

An aerial photograph of a large-scale residential development, Heyford Park, featuring numerous detached houses with grey roofs and green lawns, interspersed with paved roads and parking areas. The background shows a vast, flat landscape under a cloudy sky. A semi-transparent dark blue rectangle is centered over the image, containing white text and a logo.

The Heritage Offer at Heyford
Park
Our Strategy



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THE VISION

The Local Plan allocation of additional residential, commercial and infrastructure development at Heyford Park has provided a unique opportunity to consolidate and expand upon the obligations that were set out in earlier masterplans. The Local Plan allocation calls for:

“A comprehensive approach will be required and it will be necessary to demonstrate how the additional land identified can be satisfactorily integrated with the approved development. The additional land will not be permitted to be developed independently of the main development and infrastructure contributions will be expected for the wider scheme.”

“Proposals must demonstrate that the conservation of heritage resources ... will be achieved across the whole site identified as Policy Villages 5.”

The key opportunity that this masterplan is able to provide is the ability to deliver increased public access and appreciation of the heritage at Heyford Park. Our philosophy in designing a new heritage offer at Heyford Park has focussed upon the following:

1. Combining the heritage with leisure uses so that the residents and employees of Heyford Park can regularly access the asset of the airfield as part of day to day life, and increase visitor numbers to experience the heritage at Heyford Park.
2. Identifying the key themes regarding the history of the site, such as Technology and Aviation Innovation, Spying, Espionage and National Identity, all of which have been prominent during the history of the base and considering how these are best interpreted for others.
3. Reviewing the best way to attract new audiences to the site in order to broaden the current appeal that Heyford Park has.
4. Finding viable new uses for key structures that will enable their refurbishment and long-term preservation.

To summarise, the new heritage offer at Heyford Park will focus on - accessibility, interpretation, attraction and viability.



THE NEW HERITAGE OFFER

To deliver the vision set out above, it is proposed that the physical offer at Heyford Park should encompass the following categories:

1. Significantly increased accessibility to the core of the Flying Field for residents, visitors and employees
 - Provision of a substantial public park in the core of the Flying Field with views over the Flying Field.
2. Increased accessibility around the perimeter of the Flying Field
 - Provision of an Upper Heyford Heritage Trail with accessible views and other associated leisure trails with interpretation boards, allowing for self-guided tours around the perimeter of the Flying Field.
3. Maintaining and managing existing points of interest
 - Ensuring the elements with the highest historical interest are well maintained and managed.
4. A dynamic heritage tour offer
 - A varied tour offer that emphasises and provides access to the most important structures and heritage across the site for a number of different audiences.
5. Heritage tourism offer
 - A heritage offer that focusses on widening audiences and ensuring continual use by the community.



HERITAGE: DEFINING THE DNA OF HEYFORD PARK

The analysis that follows had been drawn from the conclusions of a number of reports by heritage specialists over the past 15 years, including:

- Cold War – Building for Nuclear Confrontation 1946-1989 by Wayne D. Cocroft and Roger J.C. Thomas (Edited by P. S. Barnwell), First published by Historic England 2003.
- September 2005 *'Former RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Plan'* Volumes One-Three prepared by The Tourism Company, Oxford Archaeology and ACTA.
- April 2006 *'RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area Appraisal'* by the Cherwell Valley District Council.
- 2006 *'Cold War Structures at the Former Upper Heyford Airbase: List Entry Summary'* (original entry 2006).
- A Strategic Consideration of the Cold War Heritage of the former RAF Upper Heyford Base, 31st July 2017, by Colonel James P Cook OBE
- Historic England's *'Former RAF Upper Heyford, Cherwell Oxfordshire: A reassessment of the flying field Conservation Area – research report Series 74-2017. Dated Nov 2017.*
- The various Planning Application Documentation and Evidence submitted as part of the previous planning applications and appeals.

