# CASE OFFICER'S REPORT

| | |
|---|---|
| **Application Reference:** | PL/2023/07052 |
| **Application Type:** | Full planning permission |
| **Site Inspection:** | 23 October 2023 |
| **Consultation ends:** | 03 November 2023 |
| **Case officer:** | Julie Mitchell |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Site Address:** | Western area of the MOD Boscombe Site adjacent to Stockport Road, Boscombe Down |
| **Proposal:** | Provision of new site entrance, with other works to include construction of new single storey reception building, install new sections of security fencing and gates to enclose new entrance area, construct new and modify existing internal roads to facilitate vehicular movement of staff, visitors and deliveries. Construct new internal pedestrian footpaths, construct new pedestrian footpath along Stockport Road to provide link to bus stops on Stockport Avenue, construct new car parking for both staff and visitors, construct new lay-by and HGV turning circle/reject loop for large vehicles. Install cycle storage provision. Install security guard kiosk, ground mounted PV panels and close existing main entrance gate once new facility is operational. |
| **Recommendation:** | Approve with Conditions |

**Site Description**

The site forms part of the existing MOD base at Boscombe Down which is located to the south east of Amesbury. The existing main entrance and reception building is located at the north of the site off a roundabout linking Main Road with Stockport Road. MOD Boscombe Down is the tri-Service home of military aircraft Test & Evaluation, the RAF Base Support Squadron provides administrative support to the military lodger units. The site is managed under the Long Term Partnering Agreement (LTPA) between QinetiQ Ltd (QQ) and the UK Ministry of Defence. Under the Agreement, QQ is responsible for the operation of the MOD Boscombe Down Aerodrome and specialist test facilities, and the provision of specialist technical expertise and support services.

**Proposal**

The proposal is for the provision of new site entrance. This is to include the construction of a new single storey reception building, installation of new sections of security fencing and gates to enclose the new entrance area, the construction of new and modification of existing internal roads to facilitate vehicular movement of staff, visitors and deliveries and new internal pedestrian footpaths, the construction of a new pedestrian footpath along Stockport Road to provide link to bus stops on Stockport Avenue, the construction of new car parking for both staff and visitors, the construction of a new lay-by and HGV turning circle/reject loop for large vehicles, the installation of cycle storage provision, security guard kiosk and ground mounted PV panels. The closure of the existing main entrance gate to vehicular traffic once new facility is operational is also proposed. Pedestrian/bicycle access is to be maintained.

