

Friday, 08 August 2014

Head of Strategic Planning
Cherwell District Council
Bodicote House
Bodicote
Banbury
Oxon
OX15 4AA

BY EMAIL AND POST

Dear Sir

Mid-Cherwell – Application for Designation of a Neighbourhood Plan Area

I am writing on behalf of Ardley with Fewcott Parish Council as the lead-parish responsible for the submission of an application designation of a neighbourhood area in accordance with Part 2 Paragraph 5 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, for a consortium of Parish Councils and other interested parties, as listed below:

- Kirtlington Parish Council
- Duns Tew Parish Council
- Lower Heyford Parish Council
- Middleton Stoney Parish Council
- Somerton Parish Council
- Steeple Aston Parish Council
- Middle Aston Parish Council
- North Aston Parish Council
- Ardley with Fewcott Parish Council
- Fritwell Parish Council
- Upper Heyford Parish Council
- Heyford Park Residents' Association
- Dorchester Group, as both the owners of the former RAF Upper Heyford Site, and to represent the business community that constitutes part of Heyford Park

This application includes and makes the following statements:

- a) A map that defines the area and boundary of the Neighbourhood Area – enclosed.
- b) A statement explaining why this area is considered appropriate as a neighbourhood area;
and
- c) A statement that the organisation or body making the area application is a relevant body for the purposes of section 61G of the 1990 Act.

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF APPLICATION FOR DESIGNATION OF NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA.

The proposed Neighbourhood Area, referred to as the Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan Area, is identified on the enclosed plan. The extent of the Neighbourhood Area reflects the commitment and desire from the partner Parish Council's and Residents' Association, as well as the Land Owner of the former RAF Upper Heyford Air Base, to participate in the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan. The Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Planning Forum is working together to agree precise Terms of Reference in order to decide upon the exact process that will be used to formulate the Neighbourhood Plan document, but all the individual organisations listed above are committed to the idea that the proposed Neighbourhood Area is coherent and logical.

The M40 to the East and the A4260 to the west represent obvious boundaries to the Neighbourhood Area, although in the case of the A4260, the parishes of Duns Tew, North Aston, Middle Aston and Steeple Aston extend slightly beyond the A4260. These geographical features give a sense of coherency to the boundary area that has been identified.

The rural setting of the Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Area represents a collection of communities and Parishes that occupy a distinctive area of the Cherwell District. Located within the proposed Neighbourhood Area is the former RAF Upper Heyford site, now known as Heyford Park. This brownfield site has a land area of approximately 500 hectares and the New Settlement Area of 1,075 dwellings (together with associated works and facilities including employment uses, community uses, a school, playing fields and other physical and social infrastructure), and therefore represents a substantial development within the Neighbourhood Area. The site also has the benefit of a Free School that provides primary, secondary and sixth form provision. The Free School opened in September 2013 and has proved very popular not only with those who live at Heyford Park, but also with many of the Parishes identified within the boundary area particularly at Secondary level. This compliments the pre-existing primary provision in the villages of Fritwell, Steeple Aston and Kirtlington, who also provide for the majority of Parishes within the boundary.

Heyford Park, both now and in the future, acts as anchor to the surrounding rural settlements by providing services and facilities to meet every day needs, as well being the only strategic employment location outside of the main towns of Bicester and Banbury. Consequently the parishes and communities identified within the boundary area that has been submitted are more logically likely to enter Heyford Park to access key amenities rather than traveling to Bicester, Kidlington, Banbury or Chipping Norton.

The 11 Parish Councils which form the Neighbourhood Plan area all have close functional relationships to the only major location for development outside of Bicester and Banbury, the former RAF Upper Heyford site. Consequently, as opportunities for further development at the former RAF Upper Heyford site are explored and identified, each of the Parish Council's will be affected, both in terms of the availability and accessibility of services and facilities on this site, which will reduce the need to travel further afield, as well as in terms of the associated impacts that additional development at the former RAF Upper Heyford site would bring.

By including both the Parish Councils and the Dorchester Group in the Neighbourhood Planning Forum that we wish to be designated, a method of collaborative working will be established with the aim of ensuring that future development proposals meet the aspirations of the Parish Council's and other community groups in the locality, and that the development is sensitive to its surroundings.

As a rural location, all of the members of the Neighbourhood Planning Forum are committed to ensuring that the quality and character of the local communities is maintained and where possible enhanced, whilst working jointly to respond appropriately to opportunities for growth as the District seeks to address its future development requirements. Through the Neighbourhood Plan process,

the partner Parish Council's will seek to ensure that the majority of new development is directed to the Upper Heyford Site in order to protect the rural communities from speculative and inappropriate development proposals which, if approved, would result in the degradation of these rural communities and result in unsustainable patterns of development.

This approach is consistent with the principles of Neighbourhood Planning as enshrined in the Coalition Government's Localism Act 2011 and it is a core planning principle, established in the National Planning Policy Framework (Paragraph 17) that planning should be "*genuinely plan-led, empowering local people to shape their surroundings, with succinct local and neighbourhood plans setting out a positive future of the area*".

This is particularly relevant in the context of the rural areas of the District. The Submission Local Plan does not allocate specific sites within villages, it confirms (paragraph C.217) that the suitability of individual sites will be considered through work on a Local Neighbourhoods Development Plan Document or, where appropriate, through the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans. The Submission Local plan recognises that Neighbourhood Plans provide an opportunity for local community to play an active role in deciding how future development should be accommodated.

