Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)
Screening Report

EIC and School development within RAF Croughton

March 2016

Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO)
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## Abbreviations

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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>AQMA</td>
<td>Air Quality Management Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BoCC</td>
<td>Birds of Conservation Concern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEMP</td>
<td>Construction Environmental Management Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTMP</td>
<td>Construction Traffic Management Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEFRA</td>
<td>Department for Environment and Rural Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIO</td>
<td>Defence Infrastructure Organisation</td>
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<td>DREAM</td>
<td>Defence Related Environmental Assessment Methodology</td>
</tr>
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<td>EIA</td>
<td>Environmental Impact Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIC</td>
<td>European Infrastructure Consolidation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMS</td>
<td>Environmental Management System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ha</td>
<td>hectare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>km</td>
<td>kilometre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LWS</td>
<td>Local Wildlife Site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>metres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoD</td>
<td>Ministry of Defence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBRC</td>
<td>Northamptonshire Biodiversity Records Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NERC</td>
<td>Natural Environment Rural Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO₂</td>
<td>nitrogen dioxide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PM₁₀</td>
<td>particulate matter with a diameter of less than 10 micrometres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PWS</td>
<td>Potential Wildlife Site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAF</td>
<td>Royal Air Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SATCOM</td>
<td>satellite communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWMP</td>
<td>Site Waste Management Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USVF</td>
<td>United States Visiting Forces</td>
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1 Introduction

1.1 Terms of Reference

1.1.1 This Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Report has been prepared by Mott MacDonald on behalf of the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) for a proposed development at Royal Air Force (RAF) Croughton, Brackley, Northamptonshire.

1.1.2 This report has been prepared to accompany a request for an EIA Screening Opinion from South Northamptonshire Council in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 and the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 (herein collectively referred to as the “EIA Regulations”).

1.2 Report Structure

1.2.1 This report begins with a brief overview of the proposed development in the context of the military base that it is located within. Information is provided on the planning strategy, along with details of the information sources used throughout the rest of the report, and assumptions and limitations. Section 2 provides information on RAF Croughton and the proposed development sites and Section 3 provides information on the need for the proposed development and a description of the proposal. Section 4 details the approach to the screening assessment and Section 5 describes the potential environmental effects of the proposed development. Section 6 details the proposed environmental mitigation measures and finally, Section 7 summarises the report and provides information on the planning application documents that may be required to be submitted.

1.3 Development Overview

1.3.1 RAF Croughton is a military communications base owned by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and currently occupied by the United States Visiting Forces (USVF). The base is currently a mixture of relatively dense buildings along with areas of open space that is used as an antennae field.

1.3.2 The proposed development comprises the construction of seven new buildings and associated infrastructure along with the extension of two existing buildings. The proposed development also includes the demolition of two existing buildings, see Figure 1 in Appendix A.

1.3.3 The proposed development is required to enable RAF Croughton to fulfil a communication base role, previously filled by RAF Molesworth in Cambridgeshire which is due for closure. Military personnel and their families currently based at RAF Molesworth will be relocating to RAF Croughton.
1.4 Planning Strategy

1.4.1 For the purposes of EIA screening, this report considers all the various components of the EIC and school development as a single proposal. However, the individual components that make up the development, as detailed in Section 3, will not be brought forward through the planning system in a single planning application. To date, the exact planning strategy has not yet been finalised, however it is anticipated that the developments will be divided into at least three separate planning applications to be submitted in phases over the next few years. The specifics of the phasing and the contents of each planning application are not yet known.

1.5 Information Sources

1.5.1 To date, there have been a number of technical environmental reports that have been produced for various development proposals at RAF Croughton.

1.5.2 The environmental reports that have been used to inform this EIA screening assessment are detailed below:
   - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Mott MacDonald, February 2016;
   - Heritage Statement, Mott MacDonald, February 2016;
   - Acoustic Planning Report, Mott MacDonald, February 2016;
   - Flood Risk Assessment RD1, Mott MacDonald, February 2016;
   - Flood Risk Assessment RD2, Mott MacDonald, February 2016;
   - Preliminary Transport Assessment; Technical Note, Mott MacDonald, February 2016;
   - Geotechnical and Geo-environmental Desk Study, Mott MacDonald, February 2016; and
   - Air Quality Assessment, Mott MacDonald, February 2016.

1.5.3 In addition, desktop assessments have been carried out that have used the following data sources for the purposes of this EIA Screening Report:
   - Web-based aerial photography, 2016;
   - South Northamptonshire Council, online planning portal, 2016;
   - Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), Magic online interactive map, 2016;
   - Environment Agency ‘What’s in your back yard?’ online interactive map, 2016;
   - MOD, Environmental Management System: RAF Croughton, 2016; and
   - Ordnance Survey, web-based mapping, 2016.

1.6 Assumptions and Limitations

1.6.1 This report has been compiled based on available data where every effort has been made to ensure that the data is accurate and up-to-date.

1.6.2 Where assessments have been based on desktop surveys, the information sources utilised are listed in Section 1.5.
2 RAF Croughton and the Development Sites

2.1 RAF Croughton

Background

2.1.1 RAF Croughton is a military base located at Croughton near Brackley, Northamptonshire, approximately 11 kilometres (km) south-west of Banbury. The base is approximately centred on National Grid Reference 456200, 232600, see Figure 1 in Appendix A.

2.1.2 RAF Croughton is owned by the MoD but is occupied by the USVF. RAF Croughton is a communications base and operates one of Europe’s largest military switchboards, processing approximately one third of all US military communications in Europe.

2.1.3 There has been a military airfield at this location since 1938; originally known as Brackley Landing Ground, it became RAF Brackley in 1940 and was used during the Battle of Britain as an emergency landing site. In 1941 the airfield was renamed RAF Croughton and was used as a training base until 1946. In 1950 the USVF took over use of the airfield, using it as a communications base, which it has continued to do to the present day.

Base Description

2.1.4 RAF Croughton covers an area of approximately 280 hectares (ha) and has an elevated ridge running east-west across the centre of the base with the terrain sloping northwards and southwards away from the ridge.

2.1.5 RAF Croughton is contained within security fencing, with controlled access to the B4031 at the north of the base, known as Village Gate. The base is bounded by the highway of the A43 to the south-east, approximately 4.5km north-east of the junction of the A43 with the M40 at Cherwell Valley Services. There is also a gate that provides controlled access on to the base from the A43, currently used for emergency and over-sized vehicles.

2.1.6 The northern part of the base contains the vast majority of the existing buildings. These have a wide range of uses, including accommodation, amenity, offices, workshops and storage, with a mixture of single, two storey and three storey heights. There are also car parks and a running track.

2.1.7 The southern part of the base functions as a high frequency antennae field and comprises mainly of pasture land which is surrounded by an arterial road. Within this part of the base there are also a variety of buildings, geodesic domes and operation antennae along with the associated access roads.
2.2 Development Sites

2.2.1 The locations where the proposed developments are to be constructed or demolished (the development sites) are shown in Figures 2 and 3 as presented in Appendix A.

2.2.2 The largest of the proposed development sites is in the northern part of the antennae field. Additional development sites are located adjacent to the southern part of the arterial road, within and on the edge of the northern built up areas and on the northern base perimeter.

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1 For clarity, references made within this report to the ‘proposed development sites’ relate to the areas occupied by the proposed buildings or structures or the areas where the proposed demolition is to take place, as shown in Figures 1-3 Appendix A. The term ‘site’ will not be used to describe RAF Croughton as a whole, which will be referred to as the ‘base’.
3 Proposed Development

3.1 Need for the Development

3.1.1 In January 2015 the United States Air Force (USAF) announced plans to shut three of its airbases in the UK; RAF Mildenhall in Suffolk, and RAF Alconbury and RAF Molesworth in Cambridgeshire.

3.1.2 As a result of these closures, approximately 1300 military personnel will be reassigned to RAF Croughton by 2022, primarily from RAF Molesworth although a small number of personnel will transfer from RAF Alconbury. Accommodation for a proportion of the transferring personnel will be provided by the USVF either within the base or within existing under-utilised off-base housing at Caversfield, near Bicester, approximately 11 km south of the base. The USVF are currently undertaking an exercise to identify additional suitable off-site rental accommodation. Educational and medical facilities will be provided within the base.

3.1.3 Additional facilities and renovations are required to accommodate the additional personnel and to enable the base to take over the communications role that RAF Molesworth previously fulfilled.