As a result of reviewing these documents, it is possible to identify a number of key themes and attributes that reflect the character and personality of Heyford Park. This includes:

1. During its 100-year history as a military aviation base it constantly evolved and was adapted to meet the prevailing needs of the time in order to make it relevant to contemporary strategic requirements.
2. As a result, Heyford was often at the forefront of technological and design innovation, as well as testing.
3. Heyford has a long history of being a training base for new skills in a wide range of disciplines associated with flying, technology, advanced engineering, design, electronic intelligence and reconnaissance.
4. Throughout its history, Heyford has welcomed international personnel. This has been seen from the very inception of the site when the original airfield was utilised by the Canadian Royal Air Force immediately post WW1 as a training base for nationalities from the Commonwealth and Allies.
5. It was a 'secretive' place with limited access around which there was a considerable amount of speculation and mythology created about 'what was going on'.
6. It was a place of cultural and social exchange between different nationalities and local people – it truly was Little America in Big Oxford, so evokes questions about both British and American identity.

In summary, therefore, Upper Heyford should be regarded as a site that has been and still is:

- **Constantly evolving, adaptive, always relevant**
- **International in outlook and make up and globally influential**
- **Innovative, and at the leading edge**
- **A centre for training and new skill development**
- **A centre of excellence**

These key attributes or the 'DNA' of Heyford Park have been considered when designing the new heritage tourism offer for the site. By focussing on the DNA of the Heyford Park site, rather than purely on the military and aviation story of the site, there is the ability to widen the potential audience that Heyford Park may have.



PART ONE: INCREASED ACCESSIBILITY

The Goal

- In order to ensure that there is a heritage offer that is engaging for all users, as well as ensuring that there is a heritage offer that is accessible at all times, our goal is to provide increased access to the site for residents, employees and visitors.
- Establishing heritage leisure trails which will be focused on leading users around, and onto the historic core of the airfield to experience the cold war landscape.

The Proposal

In order to facilitate the key aim of providing increased accessibility to the wider site and its heritage, a network of managed, public and semi-public parks and trails will be created across the wider site, including the following:

1. A substantial new public park covering 20 hectares in the core of the historic airfield, running up to the edge of the runway. The park is connected via strong green routes linking through to the Village Centre, creating a welcoming pedestrian and cycle access for residents, the commercial community and visitors, while also being located close to the bus-routes for ease of access from the wider locality.

The park is to retain the areas current character of calcareous grassland which will be managed to retain the existing cold war landscape. With 3km of walking/cycling routes, the community will be encouraged to use the park, providing an opportunity for the site's heritage to become integrated within the lives of the community who live and work at Heyford Park. Interpretation boards will be located at key views across the cold war landscape to help to broaden the community's understanding of Heyford's historic significance. The Flying Field Park will open up the public's access to views over the runway to the northern side of the airfield, including views of the Quick Response Area Scheduled Monument. We are proposing to retain and refurbish Building 391 located centrally within the park as an area for contemplation.

