarket, school, hospital, gymnasium and sports facilities. To the south and west the land falls outside the former military base and comprises agricultural fields; Kirtlington Road is a public highway that passes immediately to the Application Site's west. There is a public right of way that passes diagonally across the fields to the south, passing close-by the Application Site at the south-west corner, before continuing towards Upper Heyford. The Oxford Canal Walk, a regional route, passes to the west of the site circa 750m to the west in the River Cherwell valley.

- 3.3.2 The 'residential' area comprises a several local facilities operational today, including a shop, church, community centre and a two-form entry primary and secondary level school (Heyford Park Free School). The wider former military base is also occupied by several commercial businesses providing local employment opportunities. The area has relatively good public transport links with bus service passing along Camp Road to the north and a railway station located within Lower Heyford village.
- 3.3.3 Beyond the immediate environs of the Application Site, the land is generally used for agriculture and comprises arable/grazing fields of varying size and shape with several woodland belts. There are several villages within proximity to the Application Site, including: Upper Heyford circa 700m to the west (centre to centre); Lower Heyford circa 1.7km to the south-west; the villages of Middle Aston, Steeple Aston and Rousham to the west, the nearest of which being 2.8km; Caulcott circa 1.7km to the south; Middleton Stoney circa 3.8km south-east; Ardley circa 4.2km to the north-east; and Somerton circa 3km to the north, across the airfield. To the west (circa 1.4km) is a railway line running north-south, with railway station at Lower Heyford, and to the east (circa 3.3km) is a railway line running north-west to south-east. The M40 motorway also follows an approximate north-west to south-east orientation 4.9km. The recently constructed Ardley Energy from Waste facility is circa 3.4km to the east.
- 3.3.4 Outside the former military site but within the ownership of the Applicant is the sewage treatment works, located to the south-east of the residential area, and a balancing pond, which is accessible from Camp Road to the east.
- 3.3.5 The land to the north and east of the Application Site, falling within the former military base, are also located within the RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area. There are several Scheduled Monuments forming the single following 'Cold War Structures at the former Upper Heyford' designation (Reference: 1021399) within the former military base, comprising:
- Avionics Maintenance Facility (Building 299);
 - Battle Command Centre (Building 126);
 - Hardened Telephone Exchange (Building 129);
 - Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) Area (Buildings 3001 to 3009, 2010, 3105, UH22, 3104, 3103, UH24, UH23, UH25, 281, POL23a and b, 281 and 285); and
 - The Northern Bomb Stores and Special Weapons Area (Buildings 1001 to 1048, 1868, 1050, UH48, 1869, UH49, 1870, UH56, 1867, 1059, 1060, 1061, UH50).

3.3.6 In addition, there are several Listed Buildings falling within the former military base, comprising:

- Former Squadron HQ (Reference: 132509) Grade II (Building 234);
- Control Tower (Reference: 1392508) Grade II (Building 340);
- Nose Dock Hangar (Reference: 1392505) Grade II (Building 325);
- Nose Dock Hangar (Reference: 1392506) Grade II (Building 327); and
- Nose Dock Hangar (Reference: 1392507) Grade II (Building 328).

3.3.7 There are several other buildings across the former military site that are noted as 'Non-Listed Buildings' of either national or local significance or as 'Other buildings that make a contribution to be retained' in the RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area Appraisal (CDC, April 2006).

3.3.8 There is a 'County Wildlife Site' to the east of the former military base runway.

3.3.9 Beyond the former military site there are seven Scheduled Monuments with 5km of the Application Site's boundary comprising:

- Tithe Barn (Reference 1006351) located circa 790m to the west;
- Dovecote at Rousham House (Reference: 1017324) located circa 2.8km to the west;
- Middleton Stoney Castle (Reference: 1015164) located circa 3.7km to the south-east;
- Saxon barrow 40m south east of Oxford Lodge (Reference: 1015553) located circa 4.6km south-east;
- Ardley Wood moated ringwork (Reference 1015554) located circa 2.8km north-east;
- Somerton Village Earthworks (Reference: 1004826) located circa 2.9km to the north; and
- Somerton Manor House: earthworks and remains of hall (Reference: 1002950) located circa 2.6km to the north.

3.3.10 In addition, there are several listed buildings within the locality including: several within the village of Upper Heyford circa 430m to the west; three at/nearby Caulcott circa 1.3km south; several at Lower Heyford circa 1.2km south-west and at Rousham beyond; several at Steeple Aston circa 2.5km west; one at Troy Farm circa 2.5km north on the opposite side of the military base; several at Somerton circa 2.9km north; and one at Ashgrove Farm circa 3.1km east.

3.3.11 The Rousham Historic Park and Garden (Grade I) (Reference: 000107) is located circa 2.1km to the south-west and Middleton Park Historic Park and Garden (Grade II) (Reference: 1001405) is located circa 2km south-east.

3.3.12 The key notable nature conservation interest in the locality includes the:

- Ardley Cutting and Quarry SSSI circa 3.3km east;

- Ardley Trackways SSSI circa 3.2km east;
- Bestmoor SSSI circa 3.km north; and
- Horsehay Quarries SSSI circa 4.6km west.

3.4 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

- 3.4.1 The Applicant held a public consultation exhibition on Wednesday 12th October 2016, to show the local community the proposal and to seek comments from the general public. The exhibition consisted of a series of information boards that guided the attendees through the site background, design development and the current proposals.
- 3.4.2 The exhibition was promoted prior to the event via local networks and social media and was held over two sessions, 12-2pm and 5-7pm, in order to enable a breadth of the community to attend. At each session staff from the applicant were present to answer questions. In addition, feedback forms and contact details for the Applicant were provided to enable attendees to comment on the scheme. The event was held at the Heyford Park Community Centre on Brice Road.
- 3.4.3 The event was well attended with approximately 35-40 people in attendance across the two sections, with 11 people providing detailed feedback via the comment forms provided. The details of these feedback can be seen in detail in the **Statement of Community Involvement**, which accompanies the planning application.