

## 3 THE APPLICATION SITE

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

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

### 3.2 APPLICATION SITE

#### Site Area

3.2.1 The Application Site covers approximately 457 hectares of land occupying much of the c.520 hectares of the former RAF Upper Heyford Air Base (the former Air Base), in Oxfordshire, but excludes areas of completed and ongoing residential and associated development within Heyford Park or areas subject to separate planning applications such as Land South of Camp Road and Village Centre North. The former Air Base is approximately 5.3km north-west of Bicester, 12.9km south-east of Banbury and 1.7km south-west of junction 10 at the M40, in Oxfordshire (**See Figure 1.1**). The former Air Base was owned by the Ministry of Defence that was leased by the United States Air Force (USAF) from the 1960s until 1994, and is now in the control of the Applicant. The former Air Base is designated as the RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area (see **Figure 3.1**), and the southwest corner falls in part within the Rousham Conservation Area.

3.2.2 The Application Site is located largely to the north of Camp Road and includes the section of Camp Road that lies between Kirtlington Road/Port Way to the west and Chilgrove Drive to the east, but includes other parcels of land to the south of Camp Road as shown at **Figure 1.1**.

3.2.3 Three parcels of 'greenfield' agricultural land beyond the former Air Base boundary are also included within the Application Site in accordance with Policy Villages 5 of the CDC Local Plan. These parcels, lie between Tait Drive/Port Way, toward the southwest of the Application Site (referred to as parcels 16 and 18 on **Figure 4.2: Composite Parameter Plan**); and, land to the west of Heyford Leys Farm, including the Sewage Works, within the southeast of the Application Site (referred to as parcel 17 on **Figure 4.2**). Camp Road and a broad corridor along Chilgrove Drive are also included within the Application Site, together with an access corridor through the Land South of Camp Road site which provides access to land west of Tait Drive, and Izzard Road which provides access to the Heyford Park Free School Site (referred to as parcel 32 on **Figure 4.2**) south of Camp Road. Land west of Heyford Leys Farm would be accessed from Camp Road via a route to the northeast.

3.2.4 The majority of the Application Site boundary follows the former Air Base boundary which is marked by barbed-wire topped chain link security fences for much of its length, beyond which lies open countryside to the north, east, and west; the southern boundary in part lies adjacent to open countryside, former Air Base structures, or new-build development within Heyford Park. The boundaries and neighbouring land uses of individual development parcels within the Application Site varies according to its relationship with existing built form or open land.

#### Former Air Base

3.2.5 The former Air Base may be subdivided into three broad functional areas including the Flying Field, the Technical Site and the Residential Area, as shown on **Figure 3.2**.

3.2.6 Land use and built form varies across each of these areas:

**Flying Field** – Dominated by the former runway that lies on a WSW to ENE alignment, comprising hardened aircraft shelters (HAS), Control Tower, Northern Bomb Stores (NBS), Southern Bomb Stores (SBS), Quick Response Alert (QRA) area, and Avionics Building. These structures and features are set within extensive hard standings and access roads/aircraft taxiways that are separated by low-growing grassland. Tree cover is sparse and limited to sporadic clumps and belts toward the north western and south eastern boundaries. Access to the Flying Field is from Camp Road West Gate; access from Chilgrove Drive to the east is sealed off. Many buildings within the Flying Field are in employment uses and approximately 20 hectares of the southern taxiway is subject to temporary car storage and preparation uses operated by British Car Auctions (BCA). The QRA, NBS and Avionics Buildings are Scheduled Monuments due to their Cold War heritage value, and several buildings within the Flying Field are Listed. Parts of the eastern Flying Field is designated as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS).

**Technical Site** – This area lies to the north of Camp Road, south of the Flying Field, and is characterised by miscellaneous buildings many of which comprise large scale structures previously used for aircraft maintenance set within hard standings interspersed with mature trees and shrubs. Notably, the Telephone Exchange is a Scheduled Monument; the Technical Site also includes a number of Listed buildings. This area also includes Heyford Free School which occupies the former Officer's Mess.

**Residential Area** – This area lies principally to the south of Camp Road which formerly comprised airmen's quarters and associated facilities including a school and sports pitches. An area to the east of the Technical Site, north of Camp Road, comprises former officer's quarters. This area has been subject to ongoing refurbishment and redevelopment as part of Heyford Park. The area is characterised by domestic scale houses and bungalows with gardens and street trees.

### **Topography and Drainage**

3.2.7 The Flying Field occupies a plateau east of the Cherwell Valley and comprises convex high ground, with landform falling away locally to the north and south. Topographically there are subtle variations in levels across the Flying Field, undulating locally to the north, south, east and west, although the former runway is slightly elevated above neighbouring land uses for much of its c.3km length at between 135m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) and 130m AOD (the western end slopes down to c.112m at Somerton Road). The northern part of the Flying Field reaches approximately 130m to 135m AOD with a high point of c.138m AOD and gently slopes to the south at Camp Road which lies at c.125m AOD toward the western edge of the Application Site, and at c. 120m AOD at Chilgrove Drive junction.

3.2.8 To the south of Camp Road, land within the Application Site slopes generally to the south at c.122m AOD to 120m AOD, and the Sewage Works lies at about 115m AOD.

3.2.9 No natural water bodies occur on site, but several water storage and drainage features are present within the Flying Field, historically used during the Air Base operation for firefighting. A number of small streams issue close to the Application Site boundary and flow away from it.

### **Land Use and Built Form**

3.2.10 Land use between and around the buildings north of Camp Road is dominated by the former runway and taxiways, and extensive areas of hard standing with permanent and temporary planning permission for miscellaneous vehicle preparation and storage uses.