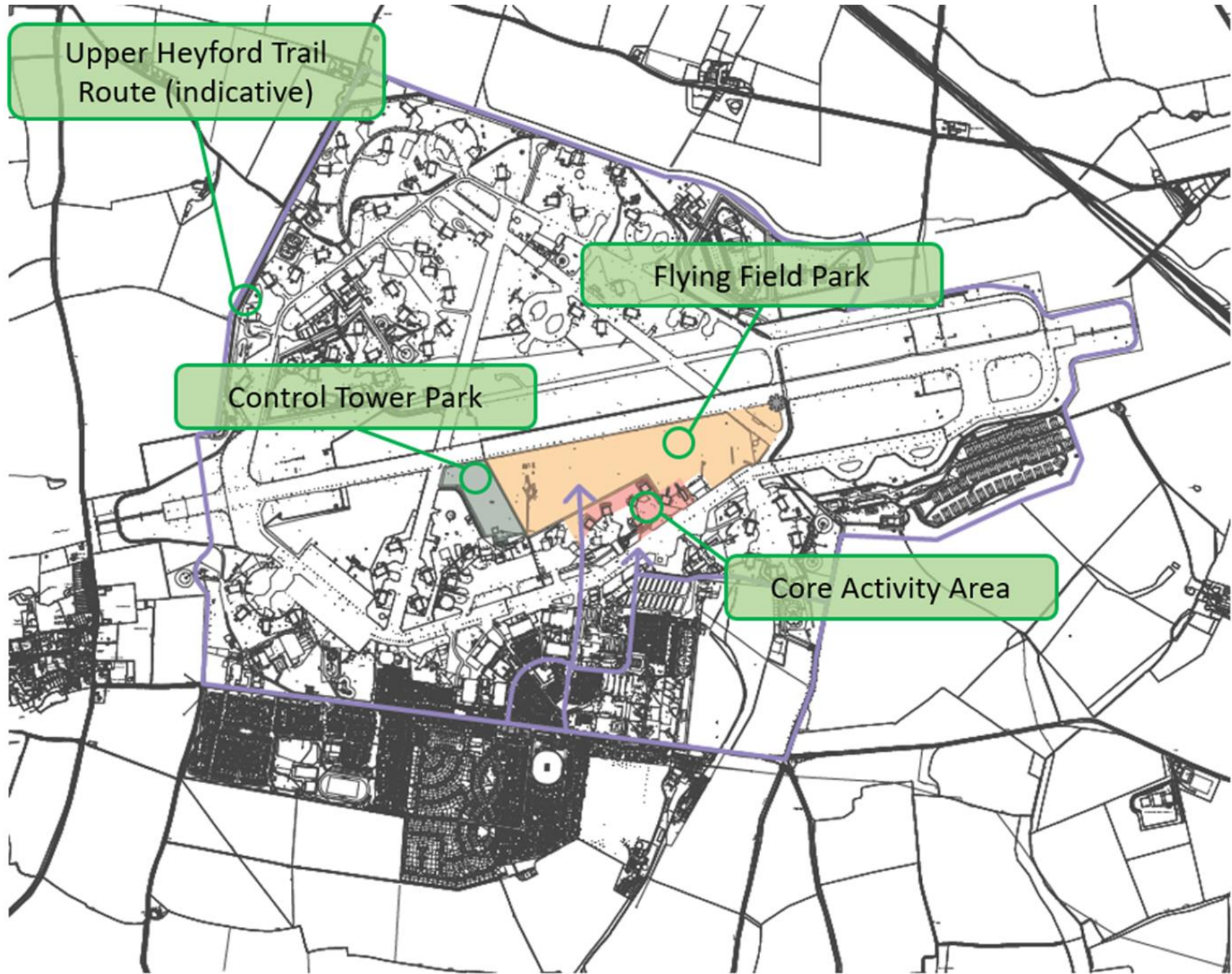
2. We intend to provide a park in the vicinity of the Control Tower of circa 4 hectares which will be maintained and managed as the Control Tower Park, which will be used as an area for events in association with the Control Tower building itself.
3. We remain committed to providing the Upper Heyford Trail, which is an obligation from the earlier masterplans. This will comprise a circular walk around the Flying Field perimeter that will include a further four interpretation boards in addition to the eight from the original obligation so that walkers can gain knowledge on their route. We envisage that this will be a popular and well utilised route. During the public consultation where we revealed plans for the heritage trail to the public and local residents, this was very well received as local people feel there is a lack of suitable walking

routes around Heyford Park at the moment. We have also done more to increase green connectivity into Heyford Park from surrounding villages based on this feedback. Thus, it is likely that this route will be utilised not only by residents and visitors, but also by neighbouring communities.

4. An elevated vantage point will be maintained at the western end of the runway on the bunded gun station adjacent to the Quick Response Area.
5. Connectivity and new routes through the new development will allow direct public access to new parts of the site and buildings of interest which were previously private and inaccessible.
6. Eight new interpretation boards will be located throughout both the Flying Field Park and the Control Tower Park which will provide information on the site, its history, key views, buildings and ecology.

By combining a key part of the heritage with leisure uses that are accessible to a broad range of our local population, we are fulfilling our vision by entwining heritage into everyday life for those in our community.





PART TWO: MAINTAINING AND MANAGING

The Goal

- To consolidate the obligations that are in the earlier masterplans in order to ensure we maintain and manage the existing structures and artefacts that have the greatest historical importance.
- To prevent the further deterioration of key structures or artefacts via a commitment to maintenance.

The Proposal

We also wish to bring forward and extend an obligation in the first masterplan in order to ensure the key historic buildings across the site remain in a stable wind and water tight condition.