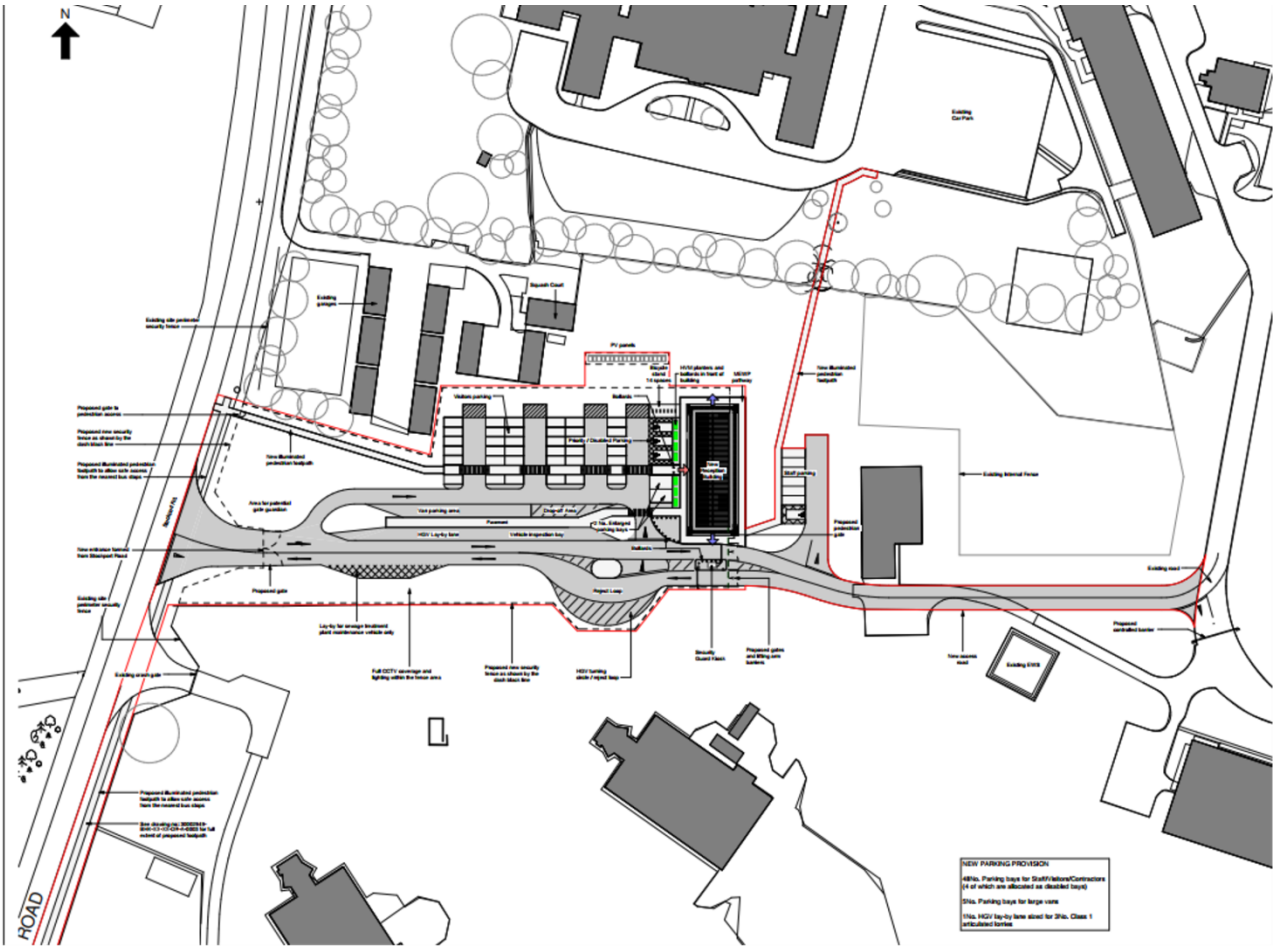
The proposal will create 275 sq m of office space within a single storey reception building, comprises office, reception, waiting area, training area with welfare facilities and other ancillary

space to support the new main gate facility. The materials comprise a rendered finish with engineering brick plinth, metal profile sheet roof and canopy with non-reflective aluminium finish, powder coated aluminium framed double glazed windows and powder coated steel doors. The proposed reception building is shown in the illustrative drawing below.



A security guard kiosk to monitor the inflow of traffic is a modular pod system with GRP finish.

A new vehicular entrance is proposed to be formed off Stockport Road, south of the existing entrance. Internal roads and car parking will link to the existing internal site road network. Car parking is proposed comprising 36 parking spaces, 3 disabled parking spaces and 2 enlarged parking spaces. There is a HGV lay-by lane and vehicle inspection bay. This is a transient space only, once visitors have been processed they will proceed onto the main site or exit via a 'reject loop'. Additional staff parking to the rear of the reception comprising 6 spaces and 1 disabled parking space. The site plan below shows the proposed layout of the various proposals.




**Policies**

National Context:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

Local Context:
Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS) adopted 2015
CP1 (Settlement Strategy)
CP2 (Delivery Strategy)
CP3 (Infrastructure Requirements)
CP4 (Amesbury Community Area)
CP37 (Military establishments)
CP50 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity)
CP51 (Landscape)
CP57 (Ensuring High Quality Design & Space Shaping)
CP60 (Sustainable Transport)
CP61 (Transport & Development)
CP62 (Development Impacts on the Transport Network)
CP64 (Demand Management)

Supplementary Planning Documents:
Creating Places Design Guide SPG (April 2006)
Achieving Sustainable Development SPG (April 2005)
Wiltshire Local Transport Plan – Car Parking Strategy

**Relevant Planning History**

The airfield was first opened as Royal Flying Corps Redhouse Farm in 1917, it was subsequently closed and returned to agricultural use in 1920. It reopened in 1939 when test flying began and the 'Aircraft and Armament Experimental Establishment' moved in, later renamed Aircraft and Armament Evaluation Establishment (AAEE). The responsibility for the airfield was given to QinetiQ, in conjunction with the Air Warfare Centre in 2001.

Whilst the site has been in use as a military base over many years, there are no planning records which are specifically of relevance to the current application.