3.2 Description of the Proposed Development

3.2.1 Table 3.1 details the components of the proposed development which are also shown in Figures 2 and 3 in Appendix A. Table 3.1 also details the approximate ground footprint of the proposed development components.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Details</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To be constructed:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration building</td>
<td>To provide office accommodation. Two storey building with a ground footprint approximately 10,900m². A landscaped bund ranging from approximately 2.5m to 5m high will surround the north, south and east perimeter of the building covering approximately 34,100m².</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warehouse</td>
<td>To provide storage for office supplies/furniture. Approximately 11m high building with a ground footprint approximately 1900m².</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recycling bin storage centre</td>
<td>To provide storage for recycling bins and temporary storage for recycled furniture. A small area of the storage centre will be used for hazardous material storage. Approximately 5m high building with a ground footprint approximately 200m².</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation block</td>
<td>Will accommodate 168 military personnel. Three storey building with a ground footprint approximately 2200m².</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitness centre</td>
<td>Facility provided for military personnel and families living or working with the base. Two storey building with a ground footprint approximately 5300m².</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commissary</td>
<td>Food store facility provided for military personnel living or working with the base. Approximately 8m high building with a ground footprint approximately 2900m².</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>Facility for primary and secondary school aged children of military personnel living or working with the base. Approximately 11m high building with a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Component</td>
<td>Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ground footprint approximately 9100m². Hardstanding (i.e. car parking and playgrounds) associated with the school cover approximately 55,150m² and sports fields cover approximately 31,100m².</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road</td>
<td>Approximately 1km road linking the warehouse in the south of the base with the administration building in the north of the base. Ground footprint approximately 9200m².</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car parking</td>
<td>Car parking for the administration building, the accommodation block and the commissary. Ground footprint approximately 73,150m².</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substation</td>
<td>Ground footprint approximately 150m².</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>To be constructed for use within the construction phase:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base entrance facility</td>
<td>Base entrance providing temporary access via the A43 for abnormal loads and construction traffic. Ground footprint approximately 11,700m² which includes a security cabin with a ground footprint approximately 100m².</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concrete batching facility</td>
<td>Temporary facility to be present during the construction phase of the development. Anticipated highest component of the plant approximately 6m high. Ground footprint approximately 900m². To be located on the existing recycling bin storage centre that is due to be demolished as part of the development. After the construction phase the facility will be removed and the area will be incorporated into the landscaping surrounding the accommodation block.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>To be extended:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing post office</td>
<td>Single storey extension with a ground footprint approximately 550m².</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing nursery</td>
<td>Nursery for children of military personnel either residing or working within the base. Single storey extension with a ground footprint approximately 450m².</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>To be demolished:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing recycling bin storage centre</td>
<td>Approximately 5m high building with a ground footprint approximately 1000m².</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing fitness centre</td>
<td>Two storey high building with a ground footprint approximately 1800m².</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The total of all the approximate ground footprints for individual development components in the above table will not equal the total development area as stated in Section 4 and 5. This is due to the proposed concrete batching plant being located where the existing recycling bin storage centre is currently located.

**3.2.2** Potable water and foul water services will be extended from the existing base wide network to all buildings apart from the warehouse, which will have a local system, and the recycling bin storage centre, which will not require any water or drainage services.

**3.2.3** Gas will be provided via connections to existing networks to all buildings apart from the warehouse, which will have an oil boiler and the recycling bin storage centre, which will not have a gas supply.

**3.2.4** All buildings will have electricity provided by connection to the existing network. The existing 11kV ring main will be extended to a newly constructed local substation that will supply power to the new development.
3.2.5 The proposed development is anticipated to be built to the Defence Related Environmental Assessment Methodology (DREAM) 'Excellent' standard and will incorporate water and energy conservation measures, where possible.

3.2.6 It is anticipated that the construction phase of the proposed development will last approximately 45 months, commencing the end of 2017. The majority of the development will be operational by the end of 2021.

3.2.7 The principal construction compound will be located on the area that will become the administration building car parking. Each of the development components will have its own satellite construction compound that will surround an area larger than the permanent development.

3.2.8 The majority of the approximate 1300 military personnel that are transferring to RAF Croughton will be working in the administration building. Approximately 100 personnel will be working within the warehouse, nursery, fitness centre, accommodation block, commissary and school.

3.2.9 The anticipated operational hours of the seven new buildings within the development are as follows:

- Administration building: the majority of the building will operate 09:00 to 17:00, weekdays with a sub-section that will operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on a shift basis;
- Warehouse: 07:00 to 17:00, weekdays;
- Recycling bin storage centre: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week;
- Accommodation block: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week;
- Fitness centre: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week;
- Commissary: 10:00 to 18:00 weekdays, 10:00 to 17:00 weekends; and
- School: 08:00 to 17:00 weekdays.
4 EIA Screening Approach

4.1 Screening Approach

4.1.1 The project is considered under Schedule 2, Part 13 Changes and Extensions (b) a change to or extension of a Schedule 2 development where that development is already authorised, executed or in the process of being executed, of the EIA Regulations. The indicative screening threshold for this category is development comprising change or extension which is more than 1ha in size.

4.1.2 The proposed development at RAF Croughton, including demolition work and temporary works, covers an area of approximately 25ha and as such is approximately 24ha over the indicative 1ha threshold.

4.1.3 Under the EIA Regulations, proposed developments may require an EIA if the development is deemed ‘...likely to have a significant effect on the environment by virtue of factors such as its size, nature or location’. In order to establish if the proposed development could potentially have such effects, Schedule 2 requires a selection criteria, set out in Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations, to be applied to the project.

4.1.4 Section 5 of this report assesses the RAF Croughton proposal against the Schedule 3 screening criteria, which is divided into three categories:
   - Category 1: characteristics of the development;
   - Category 2: location of the development; and
   - Category 3: characteristics of the potential impact.

4.1.5 Category 1 of the screening criteria is detailed in Section 5.2 of this report. This section describes the characteristics of the development in terms of:
   - (a) the size of the development;
   - (b) the cumulation with other development;
   - (c) the use of natural resources;
   - (d) the production of waste;
   - (e) pollution and nuisances; and
   - (f) the risk of accidents, having regard in particular to substances or technologies used.

4.1.6 Category 2 of the screening criteria is detailed in Section 5.3 of this report. This section describes the environmental sensitivity of the proposed development site with regard to:
   - (a) the existing land use;
   - (b) the relative abundance, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources in the area;
   - (c) the absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to the following areas:
     - (i) wetlands;
     - (ii) coastal zones;
     - (iii) mountain and forest areas;
– (iv) nature reserves and parks;
– (vi) areas in which the environmental quality standards laid down in EU legislation have already been exceeded;
– (vii) densely populated areas; and
– (viii) landscapes of historical, cultural or archaeological significance.

4.1.7 Category 3 of the screening criteria is detailed in Section 5.4 of this report. This section describes the characteristics of the potential impacts and is organised based on environmental topic. Consideration has been given to the characteristics (category 1) and location of the development (category 2) along with regard to the following Schedule 3 criteria:

- (a) the extent of the impact (geographical area and size of the affected population);
- (b) the transfrontier nature of the impact;
- (c) the magnitude and complexity of the impact;
- (d) the probability of the impact; and
- (e) the duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact.
5 EIA Screening Assessment

5.1.1 This section assesses the proposed development against the EIA screening criteria outlined in Section 4. The technical assessments detailed in Section 1.5 have been used, where relevant, to inform this assessment.

5.2 Characteristics of the Development

Size of the development

5.2.1 The proposed development comprises the construction of seven new buildings and associated infrastructure, along with the extension of two existing buildings, within an existing military base which already has approximately 140 buildings. The proposed development also includes the demolition of two existing buildings, see Table 3.1. The total ground footprint of all the buildings and infrastructure components to be constructed or demolished will total approximately 25ha.

5.2.2 Of the total approximate 25ha of development, the landscaping associated with the administration building and the school sports pitches comprise approximately 6.5ha and the hardstanding comprises approximately 15ha.

5.2.3 The remaining development of buildings and the site where the existing recycling bin storage centre is located (which will ultimately be landscaped) comprises approximately 3.5ha.

Cumulation with other development

5.2.4 A planning history review was conducted through the public access planning portal of the South Northamptonshire Council website on the 25 January 2016. This review focussed on identifying any major planning applications (either full application, outline application or reserved matters application) within 2km of RAF Croughton. The review identified one relevant application made since 2010. This planning application is within RAF Croughton and is for a BBQ pavilion and an adjoining toilet block, and is currently awaiting determination; see Table 5.1 for further information.

5.2.5 No other applications were identified that were deemed to have a potential cumulative impact with the proposed development at RAF Croughton when taking into consideration the size of the development and the proximity to the base. The rural location of the military base has resulted in the majority of the planning applications submitted since 2010 that were identified comprising extensions to existing residential properties, new individual houses or changes of use from agricultural to other uses within the boundary of the village of Croughton. These developments were not considered to be of substantial size to potentially have a cumulative impact with the RAF Croughton proposals.