The existing commitment to undertake a quinquennial review survey of the retained buildings on the Flying Field, which will also include the Command Centre and Telephone Exchange, to ensure these remain wind and watertight will be carried forward and the rolling programme of repair will continue.

Additional buildings, which were previously to be left unused and be vacant, will be refurbished and brought back into beneficial use to ensure their long-term preservation. As set out below, this will also include some key heritage buildings which will form part of the new Core Activity Area.

We also wish to digitally archive the historic plans of Heyford Park that are currently being stored in Heyford's archives, with the physical copies to be available on request and to be archived in a new facility. Digital archive facilities are to form part of the enhanced Heritage Centre specification and the archiving of the historic plans will form part of an ongoing project led by the Heritage Centre

In addition, the already completed Building Recording Report (which details over 150 buildings and structures which have now been demolished) alongside the photographic schedule of Heyford's wall art, will be made available digitally, and in hard copy within the Heritage Centre, for the public to view.

PART THREE: A NEW TOUR OFFER

The Goal

- To review the current tour offer as laid out in the original masterplan, and to commit to a more dynamic and varied offer that will create a broader audience for the tour.
- To ensure that any tour offer focusses on the key heritage themes as indicated at the start of this document, and also focusses on providing access to the structures that are of the greatest importance.

The Proposal

With regards to the tours that are currently operating, recent feedback that we have received is that a shorter and more dynamic tour, which is aimed at an audience with little prior knowledge would also be desirable in addition to the current more in-depth tour. Analysis regarding who has taken a tour at Heyford indicates that participants are generally either ex-service personnel or a resident of Heyford Park who is keen to find out more. By broadening the appeal of the site via the inclusion of the Heritage Tourism offer, it is likely that more and more visitors will arrive at Heyford Park with only a basic understanding of the site's heritage. Thus, we would like to develop two types of tour. One will be aimed at veterans or enthusiasts with a deeper understanding of the heritage, and who are likely to enjoy a longer and more comprehensive tour. The other will be aimed at local residents or heritage tourism visitors who will be looking for an engaging introduction to the site. We will also offer bespoke tours for schools and other interested organisations to suit their requirements.

Whilst the detailed routes of each tour will need to be carefully considered, access to the following buildings and structures will form a key element of each of the tours:

1. The Command Centre including internal access to the building
2. The QRA including the Hardened Aircraft Shelters
3. The Northern Bomb Stores
4. Main Runway
5. Control Tower
6. Nose Dock sheds (outside only)
7. Avionics Building (outside only)

In addition, it is envisaged that the tour will include the ability to view the opening of the doors of one of the Hardened Aircraft Shelters within the QRA (Building 3009) which will also allow visitors to see the wall art within the building and appreciate the vast space of the hanger. The tours may also feature visits to other buildings such as the engine testing cell, however these elements of the tours will be kept under review and subject to change depending on feedback.

We have consent to switch the heritage use on shelter 3008 into Building 2010 in order to facilitate the refurbishment of Building 2010 for inclusion on the tours, which will enhance the tour offer and further the understanding of the importance of the Quick Response Area, and what life was like for the crews who were on alert.

As per our obligations in the earlier masterplans, Dorchester are committed to providing transport for these tours. It will also be possible to undertake self-guided tours of the public areas via both the Upper Heyford Trail and the network of new open spaces.



PART FOUR: HERITAGE TOURISM

The Goal

- Dorchester’s ambition is to create a tourist attraction that will provide an innovative range of attractions, services and amenities that will celebrate Heyford’s DNA by successfully interpreting the heritage story of the site for a wide range of audiences.
- To ensure that the heritage centre is able to evolve and expand beyond the ambitions of the first masterplan, but yet still is able to build upon the core obligations that formed the original Heritage Centre Management Plan.
- The emphasis of the attractions will be about delivering creative, immersive, experiences ranging from the thrilling and adrenalin driven, to the discovery and educational. By exploring themes such as Technology Innovation, Social History and Espionage in this exciting and immersive way, we can attract a wider audience than would normally be expected of a site of this nature.
- By combining the heritage of the site with a tourism, community and sports offer we have facilitated the provision of an extended offer that finds sustainable uses for more buildings.