Once designated, the Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Planning Forum will collectively work together to ensure that future development in the newly created Neighbourhood area is appropriately directed to a preferred location to preserve the intrinsic quality and character of the rural communities within the Neighbourhood.

RELEVANT BODY STATUS

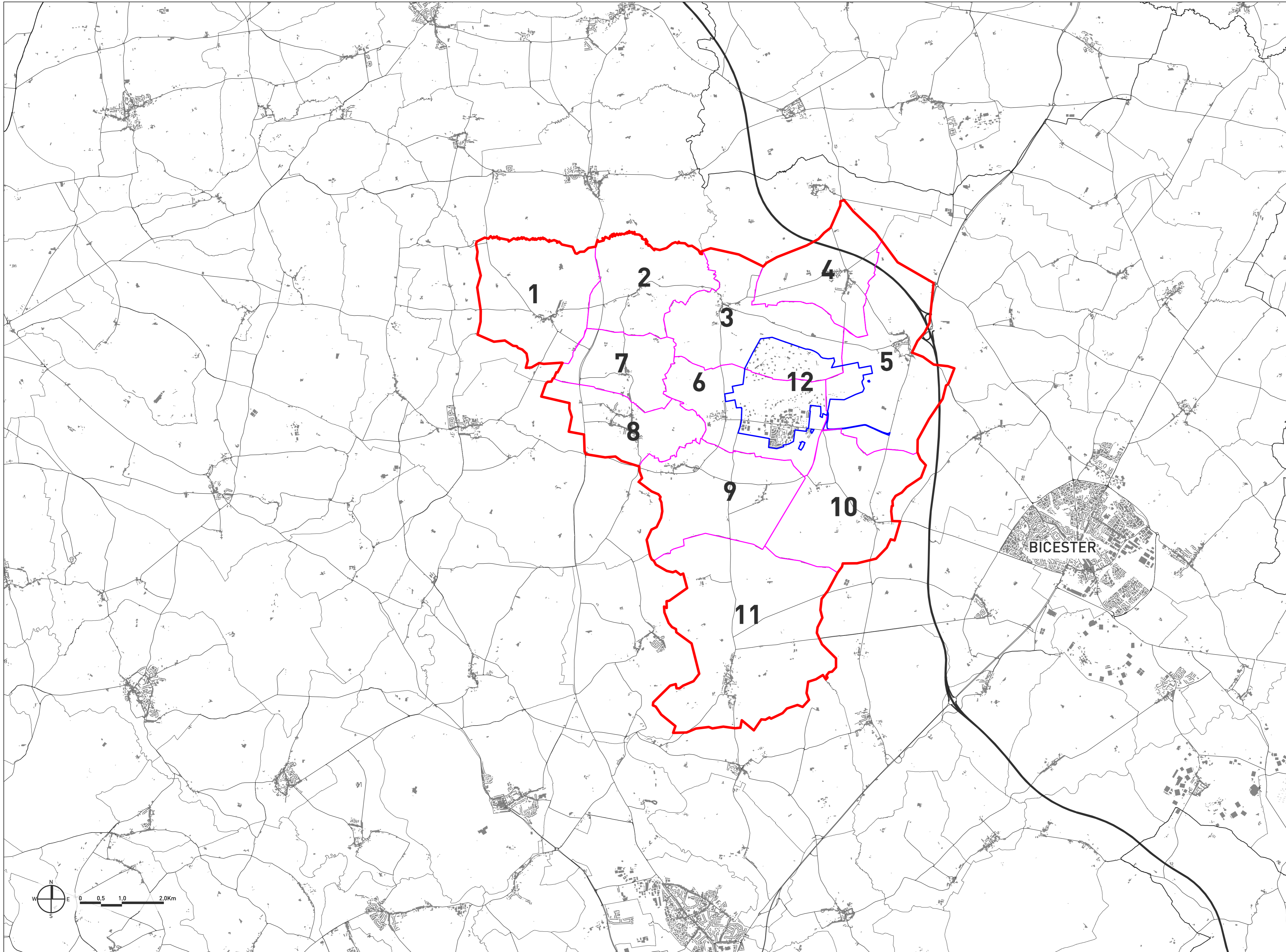
As the lead-Parish in the application for the Neighbourhood Designation Area, Ardley with Fewcott Parish Council is a Relevant Body within the terms of Section 61G(2)(2) of the 1990 Act.

This application is made with the full support of the Parish Council's which form the Neighbourhood Area, as well as Dorchester Group as the owners of the former RAF Upper Heyford site.

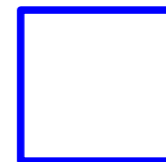

The Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Planning Forum will establish clear Terms of Reference in order to create and maintain strong working relationships amongst the various organisations involved, as well as Dorchester Group as Land Owner of the former RAF Upper Heyford site. The Planning Forum also intends to work positively with the District Council so that the Neighbourhood Plan that is prepared is sound and fully compliant.

Yours faithfully

Cllr Ian Corkin
Ardley with Fewcott Parish Council



KEY

-  Heyford Park Site
-  Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan Designation Area

- 1 Duns Tew
- 2 North Aston
- 3 Somerton
- 4 Fritwell
- 5 Ardley
- 6 Upper Heyford
- 7 Middle Aston
- 8 Steeple Aston
- 9 Lower Heyford
- 10 Middleton Stoney
- 11 Kirtlington
- 12 Heyford Park