5.2.6 In addition to the committed developments identified on the Council’s planning portal, there are developments that are either planned by the Applicant or known about by the Applicant
within or connected to RAF Croughton in the reasonably foreseeable future. These developments are also identified in Table 5.1 along with the justification for excluding individual developments from assessing the potential cumulative effects.

5.2.7 Developments that are included within the cumulative assessment are developments that are considered to be coming forward in the reasonably foreseeable future and where adequate information is known about the project in order to assess the potential cumulative effects.

5.2.8 The developments listed in Table 5.1 are functionally independent and are not physically connected to the proposed EIC and school development. The proposed EIC and school development could proceed irrespective of whether the other developments gain planning permission and vice versa.

Table 5.1: Future developments within or associated with RAF Croughton

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Considered within cumulative assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SATCOM (Applicant development proposal)</td>
<td>Development comprises three buildings, hardstanding for proposed future satellite terminals and associated infrastructure. The development also includes demolition of existing SATCOM facilities. See Figure 1 in Appendix A for proposed building locations and demolition locations.</td>
<td>Construction mid/late 2017 for 21 months. Demolition of existing SATCOM facilities early/mid 2021.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBQ pavilion and adjoining toilet block (Third party development proposal)</td>
<td>Planning application currently awaiting determination (application reference number: S/2015/3042/MAF). The application area currently comprises hardstanding and a carpark. See Figure 1 in Appendix A for proposed location.</td>
<td>Construction early to mid-2016.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powerline (Third party development proposal)</td>
<td>Powerline linking the new substation at the north of the base to the grid north of Brackley.</td>
<td>Construction mid-2017 to mid-2018.</td>
<td>No There is uncertainty regarding the details of the power line and it is unknown if the powerline will be above or below ground. Any necessary consent would be obtained by a third party for this proposal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2.9 For the purposes of EIA screening, a worst case position has been assumed such that given the timeframe for the proposed development, the potential environmental effects of the proposed development will be considered cumulatively with the SATCOM development and the BBQ pavilion development.
5.2.10 There will be an overlap of the construction periods between the proposed development and the SATCOM development. This overlap will be from the end of the 2017 to the beginning of 2019. There will also be an overlap during the demolition of the existing SATCOM facilities at the beginning of 2021.

5.2.11 The potential cumulative construction and operational effects from the proposed development in combination with the proposed SATCOM development and the BBQ pavilion are considered for the following environmental topics in Section 5.4:

- Ecology;
- Noise;
- Air quality;
- Transport;
- Historic environment;
- Landscape; and
- Socio-economic.

5.2.12 It is considered that there will not be potential cumulative operational effects from the proposed development in combination with the developments listed in Table 5.1 on the following environmental topics:

- Ground conditions and contaminated land; and
- Water.

**Use of natural resources**

5.2.13 The construction of the proposed development will necessitate the use of some natural materials including brick, tiles and timber. Appropriate sustainable construction techniques will be adopted.

5.2.14 The new building will aim to achieve the Defence Related Environmental Assessment Methodology (DREAM) ‘Excellent’ standard and will incorporate water and energy conservation measures where possible.

5.2.15 The existing RAF Croughton Environmental Management System (EMS) stipulates the responsible use of energy and water through the use of an Energy Management Plan and a Water Efficiency Plan.

**Production of waste**

5.2.16 The construction and demolition associated with the development will inevitably generate waste. However, the use of resources can be minimised through construction site best practice and by maximising the amount of materials that can be re-used or recycled. A Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP) produced prior to the start of construction will detail these measures. Waste will also be produced during the operational phases of the proposed
development although this will be limited, where feasible, with a focus on recycling. Section 6 provides further information on the role of the base EMS in managing operational waste.

Pollution and nuisances

5.2.17 Strict controls will be applied during the construction phase through effective implementation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) to minimise the risk of pollution and nuisance. The CEMP will be produced by the construction contractor and is a mandatory requirement under DREAM. Further information on the CEMP is provided in Section 6.

Risk of accidents

5.2.18 The proposed development will be constructed using standardised building techniques and technologies.

5.2.19 The existing EMS requires that procedures are in place to inform all contractors working within RAF Croughton of the recorded hazards within the base, any environmentally sensitive issues and any environmental protection measures before any work can begin.

5.3 Location of the Development

Existing land use

5.3.1 There has been a military base at this location since 1938. Currently RAF Croughton functions as a communications base and as such a large proportion of the base is used as an antennae field in which satellite terminals are located.

5.3.2 RAF Croughton comprises a range of buildings including accommodation, amenity, offices, workshops and storage along with car parks and a running track.

5.3.3 The majority of the proposed development sites currently comprise pasture land within the antennae field. The remaining development sites comprise amenity grassland within the northern developed part of the base with two sites containing existing buildings.

Relative abundance, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources

5.3.4 Information from the preliminary ecological appraisal carried out in February 2016 is summarised below.

Habitats

5.3.5 The northern part of the base is mostly built up, comprising a variety of buildings with associated hardstanding, amenity grassland and scattered trees.
5.3.6 The southern part of the base comprises extensive areas of improved grassland grazed by sheep. The intensive grazing on these areas means that they have a relatively low diversity of plant species. Species poor native hedgerows form the boundaries of some of these grazed areas. Hedgerows are also found elsewhere within the base including on the northern perimeter fence and amongst some of the existing buildings in the northern developed area.

5.3.7 A few areas of semi-improved grassland were recorded adjacent to the perimeter road where there is no grazing and the mowing is relatively infrequent.

5.3.8 Scattered trees were recorded in many parts of the base where they have been planted for amenity, particularly on areas of amenity grassland and adjacent to buildings and hardstanding.

5.3.9 A band of immature plantation woodland is located between the perimeter fence and the A43 road and young plantation woodland can be found surrounding an attenuation pond outside the southern perimeter of the base.

5.3.10 Outside of the base security perimeter in the adjacent "RAF Croughton Nature Trail and Reserve" (see paragraph 5.3.33 for further details) to the north-east of the base, dense scrub dominates the northern half of the area. Scattered scrub is also found within improved grassland to the south-east of the base.

5.3.11 Outside of the base there are also five ponds to the north and three ponds to the south of the base. One of the ponds to the south of the base was created during the construction of the A43.

5.3.12 Croughton Brook and Ockley Brook, respectively, run near to the boundary to the north and south of the base. Herb and ruderal vegetation border Croughton Brook and hedgerows running alongside the northern bank of Ockley Brook.

5.3.13 Buildings and structures that are present within the base are relatively modern constructions.

Protected and notable plant species

5.3.14 In terms of protected and notable plant species within RAF Croughton, Northamptonshire Biodiversity Records Centre (NBRC) provided records of three species that were listed as either vulnerable or endangered within the Vascular Plant Red Data List.

Protected and notable animal species

5.3.15 Breeding and wintering birds records from the NBRC identified that 11 species had been observed within 2km of RAF Croughton. Information from a previous bird survey (carried out in 2011 and accessed as part of the preliminary ecological assessment), recorded 38 breeding bird species (including seven red listed and seven amber listed Birds of
Conservation Concern (BoCC)) and 25 wintering bird species (including five red listed and four amber listed BoCC).

5.3.16 There are previous records of five bat species within 2km of RAF Croughton.

5.3.17 There is suitable foraging and commuting habitat within the base, including tree lines, ponds and hedgerows. There is a small outside toilet adjacent to the proposed fitness centre has moderate potential to support roosting bats.

5.3.18 No records of otters were provided by the NBRC however Ockley Brook to the south of RAF Croughton is likely to provide suitable otter habitat. Water voles have been recorded at Croughton Brook to the north of RAF Croughton although the lack of watercourses within the base means that it is unlikely for either otters or water voles to frequent the area.

5.3.19 NBRC records show that there have been badgers recorded within RAF Croughton. A previous ecological survey (2011) located active badger setts to the north and south of the base; however, no signs were identified during the preliminary ecological assessment carried out in 2016. A sett was identified to the south-west of the base in the recent assessment along with a culvert under the base perimeter fence which would enable badgers to forage within the base.

5.3.20 There is no suitable habitat for dormouse within RAF Croughton.

5.3.21 The NBRC records show the previous presence of brown hare within the base.

5.3.22 No reptiles were recorded during a previous ecological survey although there is a record provided by the NBRC of a grass snake within 2km of the base.

5.3.23 There are no records of great crested newts within 2km of RAF Croughton although the attenuation ponds adjacent to the A43 to the south of the base have the potential to provide habitat for them. Semi-improved grassland and hedgerows within the base are also suitable habitat for great-crested newts.

5.3.24 A previous ecological survey recorded white-clawed crayfish in Croughton Brook approximately 100m to the north of RAF Croughton.

Absorption capacity of the natural environment

5.3.25 The absorption capacity of the natural environment is considered against the following headings, as described in Section 4.