The Proposal

Located adjacent to the new public Flying Field Park, there will be a range of attractions and activities in the Core Activity Area. The schedule of attractions and facilities is described below and could be supported by a selection of cafes, restaurants and retail outlets, selling dedicated souvenirs relevant to the destination as well as associated and relevant merchandise. The attractions will be as follows:

1. Building 1368 (Hush House)

The former hush house will become the home to the new heritage centre. The building will see greater use, and will also act as a base for exploring the heritage, ecology and leisure in the park. The space will be designed to be flexible to allow for conferences to take place in this unique building, further consolidating its viability. The existing Heritage Centre currently housed in Building 103 will be relocated into this space. This will consolidate the offer into a more defined geographical area and will also ensure the Heritage Centre can expand with the greater offer. The original obligations will be brought forward in order to honour the previous commitments and enhanced.



The new centre will contain:

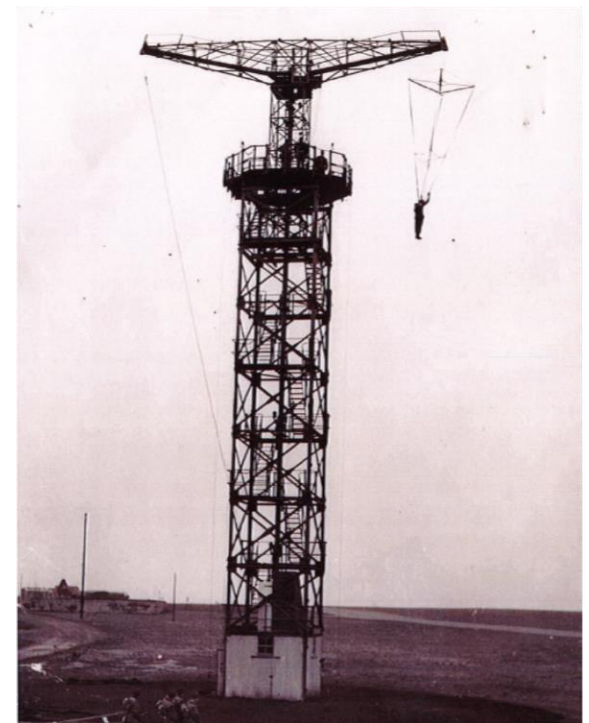
- Exhibition
- Cold War artefacts
- Video presentation room to accommodate 40 people
- Reading room
- Study area
- Archive room
- Digital archive facilities
- Refreshment area and gift shop
- Flight simulator

We also commit that the new Heritage Centre in Building 1368 will be open to the public no less than 4 days a month and Dorchester will provide staffing to assist with this. However, it is likely that this will be increased as visitor numbers demand.

Once the facility has relocated from Building 103 into Building 1368, Building 103 would then return to the developer. It would be guaranteed that the new heritage centre would operate for at least 5 further years. If the centre is not viable after 5 years in its new location, Dorchester will attempt to transfer this to a new operator or Trust, otherwise the building would be converted under a change of use.

2. Heyford Park Observation Tower

We aim to construct a new build Observation Tower (up to 30m in height) that will have the potential to also contain a zip line. Not only will the Observation Tower provide an opportunity to experience views west across the main runway and core of the Flying Field from above, but the zip line is a fun interpretation of how it would have felt to land on the runway at Heyford Park. The intention is to locate this adjacent to the north east end of the runway on the edge of the flying field park. Design cues will be taken from the former parachute training tower (pictured) and the radio mast (Buildings 355).



3. Building 1443 (Engine Testing Cell)

Our intention is to repair and refurbish the building to provide an exhibition space which could be utilised to house exhibitions such as a Cold War Gallery and Sculpture Park, and also feature on the Heritage Site Tours. By focussing on the art of the cold war and working with our appointed artist(s), a new audience can be brought to Heyford Park. This will also allow for the cultural understanding of our visitors to be broadened. We also propose that Building 1443 could house some artist studios which would be available for let, and use by artists in residency.