**Consultation Responses**

**Amesbury Town Council:**

Amesbury Town Council do not support this application due to the transportation plan not being clear for increased traffic on Porton Road.

**Highways Officer:**

Access for all vehicles and pedestrians is currently gained via the main gate off a three-arm mini roundabout on the junction of Main Road with Stockport Road. An alternative access arrangement is sought providing a new vehicular and pedestrian access onto Stockport Road approximately 375 metres to the south of the existing access. The alterations are required for internal security reasons and to reduce congestion at the main gate. This will be achieved by the provision of a longer length of road between the junction and the reception building allowing more capacity for vehicles to queue within the site for security checks and controls etc, reducing the likelihood of vehicles queuing on the highway. The scheme also includes additional car parking and an improved reception area.

The main use of the existing access will cease concurrently with the opening of the new access but will continue to allow controlled access for pedestrians and cyclists who approach the site from the north, together with occasional abnormal loads.

There is a bus stop located adjacent to the existing main gate which will continue to be of benefit to pedestrians who will still be able to access the site via the pedestrian gate in this location. There are alternative bus stops for the main services on Stockport Avenue further south. The proposed scheme includes the provision of a 2m footway with street lighting on the east side of Stockport Road to provide a continuous footway link from the proposed site entrance to the bus stops on Stockport Avenue. The footway will be constructed on the existing grass verge within the public highway. It is noted that additional internal footpaths will be provided to improve the connectivity within the site.

In terms of vehicle movements, whilst it is acknowledged that the site attracts a significant number of vehicles, the proposal will not result in an increase in land use and thus no increase in trips. The relocation of the point of access is not expected to have any negative impacts on the

surrounding highway network given that there will be no change to the traffic flows. The proposed site access arrangement will change from a roundabout to a priority T-junction. A junction analysis of the proposed site access has been provided in the TA and demonstrates that the Ratio of Flow to Capacity (RFC) is below the threshold of 85% indicating that delays and queues are unlikely on Stockport Road and the junction should function efficiently.
The proposed access is located within the national speed limit, it is noted that Stockport Road is straight and allows for good visibility in both directions for exiting vehicles and forward visibility of turning vehicles. The design of the access submitted with the TA shows a lengthened taper to the south to accommodate the adjacent access; this should be amended to provide a similar junction radius on both sides of the bellmouth.
I recommend the following condition is applied should permission be granted:-
No development shall commence on site until full construction details of the new bellmouth access arrangement and the proposed footway from the new site entrance in a southerly direction to connect with the existing footway on Stockport Avenue, together with any necessary drainage, street lighting, surfacing, kerbs and tie-in to the existing carriageway, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Highway Authority. The bellmouth access and footway shall be constructed in accordance with the approved drawings prior to first use of the reception building and associated facilities.
Informative
A S278 legal agreement with Wiltshire Council Highway Authority will be necessary to enable the works to the public highway to be undertaken. S278 drawings should be sent to Highways Development Control for approval. A street lighting scheme will be required.

**Further comments in response to queries from divisional member of adjoining ward:**
I am unable to comment on why the opportunity to extend the already constructed Solstice link road to create a new gate and visitor centre may have been overlooked nor am I able to explain why a main gate is required with activity at an all-time low, this is a commercial decision to which the Highway Authority has no input.

In terms of traffic flows, the Transport Assessment provides measured turning counts together with growth rates for three forecast years with and without development (new access) as requested by the Highway Authority. The diagrams provided demonstrate that vehicles are likely to take the same route depending on which direction they arrive from, irrespective of the access location, either at the existing or proposed position. The figures show that more vehicles arrive from the Main Road direction than Stockport Road, and thus more vehicles will pass The Nicholson Centre at peak times. However, it is noted that there is a car park and layby adjacent to The Nicholson Centre. Any vehicles parked on the highway will act as traffic calming and drivers will choose to divert to a different route or alter their arrival time should it become a significant issue.

There will be adequate sight lines for and of vehicles exiting the proposed access and sufficient forward visibility of any vehicles waiting on Stockport Road to turn right into the site. The proposed access has been assessed using junction analysis software and the resulting figures show that the Ratio of Flow to Capacity (RFC) is under the 0.85 threshold, meaning that any queues likely to form are within an accepted threshold. This would be no different to the current arrangement with a roundabout where one-arm has priority over another and where queues may form. It is noted that delays at the existing main entrance are likely to be a consequence of the close proximity of

the Gate House to the gate, the proposal seeks to address this issue by setting back the new Gate House and providing space internally for vehicles to park, wait and queue.