Wetlands

5.3.26 There are no wetlands within the immediate or wider vicinity of RAF Croughton.
Coastal zones

5.3.27 There are no coastal zones within the immediate or wider vicinity of RAF Croughton.

Mountain and forest areas

5.3.28 There are no mountain and forest areas within the immediate or wider vicinity of RAF Croughton.

Nature reserves and parks

5.3.29 No statutory designated sites were identified within RAF Croughton or within 2km of the base.

5.3.30 However, there are eleven non-statutory designated Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) within 2km of RAF Croughton:

- Slade Covert, approximately 900m east of the proposed administration building;
- The Moors, approximately 650m north-west of the proposed substation;
- Croughton Spring Copse, approximately 750m north-west of the proposed substation;
- Croughton Spinney, approximately 750m north of the proposed substation;
- Old Astwick Village Moat, approximately 1.5km north-east of the proposed substation;
- Old Down Covert, approximately 2km west of the proposed recycling bin storage centre;
- Rowler’s Covert, approximately 2km west of the proposed recycling bin storage centre;
- Aynho Vally, approximately 2km west of the proposed recycling bin storage centre;
- Evenley Road Verge, approximately 1.7km north-east of the base perimeter;
- Evenley Common, approximately 1.8km north-west of the base perimeter; and
- Evenley Fish Pond, approximately 2km north-west of the base perimeter.

5.3.31 There are also six Potential Wildlife Sites (PWSs) identified within 2km of the base. One of these, RAF Croughton PWS, is within the base and includes the proposed development sites for the administration building, warehouse, recycling centre, road and the A43 access.

5.3.32 There are three Pocket Parks within 2km of the base:

- Croughton, approximately 300m north-west of the base;
- Croughton Old Allotments, approximately 1.1km north-west of the base; and
- Evenley, approximately 1.5km north-east of the base.

5.3.33 In addition, “RAF Croughton Nature Trail and Reserve” is an area outside the base security perimeter to the north-east, which has been created and managed for wildlife. This area comprises a northern and a southern part which is split by Croughton Brook. The reserve is managed by the 422\textsuperscript{nd} Air Base Group Environmental Department based at RAF Croughton.

5.3.34 There are no areas designated for the conservation of wild birds, natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora within the immediate or wider vicinity of RAF Croughton.

Areas in which the environmental quality standards laid down in EU legislation have already been exceeded

5.3.35 There are no environmental quality standards laid down in EU legislation that have been exceeded either within RAF Croughton or within the vicinity of the base.

Densely populated areas

5.3.36 RAF Croughton is not in a residentially dense area; the nearest non-military housing is in the village of Croughton approximately 200m to the north-west of the base. The main street of this village extends for approximately 1km and there is a primary school, village hall and several businesses including a farm within the village. There are multiple dwellings with several residential cul-de-sacs branching off the main street.

5.3.37 There are several other small villages also nearby: Souldern approximately 3km to the west, Aynho approximately 3.3km to the west, Cottisford approximately 2km to the south-east and Evenley 2.2km to the north-east. The nearest town is Brackley which is approximately 5km north-east of the base.

Landscapes of historical, cultural or archaeological significance

5.3.38 RAF Croughton was built in 1938 as part of the expansion scheme of military airfields. Airfield defences were built in 1940-1941, these included seagull trenches, a mushroom FC construction pillbox with two gun mounts and six type C fighter pens in two groups of three.

5.3.39 The group of three fighter pens on the northern edge of the perimeter runway have survived relatively intact and are Grade II listed. The three on the eastern edge of the perimeter runway have not survived to the same extent and only remnants, including the eroded banks and some hard standing, are still extant.

5.3.40 In 1941 the base was established as a training airfield and it continued in this capacity until after the war, with flying ceasing at RAF Croughton in May 1946. Since then the World War II structures have been gradually replaced by modern buildings and structures suitable for the changing role of the base.

5.3.41 The landscape in and around RAF Croughton has historically been predominantly agricultural. Within the vicinity of the base there is limited evidence of settlement until the medieval period.
5.3.42 The wider landscape is characterised by the regular field pattern of 19th century enclosures interspersed with settlement. The main settlement is the village of Croughton, just outside the base. This is a linear settlement which formed along the Warmington to Buckingham turnpike.

5.3.43 A heritage statement completed February 2016 identified a number of heritage assets that are relevant to the proposed development. These are:
- Deserted medieval village of Astwick and associated moated site scheduled monument, approximately 1km to the north of the base;
- RAF Croughton World War II airfield, not designated, within base;
- Three type C fighter pens, Grade II listed, within the base;
- World War II airfield defence structures, not designated, within the base;
- Croughton Conservation Area, approximately 1.3km west of base;
- Croughton House and Gardens, Grade II listed, approximately 1.3km west of the base;
- Astwick Farm and cottages, not designated, approximately 350 metres (m) north of the base;
- Warmington to Buckingham turnpike, not designated, approximately 500 m north of the base.

5.4 Characteristics of the Potential Impact

Ecology

5.4.1 The preliminary ecological assessment carried out by Mott MacDonald in February 2016 has identified that the proposed development sites comprise the following habitats: improved grassland, amenity grassland, species-poor semi-improved grassland, scattered scrub and buildings. All of the habitats are deemed to have either no or a low conservation value. All of these habitats within the ground footprint of the development will be permanently lost.

5.4.2 Whilst the species-poor semi-improved grassland has a low conservation value, it can support ground nesting birds if the habitat is left undisturbed. Similarly, buildings have no conservation value but the existing recycling bin storage centre has the potential to provide a nesting site for birds. There is therefore potential for adverse impacts to breeding birds unless construction works are carried out at an appropriate time of year, see Section 6.3 for further information.

5.4.3 There is a risk that over-wintering birds may also be adversely impacted by the development due to loss of habitat, primarily where the proposed administration building is to be located. Therefore winter bird surveys will be carried out to establish the species and conservation value of birds using the base to over-winter. If the surveys identify major foraging use of the area where the proposed administration building is to be located, it may be necessary to
include mitigation for the loss of this habitat in the design, see Section 6.2 for further information.

5.4.4 There is the potential for adverse impacts on the flowing water habitat outside of the development sites due to the proximity of the substation to Croughton Brook and due to the construction of a discharge pipe into Ockley Brook.

5.4.5 The proximity of Croughton Brook to where the proposed substation is to be located may mean that to enable access during construction, there is the potential for adverse impacts on water voles. A survey will be carried out to ascertain the current status of water voles in Croughton Brook and to establish the construction phase mitigation, see Section 6.3 for further information.

5.4.6 The installation of a discharge pipe associated with the proposed drainage system has the potential for adverse impacts on otters. An assessment of this watercourse for its potential to support otters should be undertaken with a subsequent otter survey carried out if potential habitats are identified. See Section 6.3 for the construction phase mitigation that may be required if otter habitat is identified.

5.4.7 There are a number of ponds in the vicinity of RAF Croughton which have the potential to support great-crested newts to varying degrees. There is also potential for great-crested newts to use the semi-improved grassland and hedgerows within the base. A pond within a private garden to the east of the base has not been assessed due to lack of access. This pond is within 250m of the proposed development sites with no substantial barriers to newt migration.

5.4.8 In general, adverse impacts on great-crested newts are considered to be unlikely. However, all water bodies will be properly assessed to establish their suitability for great-crested newts. If a pond is deemed suitable for great-crested newts, then additional surveys (see Section 6.2 for further information) will be carried out to establish the required mitigation to reduce the potential for adverse impacts.

5.4.9 There is potential for adverse effects on white-clawed crayfish during construction of the proposed substation and due to the discharge pipe entering Ockley Brook. Additional surveys will be carried out to determine the current status of this species in these watercourses. Based on the results of the surveys, if required, appropriate mitigation will be implemented and as such impacts on this species are considered to be unlikely.

5.4.10 Trees within hedgerows to the south of the proposed fitness centre and in the vicinity of the proposed substation have a low potential to support roosting bats and it is unlikely that these will be affected by the construction works. However, if there are any direct impacts to the hedgerow trees, such as to create an access route for the proposed substation, then an assessment of trees in the vicinity to be affected for their potential to support roosting bats will be carried out. See Section 6.2 for further information.
5.4.11 A small outside toilet adjacent to the proposed fitness centre location has moderate potential to support roosting bats. It is not currently anticipated that this building will be affected by the proposed development. However, if the outside toilet, an internal inspection will be carried out to ascertain the likely presence of bats, see Section 6.2 for further information.

5.4.12 There is a known badger sett outside the security perimeter of RAF Croughton, to the south-west, with a culvert under the fence that enables badgers to access the base for foraging. However, with the implementation of construction phase mitigation (see Section 6.3), there are unlikely to be any adverse impacts on badgers as a result of the proposed development.