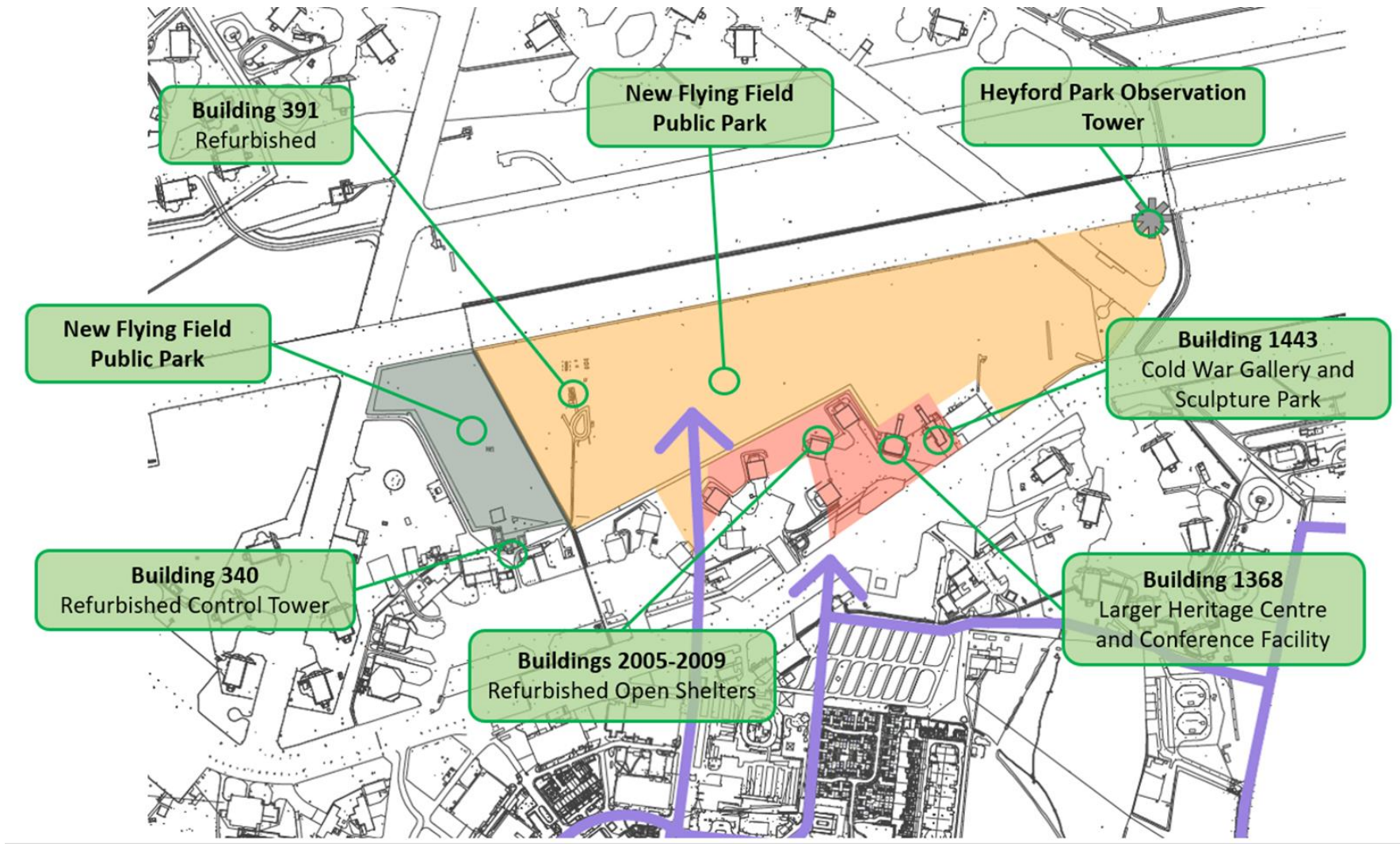
4. Victor Alert Area

It is intended to refurbish five of the open shelters (Buildings 2005-2009) into an adrenaline park to include indoor sports to Sports England specification which we are currently exploring but could be a bouldering centre, a skate park and a NEAP as part of our play areas obligation and a public picnic seating area. This approach viably incorporates these structures into the Core Activity Area by enhancing their long-term feasibility, and also provides recurrent leisure uses that will ensure local residents and visitors continuously utilise this part of the site.