3.2.11 Due to its scale and former functions, the Application Site comprises a varied built form and scale, circulation routes, and spaces that are described in greater detail within **Chapter 7: Landscape and Visual Impact**. However, to the south of Camp Road the greenfield parcels west of Tait Drive and east of Heyford Leys Farm comprise arable farmland with no built form or paved access, that directly abut residential uses within Heyford Park. Heyford Park Free School site to the south of Camp Road is bound to the northeast and east by existing 2-storey and single-storey residential development, and to the northwest, west and south by proposed 2 to 2.5-storey residential development and associated green infrastructure on Land South of Camp Road site (although the site is presently occupied by single storey pre-fabricated building of the former school huts; the planning application for this site is yet to be determined). Existing land uses within this parcel include the Free School building, sports pitches and all-weather courts, and an area of vacant land at the south-western end of Izzard Road.

3.2.12 Built form to the north of Camp Road is more complex and large scale, comprising utilitarian military structures of the former Flying Field and technical areas. However, on a more domestic scale, it also includes the Heyford Park Free School to the north of Camp Road and residential properties off Larsen Road and Soden Road.

3.2.13 The Upper Heyford Sewage Works lies within the southeast corner of the Application Site.

#### **Vegetation and Boundaries**

3.2.14 Mature and juvenile trees and shrubs occur in a haphazard manner across the Application Site with areas of grassland separating the built form and hard standings. Notable vegetation includes tree, hedgerow and/or shrub planting along the south-western and north-western boundary of the Flying Field, the southern boundary of the Southern Bomb Stores, flanking Chilgrove Drive, and the western boundary of the parcel east of Tait Drive. A dense tree belt lies outside of but adjacent to the northern boundary of the Flying Field.

3.2.15 The c.2.25m high chain link and barbed wire security fencing that surrounds the former Air Base remains in place and therefore this defines and encloses much of the external boundaries (and occasional internal boundaries) of the Application Site. The former Air Base security fence forms the northern and eastern boundaries of the Application Site parcels 16 and 18 to the west of Tait Drive, with the southern edge marked by an agricultural access track, with the western boundary formed by hedgerows and Port Way, separating this parcel from open countryside. The former Air Base security fence has been removed along the northern and western boundaries of parcel 17 west of Heyford Leys Farm, and it has been replaced by timber post and rail fencing with hedge planting adjacent to existing housing; the eastern boundary of this parcel is formed by existing hedgerows and/or tall chain link fencing of the Sewage Works, and the southern boundary is marked by a gappy hedgerow separating parcel 17 from open countryside.

#### **Public Rights of Way**

3.2.16 Only one Public Right of Way (PRoW), footpath 388/4/20, falls within the within the southwest corner of the Application Site, diagonally crossing parcel 18 in a northwest to southeast direction. No other PRoW occur within the Application Site, but several footpaths and bridleways terminate at or follow the boundary, having been severed or diverted by construction of the former Air Base. Notably, these include two historic long-distance routes comprising Aves Ditch at the east along Chilgrove Drive, and Port Way to the west of the former runway.

### 3.3 APPLICATION SITE CONTEXT

3.3.1 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 3.88km driving distance to the north-east and provides access towards Banbury and Birmingham and south towards Bicester, Oxford and London. Approximately 1.6km south-west of the Application Site is Ardley Energy Recovery Facility (ERF) which began operating in 2014 and takes the majority of residential municipal waste from Oxfordshire and converts it into electricity.

3.3.2 The landscape that surrounds the Application Site is predominantly rural land, within agricultural use interspersed with villages including Fritwell 1.4km to the north, Ardley with Fewcott 0.7km to the northeast, Middleton Stoney 2.2km to the southeast, Caulcott 0.8km to the south, Lower Heyford 1.1km to the southwest, Steeple Aston 2.1km to the west, Middle Aston 2.2km to the west, North Aston 2.7km to the northwest and Somerton 0.9km to the northwest.

3.3.3 A number of individual houses, farmsteads and hamlets occur between the settlements within approximately a 1km radius of the Application Site, including clockwise from the north: Troy Farm and Troy Cottages, Crossroads Farm, Upton Cottage, Ashgrove Farm, Manor Farm (Middleton Stoney), Lime Hollow/The Gorse, Cheesman's Barn, Mudginwell Farm, Village Farm (Somerton) and Portway Cottage.

3.3.4 Other notable land uses and built form within vicinity of the Application Site include Cherwell Valley Motorway Service Area 1.7km to the northeast and Ardley Quarry/Ardley Energy Recovery Facility (ERF) about 1.2km to the southeast.

3.3.5 Land immediately to the west of the Application Site (including in part the south west corner of the Application Site) falls within the Rousham Conservation Area that encompasses a broad swathe of the Cherwell Valley (see **Figure 3.1**).

3.3.6 Four Registered Parks and Gardens occur within the wider context of the Application Site including Aynho 3.8km to the north, Middleton Stoney 650m to the southeast, Kirtlington 3.6km to the south and Rousham 2km to the southwest.

3.3.7 Ardley Cuttings and Quarry Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) lies 120m to the east of the Application site at its closest point (see **Figure 3.1**).

3.3.8 Topographically, the landscape gently slopes to the southeast toward Gagle Brook and south toward Gallos Brook. To the west, the valley of River Cherwell creates a strong landform and separates the Application Site from the higher ground located further west. The A4260 marks that higher ground but is not perceptible due to the distance and intervening vegetative screening; it is approximately 3.7km away at its closest point near Hopcrofts Holt.

**Figure 3.1**

**Environmental Constraints Plan**



**Figure 3.2**

**Existing Features**