5.4.13 A number of the proposed development sites are contained within the non-statutory designated RAF Croughton PWS. This PWS covers the majority of the grassland areas within the perimeter road in the south of the base.

5.4.14 PWS are sites that are either known or thought to be of higher biodiversity value than the average countryside; it is likely that this area was designated as a PWS due to the large area of grassland and historical records of botanical interest. However, more recent studies have found the area to be relatively species-poor, probably as a result of heavy grazing by sheep and as such it is unlikely to currently meet the criteria for designation as a Local Wildlife Site.

5.4.15 In terms of the cumulation with other developments, information from the SATCOM preliminary ecological assessment carried out in August 2015, identified that the SATCOM development sites have the potential to support breeding birds, over-wintering birds and bats. However, with the appropriate mitigation, as outlined in the SATCOM preliminary ecological assessment, adverse impacts related to that development are unlikely.

5.4.16 Based on this screening review it is considered unlikely that there will be any significant cumulative ecological impacts due to the proposed BBQ pavilion development as the proposed location for this development currently comprises hardstanding which is considered to be of low ecological sensitivity.

5.4.17 It is therefore anticipated that with the effective implementation of the mitigation stated in Section 6, along with the additional surveys and if necessary, subsequent mitigation, and the mitigation specific to the proposed SATCOM development, any potential significant effects on ecology can be controlled to an acceptable level during both the construction and operational phase.

Noise

5.4.18 A noise survey was carried out in July 2015 with noise measurements recorded both at the base and at locations representative of noise sensitive receptors surrounding RAF Croughton.
5.4.19 An unattended noise recorder was located near the southern base security perimeter in line with an existing residential property whilst attended noise surveys were carried out at eight other locations around the RAF Croughton boundary.

5.4.20 Four of these locations were considered representative of noise sensitive receptors outside of the base and were agreed with the Senior Environmental Protection Officer of South Northamptonshire Council. It was also agreed with South Northamptonshire Council that residences within RAF Croughton were not considered noise sensitive due to their association with the proposed development.

5.4.21 The results of the noise survey show that the background noise at RAF Croughton is mainly characterised by birdsong, leaf rustle with occasional vehicles on the base access road. There were also records of infrequent overhead aircraft and crickets. The noise associated with the B4031 road was audible at two measurement locations. The noise from the A43 road was less audible than originally anticipated with it only the dominant sound at two survey locations and occasionally audible at two other locations.

5.4.22 It was not possible as part of the noise assessment to undertake a quantitative assessment of construction noise as the specific construction methods that the construction contractor would be using are not yet known.

5.4.23 Therefore, at this stage it is only possible assume to that any potential noise impacts during the 45 month construction will be best addressed through the use of appropriate noise mitigation outlined in the CEMP, see Section 6. This will also be the case for any potential cumulative noise impacts with the SATCOM development.

5.4.24 Noise modelling has been carried out to predict the combined operational noise levels of the EIC (excluding the school) and SATCOM developments. The results of the modelling have identified that for all of the noise sensitive receptor locations apart from one, the predicted noise levels fall below the current background noise.

5.4.25 The exception is Astwick Farm and Cottages, located adjacent to the northern base boundary, where during both day and night the additional noise levels may have an adverse impact. However, additional modelling has been carried out that has identified that mitigation related to the repositioning and housing of the development generators and the extension of the landscape bund surrounding the administration building will reduce the noise levels to an acceptable level at this property, see Section 6 for further information.

5.4.26 The potential noise impact associated with the operation of the school is considered to be negligible. The school will only be open during daylight hours with children being outside during breaks and on ad-hoc occasions. The noise associated with vehicular movements at the school will be minimal and will be mainly be buses arriving and leaving twice a day.
5.4.27 During the operation stage of the development the control of noise levels and any potential significant environmental effects will be managed through the effective implementation of the existing RAF Croughton EMS, which will be reviewed and updated as appropriate. This will also be the case for the EIC and school development, along with the BBQ pavilion.

5.4.28 Based on this screening review it is anticipated that with the effective implementation of the mitigation measures stated in Section 6, that it is unlikely that there will be any significant noise effects from the proposed development, or cumulatively, during either the construction or operational phase.

Air quality

5.4.29 An air quality assessment was carried out in February 2016 by Mott MacDonald.

5.4.30 There are no Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) within the vicinity of RAF Croughton; the nearest AQMA is approximately 12km to the north-west in Banbury.

5.4.31 The largest potential air quality impact will be the dust and particulate matter (PM$_{10}$) associated with construction activities. However, the air quality assessment identified that impacts with respect to health and amenity are likely to be minimal with the effective implementation of good construction practices, as detailed in Section 6. It is considered that this will also be the case when taking into account the cumulative impacts from the construction of the proposed SATCOM and BBQ pavilion developments.

5.4.32 The assessment has identified that during the operation phase, the introduction of additional vehicles on the local road network will result in a negligible change in air quality. This anticipated change in air quality is comfortably within relevant air quality objectives and therefore, from an air quality perspective, RAF Croughton is considered suitable for residential use.

5.4.33 There will be no operational cumulative air quality impacts taking into account the SATCOM and BBQ pavilion developments, as neither development will produce an increase in vehicle movements.

5.4.34 Based on this screening review it is anticipated that with the effective implementation of the mitigation stated in Section 6, that it is unlikely that there will be any significant effects from the proposed development on air quality during either the construction or operational phases.

Ground conditions and contamination

5.4.35 A geotechnical and geo-environmental desk study was carried out in February 2016 by Mott MacDonald.
5.4.36 RAF Croughton’s internal records identify several records of pollution from petroleum, oils and liquid spills from the hazardous waste pad located approximately 40m to the east of the proposed warehouse. There is also the possibility that lead contamination may be present in the area around the small arms range.

5.4.37 Licensed industrial activities that are within the vicinity of the base comprise two electrical substations, a sewerage works and various industrial companies.

5.4.38 Historical maps show that quarrying activity for limestone and sandstone has taken place to the north of the base in the vicinity of the B3041. It is a possibility that unrecorded quarrying has taken place within the base in the past, which may have been backfilled with contaminated made ground although it is not possible to estimate the exact location of this.

5.4.39 RAF Croughton has also supplied information that suggests that cables from decommissioned antenna will have been abandoned in place although no information was available on the likely locations. It is possible that these cables have started to corrode and therefore will raise the levels of metals within the local soils and groundwater, although it is thought that the probability of this happening is low.

5.4.40 Waste related activities, either historical or current, include a historic landfill site and six waste transfer or treatment sites. Two of the waste treatment sites are registered to the current recycling centre on the base and a further four are registered to the former RAF Croughton Medical Centre.

5.4.41 There are six abstraction licences within 500m of the base, all for either agricultural or domestic use, the nearest is less than 10m from the south of the base.

5.4.42 Ground investigation was carried out in 2013 the results of which considered that the base poses a moderate to low contamination risk. However, the desk study information suggests there is some potential for contaminants to be encountered (typically fuel) particularly if groundwater levels are found to be higher during construction.

5.4.43 The construction phase of development poses the highest risk of exposing contaminated land. Prior to any disturbance works, more detailed studies will be carried out to establish if remedial work is required prior to construction activities commencing. It is recommended that this ground investigation includes ground gas monitoring, surface deposits and bedrock sampling and contamination testing of soil, groundwater and surface water.

5.4.44 Sewage will be discharged into the existing mains sewer and is not expected to lead to the contamination of land or water.

5.4.45 Prior to any disturbance works or demolition, an up-to-date asbestos survey will be undertaken on all buildings to be demolished. A suitably accredited asbestos specialist will then be engaged to ensure any suspected asbestos containing materials identified within
these buildings are suitably managed, removed and disposed prior to or as part of the future demolition works. It is not anticipated that there will be any significant adverse effects as a result of asbestos in buildings as all materials will be appropriately removed and disposed of in accordance with regulations.

5.4.46 Based on this screening review, it is anticipated that with the effective implementation of the mitigation stated in Section 6, potentially contaminated land will not pose a significant risk during construction or operation of the proposed development nor will the development lead to the contamination of land or water.

**Transport**

5.4.47 During the operational phase of the proposed development, vehicles will continue to access RAF Croughton from the B4031. The A43 entrance will continue to provide access for emergencies and for oversized vehicles.

5.4.48 A full Transport Assessment is currently being prepared and will accompany the forthcoming planning application for the proposed development. Preliminary traffic assessments (Mott MacDonald, February 2016) have been undertaken in order to gain an initial understanding of the likely scale of traffic impacts on the local highway network. This preliminary traffic assessment is for a scope of works that does not specifically account for the school component of the proposed development. However, it is not considered that the school, which will cater for children of military personnel who either live or work at the base, will impact upon the external highway network. The additional traffic associated with the off-base military personnel using the school is already accounted for within the operational traffic numbers for the remaining development components.

