

Steeple Aston Parish Council wishes to object to the application 07/02291/OUT – North Oxford Consortium –

**Steeple Aston Parish Council
response to Planning Applications - Upper Heyford – NOC
07/02291/OUT**

Steeple Aston is one of 23 parishes which jointly submitted evidence to the planning inquiry into the previous appeal about the development of this site. There were a number of important points which were recognised by the appeal inspector and remain relevant to the current application:

1. The site is mainly open, with built development situated around Camp Road. Further extensions into the open parts of the site should not be encouraged, and the open areas should be retained and linked directly to the surrounding countryside. UH1(i)
2. This is not a sustainable location for a large new settlement. It would impact on the development of Bicester and result in many additional commuting journeys. Therefore it should be specifically limited to redevelopment of the Camp Road area on the scale specified in the Oxfordshire Structure Plan - around 1,000 new dwellings and 1,500 jobs, a policy which Steeple Aston Parish Council supports.
3. Any new scheme should be clearly designed as a complete settlement of limited size, not as the basis for expansion to a larger settlement. UH1 (i)
4. Whilst the Parish Council accepted that commercial uses have been temporarily based on the site, and recognises that useful employment has been provided since, this should not be used as a pretext for commercial exploitation of the whole. We would support existing commercial uses which provide local employment and are commensurate with planning policy. UH1(iii)
5. Steeple Aston Parish council recognises the wish of already established commercial enterprises to retain the existing fence as a means of site security, however we believe that the perimeter fence should be removed to the west and south of the site, and to all the residential area, so as to open the site to the countryside and remove an eyesore. The water towers, which are visible from Rousham House, should be removed in the first phase of any development.
6. The pre-existing footpaths on the site should be re-instated. UH1(x).
7. Traffic movements over the narrow historic bridges to the west should be discouraged.
8. We support the inclusion of affordable housing in the application and believe that the employment provided should be commensurate with the 1000 dwelling target, as specified in the Oxfordshire Structure Plan. We believe that existing residents should be given priority to secure either affordable, rented or purchasable property on the site, and that the proportion of affordable housing provided should be or exceed the District Council's minimum statutory requirement. H7 /UH1(v).

9. We have serious concerns that the proposed transport initiatives will not prevent an increase of car traffic to the west of Upper Heyford thus having an adverse impact on the inadequate rural road system and Rousham Bridge.

Extending the proposed bus services to include Steeple Aston might usefully reduce some car journeys east from here. UH(viii)

10. We regret the decision not to provide a Health Centre on site as we do not believe that the use of the existing Health Centre at Deddington is a viable option. UH1(vi)

11. We believe that the lack of provision for a primary or other school will be detrimental to the development of Upper Heyford and increase pressure on educational provision in the surrounding area UH1(vi)

Achievement of an appropriate 'village feel' will depend upon detailed control over scale, built form and use of materials.

The Parish Council are concerned that the proposal does not appear to deal comprehensively with the whole site, i.e. showing the integration of the former runway and HAS areas with the surrounding countryside, including additional landscaping, part removal of perimeter fence and water towers etc. We question the argument that the NOC's desire to retain specific commercial uses should justify the fence remaining in situ. Whilst we have no objection to continued use of the HAS's, we feel that alternative security arrangements should be sought. Landscape, restoration etc should be carried out across **the whole** of the base area (Oxfordshire Structure Plan policy H2b).

Furthermore, the Parish Council are concerned that, in the absence of a full treatment of the whole base area, there will be later attempts to expand the settlement and so defeat the very clear policies on the scale of development (see paras 7.7 and 7.8 of the Structure Plan). In effect, the NOC are saying - give us permission for our development of a new settlement, but do not require us to take any serious steps to restore the damaged landscape or cease extensive uses or remove major items. The result will be that the base will remain an unrestored site in perpetuity. Minor scarification of runways and some alteration to the perimeter fence will not significantly improve the existing situation.

The Parish Council therefore suggests that this application be refused until such time as a fully comprehensive plan for the final treatment of the whole site is included.