5. Building 340 (The Control Tower)

We will refurbish the Control Tower as part of our S106 obligation. Whilst the final end use is still being explored, the eventual offer is likely to be a café/restaurant to serve users of the Flying Field Park and the Control Tower Park, and a co-working hub with some further function space to facilitate larger events.





We have discussed the above concept with Experience Oxfordshire, who are fully supportive of our plans so far. Indeed, Experience Oxfordshire has identified that North Oxfordshire has an issue in retaining foreign visitors as there is a lack of attractions in this part of the county that encourage visitors to spend more than half a day here. Thus, the heritage offer proposed is seen as relevant and vital to the tourism expansion strategy that Experience Oxfordshire has for this part of the county.

SUMMARY TABLE

Obligation	Current Commitment	Future Commitment
Heritage Centre	Use of Building 103	Enhanced
	Kept in Wind and Water Tight Condition	Maintained
	To be part of Quinquennial Survey	Maintained
	Approval of external Paint Scheme	Maintained
	Guaranteed minimum use of the Heritage Centre for 5 years from when it opens to public	Enhanced
	Heritage Centre Building to be transferred to organisation or trust prior to opening of Heritage Centre	Maintained
	If after 5 years there is no interest in the following 3 months from an interested Trust or organisation to independently run a heritage centre then a change of use of the building may be applied for	Maintained / Enhanced
	Heritage Centre to contain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibition boards • Cold War Artefacts • Lecture/video presentation room to accommodate 30 seated school children • Archive room • Reading Room / Study Area • Refreshment Area & Gift Shop • Toilet 	Enhanced
	Open for minimum of four days per month from 10:00 – 16:00 and by arrangement for school visits	Enhanced
	Employment of a Heritage Centre Manager for 4 days a month for the initial 5-year period	Enhanced
Building 126	To be open to public during the tours	Maintained
	Kept in Wind and Water Tight Condition	Maintained
	To be part of Quinquennial Survey	Maintained
	Approval of external Paint Scheme	Maintained

Obligation	Current Commitment	Future Commitment
	Building 126 to be transferred to organisation or trust prior to opening of Heritage Centre	Maintained
Building 129	External Access	Maintained
	Kept in Wind and Water Tight Condition	Maintained
	Approval of external Paint Scheme	Maintained
	To be part of Quinquennial Survey	Maintained
Building 3008/3009	Monumentalised and to form part of tour	Enhanced – Buildings 3009 and 2010 now proposed to form part of tour. 3008 has permission for Class B8 use.
Guided Tours	To include the following buildings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QRA • Northern Bomb Stores (outside only) • Main Runway • Control Tower (outside only) • Nose Dock Sheds (outside only) • Avionics Building (outside only) 	Enhanced
	Secure the use of suitable travel for guided tours for 5 years	Maintained
Cold War Park	Provision of Cold War Park comprising of Buildings 3052, 3053, 3054 and 3055	Replaced and Enhanced with larger central, public park.
Upper Heyford Trail	Circular Walk around perimeter of Flying Field	Enhanced
	Provision of 8 interpretation boards	Enhanced
	Provision of 2 new Vantage Points	Enhanced
Quinquennial Survey	Undertake condition survey of Flying Field Buildings every 5 years	Maintained
	Contribution of £450,000 (index linked) for wind and water tight repairs	Maintained
Photographic Survey of Wall Art etc	Undertake photographic survey of all wall art and features of interest	Maintained
Building Record	Undertake Building record of Buildings to be Demolished	Maintained / Enhanced
Building 340 (Control Tower)	Wind and Water Tight	Enhanced – Refurbished and reused

Obligation	Current Commitment	Future Commitment
Building 1368 (Hush House)	Wind and Water Tight	Enhanced – Refurbished and reused
Building 1433 (Engine Test Cell)	Wind and Water Tight	Enhanced – Refurbished and reused
Creation of Flying Field Park	---	New Commitment
Creation of Control Tower Park	---	New Commitment
Public Access to Flying Field	Part of bookable tour offer	Enhanced
Digital Archive	---	New Commitment
Victor Alert Area (Buildings 2005-2009)	---	New Commitment
Observation Tower / Zip Line	---	New Commitment