5.4.49 An initial forecast of the increase in traffic associated with the proposed development identified that there may be up to 2450 two-way vehicle movements at the base entrance junction (i.e. 1225 entering and 1225 leaving) over a 24 hour weekday period. At the weekend this figure decreases to approximately 200. This information is based on a traffic count that was carried out at RAF Molesworth, Cambridgeshire (September 2015) and assumes that all staff, and therefore vehicles, at RAF Molesworth will ultimately transfer to RAF Croughton. This figure should be considered a worse-case scenario as it is understood to be unlikely that all vehicles will transfer to RAF Croughton.

5.4.50 In terms of the distribution of the predicted vehicle movements, the off-base home addresses of the current personnel at RAF Croughton have been used as it is presumed that new personnel will be accommodated at similar locations.

5.4.51 The results of the preliminary assessment identifies that, as would be expected, the greatest increases in traffic flows occur at locations closest to RAF Croughton. At the base entrance junction on the B4031 it is anticipated that there will be an increase in total junction
movements of between 40% and 50% as a result of the proposed development. At the Barleymow roundabout (which links the B4031 with the A43 and A421) it is anticipated that at the peak traffic hour in the morning (07:00-08:00) and evening (16:00-17:00) there will be an increase of 295 vehicles and 250 vehicles, respectively. At the Baynards Green roundabout (which links the B4100 that runs adjacent to the west of the base, with the A43), this increase is anticipated to be 150 vehicles in the morning peak hour and 133 vehicles in the evening peak hour.

5.4.52 The final Transport Assessment report will assess the traffic impact of the proposed development for the latest assumed year of opening (2020) and a future year of 2031. Department for Transport (DfT) forecast traffic growth factors indicate that there is likely to be a substantial increase in background traffic in the local area. The DfT growth factors indicate that there will be an increase in vehicles on the surrounding highway network of around 9% from 2015 to 2020 and over 25% to 2031. These levels of growth are likely to result in the A43 junctions exceeding capacity in the peak periods even before the proposed development is considered.

5.4.53 In terms of the anticipated increase in traffic associated with the proposed development, it is predicted that in 2031 the percentage increase represents only a 5% increase on the future background traffic flow at the A43 Barleymow roundabout and a 2% (morning peak hour) and a 3% (evening peak hour) increase at the A43 Baynards Green roundabout. Although the traffic impact of the proposed development on the A43 road is likely to be low in terms of percentage increase in vehicles, the final Transport Assessment will include detailed junction capacity assessments and where necessary will identify proposed highway improvement measures.

5.4.54 Whilst percentage increases at some locations on the local highway network are higher (such as the junctions in Croughton village), the low existing flows at these junctions mean that they currently operate with large amounts of spare capacity. This has been confirmed during peak hour visits to the junctions. Therefore it is considered unlikely that the preliminary forecast increases in flows at these locations will have a material impact on their performance.

5.4.55 In order to mitigate potential operational impacts, the existing Travel Plan within the RAF Croughton EMS, will be reviewed and updated. The Travel Plan will incorporate measures to promote a reduction in single occupancy car trips associated with the base, see Section 6 for further information.

5.4.56 Pre-application discussions have been held with the relevant highways authorities (Northamptonshire County Council, Highways England and Oxfordshire County Council) regarding the scope of the Transport Assessment. It is anticipated that correspondence will continue prior to the submission of the planning application with the intention of working with the highways authorities to identify mitigation measures, potentially including highway improvements where appropriate.
5.4.57 In terms of cumulative impacts with other developments, it is not considered that operationally there will be any additional impact on the local highway network. The SATCOM development involves the relocation of existing military personnel who already work within the base and the BBQ pavilion will be mainly used by staff housed on the base.

5.4.58 During the construction phase it is acknowledged that there will be an increase in vehicular movements. The current proposal is to use the A43 base entrance for construction traffic associated with the proposed development which would reduce the potential for construction traffic conflicting with local traffic on the B4031. At time of writing this is currently under discussion with Northamptonshire County Council, Oxfordshire County Council and Highways England.

5.4.59 There is potentially a cumulative impact of the construction traffic associated with the SATCOM development on the local highway network. There will be no cumulative impact with the construction of the BBQ pavilion as the construction phase for this development is scheduled to be at least one year prior to the construction of the EIC and school development.

5.4.60 In order to mitigate for the potential congestion, taking into account any cumulative impacts, it is recommended that the appointed construction contractor will be required to produce a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) in consultation with Northamptonshire County Council, Oxfordshire County Council and Highways England, see Section 6 for more detail.

5.4.61 Based on this screening review it is anticipated that with the effective implementation of appropriate highway improvements, a Travel Plan and a CTMP as stated in Section 6, that it is unlikely that there will be any significant effects from the proposed development on the local highway network during either the construction or operational phase.

**Water environment**

5.4.62 The two flood risk assessments (that cover all of the development components apart from the school) carried out in February 2016 by Mott MacDonald identified that RAF Croughton is within Flood Zone 1; land assessed as having less than a 0.1% annual probability of river flooding. This is the lowest risk category.

5.4.63 RAF Croughton is outside the flood envelope of all other identified sources of flood potential and as such the development type is deemed to be suitable for this location.

5.4.64 There are no watercourses within RAF Croughton although Croughton Brook and Ockley Brook, respectively, run near to the boundary to the north and south of the base.

5.4.65 There is narrow area of land that follows Croughton Brook that runs along the B4031 to the north of the base that is within Flood Zone 3; land assessed as having more than 1% annual probability of river flooding.
5.4.66 RAF Croughton lies upon a Major Aquifer. There are no features in the vicinity of the base which would indicate any elevated groundwater or areas where rainfall is ponding such as marshy areas or pond features.

5.4.67 The management of storm water generated by the proposed development has been identified as the principle flood risk to the development; however, it could be managed by an infiltration based system as the underlying strata is suitable for the large scale discharge of water. The most appropriate methods are likely to be a mixture of permeable paving, green roofs, ponds and plot soakaways.

5.4.68 It is recommended that foul drainage from the proposed developments should be discharged via infiltration or using existing connections into the current base-wide system. Consultation will be required with Thames Water to confirm that the additional loading can be accommodated within the existing sewage treatment plant located approximately 150m east of the base.

5.4.69 The potential for flooding or contamination of any surface water during the construction phase would be minimised through the effective implementation of a CEMP that will adopt best practices and appropriate guidance from the Environment Agency.

5.4.70 During the operational phase of the development there is not anticipated to be any impact upon the water environment with feasibility studies being carried out to establish the most appropriate action regarding foul and surface water drainage, as identified above. The base EMS provides further measures regarding best practice relating to the water environment.

5.4.71 Based on this screening review it is anticipated that with the effective implementation of the mitigation measures stated in Section 6, that it is unlikely that there will be any significant effects from the proposed development on the water environment during either the construction or operational phase.

**Historic environment**

5.4.72 The heritage statement carried out in February 2016 identified that the proposed development will have no impact on the heritage significance of Astwick medieval village, Croughton Conservation Area, Croughton House, Astwick Farm or Pimlico Farm. These heritage assets are all outside of RAF Croughton and therefore there will be no direct impact. The historic agricultural setting of these assets has already been compromised by the construction of RAF Croughton in 1938, its post war expansion and the significant road network. Therefore the proposed development will have no further detrimental effect on the historic setting of these assets. Due to the topography and existing landscape features the proposed development will not affect key views to, from or within these assets.

5.4.73 Within RAF Croughton, the proposed development will have a limited impact on the historic setting of both the World War II airfield and the Grade II listed type C fighter pens. Five of the
components of the proposed development, the administration building, the commissary, the dormitory, the warehouse and the road, will be located within the landing ground, an area where historically there were few structures due to its use.

5.4.74 However, the original cluster of buildings to the north of the perimeter taxiway has expanded into the landing ground during the latter part of the 20th century and early 21st century. Although the introduction of non-functional landscaping and the new road are detrimental to the character of RAF Croughton, overall the development will not reduce the ability to understand and interpret its historic development and no historic structures will be lost. The flat open nature of the landing ground will remain the dominant character and the historic function, use and relationship between the landing ground and the World War II structures and defences will still be apparent.

5.4.75 The proposed administration building will interrupt long views to the fighter pens and across the landing ground however the grass bund that will surround the north, east and south of the building will limit this impact. The bunding has been designed to reflect the bunding used around the fighter pens and will vary in height from 2.5m to 5m from north to south to ensure that the height of the bund remains consistent as the land falls away to the south. The presence of the administration building will not alter the views across the landing ground to the extent that the historic setting or ability to understand function and use of RAF Croughton during World War II will be unduly compromised.

5.4.76 In terms of cumulation with other proposed developments, the proposed BBQ pavilion development is to be located amongst the existing buildings to the north of the base and as such will not impact on the setting of any heritage assets. The proposed SATCOM facilities are to be located within the antenna field, south of the EIC administration building. The SATCOM heritage statement (July 2015) concluded that the presence of these facilities will not have a significant effect on any heritage assets, and in cumulation with the EIC and school development it is considered that this will not be changed.

5.4.77 The EIC heritage assessment has concluded that there is not anticipated to be any significant effects during the construction phase of the development on any heritage assets. The proposed construction site is over two circular concrete pads which are associated with the fighter pens; however, protection measures will be put in place to protect the concrete pads during construction. Therefore the proposed development has no direct impact on the historic fabric of the structures or infrastructure.

5.4.78 Based on this screening review it is anticipated that with the effective implementation of the mitigation measures stated in Section 6, that it is unlikely that there will be any significant effects from the proposed development on the historic environment during either the construction or operational phase.
Landscape and visual

5.4.79 RAF Croughton contains a mixture of single, two and three storey buildings which range in age from the 1930’s to the present date. As such the building element; design, techniques and materials, differ greatly between buildings.

5.4.80 The townscape in the northern part of the base is of a higher density than the southern part and contains the majority of the buildings which are separated by amenity grassland and scattered trees. The southern part of the base comprises grassland with two areas of low density buildings and structures approximately 700m apart.

5.4.81 The proposed development contains a mixture of single, two and three storey buildings. The buildings have a contemporary design to reflect the modern character of RAF Croughton as a working USVF base.

5.4.82 The hard and soft landscaping proposals compliment the buildings, and whilst the security fencing and gating is utilitarian, it is considered that the type and height of fencing and gating is appropriate within the context of the base and function of the facility.

5.4.83 The majority of the proposed development sites are either located within the built up area in the north of the base or within the northern area of the antenna field. As such the proposed buildings will be screened from both the village of Croughton and any properties outside of the village but to the north west of the base, by the existing buildings. The exception is the substation which is proposed to be located at the very north of the base which will be screened by trees from the north.

5.4.84 The proposed development buildings will be visible from a number of nearby residential properties to the north, north east, south and south east of the base. Properties to the south and south east of the base will view RAF Croughton as a single entity and as such the addition of further development would not be overly apparent against the existing backdrop. This is also considered for views from the A43, which is located adjacent to the whole length of the south eastern boundary of RAF Croughton.

5.4.85 Properties to the north and north east of RAF Croughton will have views of the eastern part of the antenna field where the administration building is to be located. However it is not anticipated that the administration building itself will be visible from these properties as incorporated into the design of the building is a landscaped bund. This bund increases in height from north to south to ensure that the height of the bund remains consistent as the land falls away to the south.

5.4.86 There are several public rights of way within close proximity to RAF Croughton and the proposed development will be visible from a range of viewpoints along them. As there is no substantial vegetation removal associated with the development, no previously screened
views will be opened up so users of the public rights of way will already have views of the base.

5.4.87 RAF Croughton is with the Croughton Plateau Landscape Character Area, as defined within the Northampton County Council Environmental Character Assessment. The presence of the military base is described as providing a 'distinctive utilitarian character to the local area' and is regarded as a 'significant local landmark'.

5.4.88 It is not considered that the presence of these buildings will negatively impact on the landscape in the vicinity of the base. The boundary of the base is not extending and it is considered that the development is in fact appropriate to the Croughton Plateau Landscape Character Area.

5.4.89 In cumulation with the proposed SATCOM development and the proposed BBQ pavilion, a greater number of buildings will be present within the base. However, the proposed SATCOM buildings are replacement facilities with the original facilities being demolished as part of the development and the BBQ pavilion is to be located amongst existing buildings in the north of the base. The cumulation with other developments would therefore not be of a scale to impact upon the LCA.

5.4.90 During the construction phase, the main construction compound and some of the satellite compounds will be temporarily visible from locations outside of the base. During the construction period, there will be a cumulative impact for 18 months with the construction activities associated with the SATCOM development. However, the construction activities will be screened from the north for the majority of the development sites by the existing buildings within the base whilst from the south, the activity will be viewed against the backdrop of these existing buildings. There will be no cumulative landscape and visual impact with the construction of the BBQ pavilion as the construction phase for this development is scheduled to be at least one year prior to the construction of the EIC and school development.

5.4.91 The temporary security buildings at the base access on the A43 will be also be visible throughout the construction phase, especially from the residential property that is located adjacent to the A43 and near to the base's construction entrance. The mitigation measures associated with the construction phase to reduce these impacts are stated in Section 6.

5.4.92 Based on this screening review it is anticipated that with the effective implementation of the mitigation stated in Section 6 that it is unlikely that there will be any significant landscape and visual effects from the proposed development during either the construction or operational phase.

**Socio-economic**

5.4.93 The resident working population (age 16-64) of Brackley is 8508 people. The employment rate in Brackley is 85.6%, slightly higher than the regional figure of 84.3% and substantially higher
than the rate in England and Wales of 76.8%. For October 2015, the percentage job seekers to working population (those aged 16-64) in Brackley (0.5%) and South Northamptonshire (0.6%) is substantially lower than for the percentage Great Britain which is 1.5%.

5.4.94 It is anticipated that the positive direct impact of the construction phase of development will be the creation of local jobs related to the construction activities. These will be temporary impacts that will last throughout the construction period, to varying degrees. In cumulation with the proposed SATCOM development, and the BBQ pavilion, this positive impact will be increased. There will also be a subsequent positive indirect impact on the local services within Brackley, Banbury and other local towns with, in particular, an increasing demand for accommodation and eateries and other service industries. It is therefore anticipated that there will be a temporary positive socio-economic effect as a result of the construction of the proposed development.

5.4.95 During the operational phase of the development some of the transferring military personnel will be housed off-base in accommodation already owned by the USVF. This accommodation is currently under-utilised and as such there will not be a requirement for additional housing to be sourced within the local housing market.

5.4.96 All educational and medical facilities will be provided for military personnel and their families within the base with additional specialist medical facilities available at other USVF bases within the UK.

5.4.97 Cumulatively, the proposed SATCOM development only involves the relocation of military personnel already working within the base and the BBQ pavilion is for the use of personnel already housed within RAF Croughton. Therefore it is not considered that independently or cumulatively, there will be a negative socio-economic impact.

5.4.98 The proposed development is required to ensure that RAF Croughton is able to take over the communications role currently carried out by RAF Molesworth. The proposed development will assist in ensuring that RAF Croughton continues to operate as a communications base with continued long-term investment from the USVF.
6 Proposed Mitigation

6.1.1 As a result of these initial assessments, there are a number of actions that may, if necessary, need to be undertaken to reduce the impact on the environment. These relate to building design, construction practices, additional studies which will identify appropriate mitigation if required and the management of various elements of the operational phase of the development.

6.2 Embedded Design Mitigation

6.2.1 The proposed development has been designed to blend in with the context of the base; the buildings have been designed with minimal elevations to maintain the ‘openness’ of the landscape and preserve views across the base. The administration building has a landscaped bund that surrounds the building to the north, east and south which softens the outline of the building. The building materials have been selected to harmonise with the surrounding context and ensure continuity with existing buildings at RAF Croughton.

6.2.2 The drainage strategy for the proposed development utilises a mixture of permeable paving and, green roofs, attenuation ponds and plot soakaways.

6.2.3 Plant used for the development will be selected to ensure that there is no discernible tonal noise when in operation.

6.2.4 Within the existing RAF Croughton EMS there is a Travel Plan which contains initiatives for alternative sustainable modes of transport. Examples of initiatives include sponsored bike purchase scheme, systems for facilitating car sharing and training for cycling proficiency. This document will be reviewed and updated if appropriate.

6.2.5 If the over-wintering bird surveys identify substantial use for foraging of the proposed development site where the administration building is to be located, it may be necessary to include mitigation for the loss of this habitat in the design. This may include management of other parts of the base so that sufficient suitable foraging is available elsewhere.

6.3 Construction Phase Mitigation

6.3.1 Prior to the commencement of demolition or construction work, more detailed studies related to the potentially contaminated land and the potential presence of asbestos in the existing recycling bin storage centre, will be carried out to establish if remedial work is required.

6.3.2 During the construction phase of the development the contractor will produce a CEMP which will address the implementation of appropriate construction practices. The CEMP will be produced based on current best practices with guidance sought from the relevant consultees.

6.3.3 The CEMP will state the construction mitigation associated with operating plant in terms of the best practice methods to control noise and reduce air quality impacts. Information will be
6.3.4 The CEMP will also provide information on methods that will minimise the risk of contamination of any surface water or groundwater. The risk to construction workers who may come into contact with gas and vapours will be mitigated through site management and preparation, safe working practices including, but not limited to, the use of personal protective equipment, respiratory protective equipment and site hygiene.

6.3.5 A SWMP will be produced prior to the start of construction which will describe how materials will be managed efficiently. The SWMP will estimate how much of each type of waste is likely to be produced and the proportion of this that will be re-used or recycled on the construction site, or removed from the site for re-use, recycling, recovery or disposal.

6.3.6 A CTMP will be produced that will contain information on construction related-traffic including working hours, construction traffic routes and contractor car parking. This document will not only manage transport issues but will also assist in the reduction of noise associated with increased traffic.

6.3.7 Any vegetation clearance of suitable nesting habitat such as hedgerows should ideally be undertaken outside the breeding season for birds. If vegetation clearance needs to be carried out during the breeding season for birds (March to August inclusive) it will be necessary to carry out a check for active nests not more than 24 hours prior to clearance.

6.3.8 Two over-wintering bird surveys should be carried out between November and February following to establish the species of birds using the site to over-winter and the conservation value of each of the species.

6.3.9 It is not anticipated that there will be any direct impacts on the hedgerow trees in the vicinity of the substation or south of the fitness centre, however, if there is a need to directly affect these trees, for example to gain construction access, then an assessment of their potential to support roosting bats will be undertaken. Any trees with moderate or high potential will be surveyed by tree climbing inspection and, if necessary, emergence surveys will be carried out to identify whether any roosts are present.

6.3.10 Additional surveys will be required to establish the presence of water voles. These surveys will be required to be carried out between April and September. If surveys identify water voles as being present in Croughton Brook, any construction works affecting the banks or within 20m of any burrows should be avoided.

6.3.11 Prior to the start of construction, a check for badgers will be carried out to ensure that badgers have not dug new setts in woodland or hedgerows within 30m of the construction works. If a sett is found it may be necessary to apply for a licence from Natural England to close the sett. This can only be done outside the breeding season for badgers (December to June) and provided on the installation of hoardings and fencing surrounding the proposed development site, to limit the visual impact of construction activities.
additional mitigation for badgers may need to be incorporated into the development. During construction, any excavations left open overnight should either be covered or constructed with access ramps placed to allow badgers to escape.

6.3.12 If the outside toilet will be affected by the construction of the fitness centre, an internal inspection will be undertaken to ascertain the likely presence of bats. If this survey is not conclusive it may then be necessary to carry out a series of dusk emergence and dawn re-entry surveys at an appropriate time of year (March to September).

6.3.13 Additional assessments will be carried out to assess the suitability of the ponds in the vicinity of the base for great-crested newts. If a pond is deemed suitable for great-crested newts then a minimum of four surveys will be carried out during mid-March to mid-June with at least two of these visits during mid-April to mid-May. If great-crested newts are found during these four surveys, an additional two surveys must be carried out to determine the population size. If great-crested newts are found to be present, a licence may be required from Natural England and additional mitigation will be required.

6.3.14 In order to reduce the potential for adverse impacts on white-clawed crayfish, all construction works near to Croughton and Ockley Brooks will be undertaken in accordance with the Environment Agency’s Pollution Prevention Guidance for Works on Near or with Potential to Affect Watercourses.

6.4 **Operational Phase Mitigation**

6.4.1 During the operational stage of the development the reduction of any environmental effects will be managed through the use of the existing RAF Croughton EMS, which will be reviewed and updated if appropriate. The DIO will have responsibility for any changes to the EMS and to ensure that subsequently, information is communicated to personnel at all levels and functions across the base.

6.4.2 The EMS requires that all noisy activities are identified and that noise levels are monitored to determine the impact on people, building and livestock, with a log maintained of all noise related communication. It is considered good practice that rooms where noisy activities take place are adequately soundproofed and that noisy outdoor activity is minimised and is limited to daylight hours.

6.4.3 The EMS details measures to prevent the potential contamination of land through the management of waste. This includes the appointment of a waste warden who makes regular checks to ensure compliance with statutory waste requirements and the adoption of a waste action plan aimed at increasing recycling and reducing waste. Hazardous waste associated with military activities is also managed through the EMS, along with the adherence to all statutory regulations.
6.4.4 The storage and disposal of fuel, lubricants and waste oil is also managed through the EMS and includes measures such as, vehicle barriers near to storage areas, regular checking of storage bunding, appropriately placed ‘oil spill kits’ and a readily Unit Spill Response Plan.

6.4.5 The EMS provides guidance on ensuring operational activities within the base do not impact upon the water environment. Measures include the availability and understanding of the base detailed drainage plan and the older water related infrastructure is regularly inspected. The washing of private vehicles is prohibited and that all washdown facilities are bunded and that wastewater is controlled and enters an interceptor.
7 Conclusion

7.1 Summary of EIA Screening

7.1.1 This report has provided EIA screening information on the potential environmental effects of the proposed development at RAF Croughton, Brackley, Northamptonshire. The development comprises seven new buildings and associated infrastructure along with the extension of two existing buildings. The proposed development also includes the demolition of two existing buildings.

7.1.2 The proposed development has been considered under Schedule 2, Part 13 of the EIA Regulations. The ground footprint of the proposed development is approximately 24ha over the 1ha threshold and as such is an indicative indication that EIA is required. The majority of the proposed development area comprises hardstanding (approximately 15ha) and soft landscaping (approximately 6.5ha). However, paragraph 18 of the national planning practice guidance\(^2\) is clear on the fact that the use of thresholds provides only a broad indication of the requirement for an EIA and that the character and location of a proposed development is vital in establishing the potential environmental impacts.

7.1.3 On this basis, the proposed development has also been examined and demonstrated to satisfy the Schedule 3 screening criteria. The characteristics of the development have been stated along with the environmental sensitivity of the location and the characteristics of any potential impacts have been described in Section 5.

7.1.4 In terms of the environmental sensitivity of the location, the proposed development is within an existing military base that has been at this location since 1938 and as such the development can be considered to be infilling of an existing development. The proposed buildings and infrastructure are mainly to be located in the centre of the base; the only development components that are towards the edge of the base are the substation, sports fields and the construction access on to the A43.

7.1.5 The habitats within the base are mainly of a highly modified nature; the majority of the proposed development sites comprise of grazed pasture land which has a low ecological value. A preliminary ecological appraisal has been carried out which has identified that in combination with the proposed mitigation measures, along with additional surveys and if necessary, subsequent mitigation, that there is unlikely to be a significant adverse effect on either the habitats or protected species within or near to the proposed development sites.

7.1.6 All components of the proposed development are appropriate in the context of the base and function of the facility and the operational use of them will assist in ensuring that that RAF Croughton is able to take over the communications role that RAF Molesworth previously filled.

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7.1.7 The environmental reports, both technical environmental reports and desktop assessments, that have been carried out have assessed the development in terms of its potential effect on the following topics; ecology, noise, air quality, ground conditions, water environment, historic environment, landscape and visual, transport network and socio-economic environment.

7.2 Conclusion

7.2.1 Based on this screening review it is anticipated that with the effective implementation of the stated environmental mitigation, the proposed development is unlikely to have a significant effect on the environment. Given the reasons stated above, it is considered that an EIA is not required in support of the planning application.
Appendices

A. Figures .............................................................................................................................................. 39
A. Figures
RAF Croughton
EIC
Proposed Development
Figure 1

MMD-347177-C-DR-00-XX-0901

CROUGHTON
JUNIPER
HILL

Ownership Boundary
Proposed EIC and School Development
Proposed SATCOM Development
Proposed EIC Demolition
Proposed Demolition linked to SATCOM development

All dimensions shown in millimetres.
No dimensions to be scaled from this drawing.
RAF Croughton
EIC
Proposed Development
Figure 2
Proposed Accommodation

Block

Proposed Fitness Centre

Proposed Commissary

Existing Recycling Centre to be demolished

Proposed new Sports Field

Nursery Extension

New North-South link road

Proposed Warehouse

Proposed Recycling Bin Storage Centre, Green Waste and Hazardous Materials Storage Pad

Proposed new Running Track

Existing Fitness Centre to be demolished

$SS§G

&K¶N¶G

Description

Drawn

Date

Rev

Status

Drawing Number

Scale at A1

Eng check

Approved

Coordination

Dwg check

Drawn

Designed

Title

Notes

Client

Security

Key to symbols

References

T

F

W

ORDERFOREVER

RAF Croughton

EIC

Proposed Development

Figure 3

S Gilbert

SFG

S Vassiliou

SNAV

L Meek

LM

A Green

ASG

1:2000

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PRE

P3

STD

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