The lack of street lighting on Stockport Road is noted and can be considered by our Street Lighting consultants at Atkins as part of this proposal. As Stockport Road and the verge either side is public highway, any work carried out will require a S278 legal agreement. At that time detailed drawings will be required to be submitted for approval, including cross sections, construction details, drainage and street lighting schemes.

**WC Public Rights of Way Officer:**
No comment received.

**WC Archaeology:**
This application is supported by an archaeological desk-based assessment (Wessex Archaeology, August 2023). The assessment report sets out the known heritage assets within and close to the application site, assesses the likelihood of as yet unidentified buried archaeological remains to survive within the application site, and the likely impact of the proposed development on those buried remains. The principal conclusions of the assessment are as follows:

1. There are no designated heritage assets within the application site but there are several Scheduled Monuments, mostly Bronze Age barrows, on the downland around the site.
2. Two archaeological investigations have previously taken place within parts of the site, a trial trench evaluation in 2001, and a geophysical survey in 2016. There have previously been widespread and detailed archaeological investigations in the wider area, mostly in advance of the new housing immediately to the west of Boscombe Down, and so the archaeological potential of the area is well understood.
3. These investigations have identified mostly Neolithic, Bronze Age, and Roman monuments, settlements and burials, including the internationally important ‘Amesbury Archer’, one of the richest Beaker burials so far found in Britain.
4. From the post-Roman period, up to the creation of Boscombe Down airfield in the early 20th-century, the site was probably in agriculture, serving the small town of Amesbury. The military facility has a long and important history. From the limited evidence available, it does not appear that any significant structures from the airfield previously occupied the application site. Therefore, if any as yet unidentified buried remains are present, they are likely to survive in good condition.
5. The report assesses the potential for significant remains of Bronze Age and Roman date to be present on the site to be high. The proposed development has the potential to harm any such deposits.
6. The assessment therefore concludes that further archaeological investigation is likely to be sought and this might either comprise exploratory investigation or a strip, map and record exercise in advance of construction, should the scheme be permitted.

I am in broad agreement with the conclusions of the assessment. The report rightly notes the frequency and significance of buried remains identified immediately to the west of the application area in advance of recent housing and there is no reason to doubt that similar remains continue to the east into the area of Boscombe Down. The red line boundary of the site set out in the desk-based assessment report does not entirely match that submitted with the application. The proposed access road in the east of the site crosses a pair of undated, but probably prehistoric, ditches (Fig. 3).

The assessment also notes two previous exploratory archaeological investigations within the application area, but these were limited in extent, and it is not entirely clear if any of the 2001 evaluation trenches actually fell within the red line boundary of this application. Two trenches (15 and 16) immediately to the south of the application site certainly contained several archaeological features, albeit undated. It would have been helpful for the desk-based assessment to reconcile the precise location of the previous archaeological surveys and trial trenches with the current application area.

It is also an omission that the report does not mention Wessex Archaeology's own recent monitoring of geotechnical investigations within the site area in May 2023 (Wessex Archaeology, 279930.03, June 2023). Unsurprisingly, given the small area examined, no archaeological deposits were identified but, notably, no deep or widespread modern disturbances were encountered.

This is a site of reasonable area (c. 1ha) that the accompanying desk-based assessment concludes has a high potential to contain significant buried archaeological remains. This is exemplified by discoveries in the early 2000s to the immediate west of the site, including the internationally important 'Amesbury Archer'.

For these reasons, I recommend that this application is not determined until further information on the archaeological implications of this proposed development has been provided. It would therefore be appropriate for an exploratory archaeological investigation (field evaluation) to be carried out so that a planning decision can be made based on authoritative information on the archaeological impacts of the proposal. This is in accordance with Paragraph 194 of the NPPF which states that 'Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation' (The Archaeology Service's emphasis).

The field evaluation should take the form of a trial trenching exercise, which will rapidly establish the presence of any buried remains, their significance, and the impact of the proposal upon them so that appropriate mitigation measures can be put in place.

**Further comment:**
If there is an issue of military security that inhibits archaeological investigation at this time, I would be willing, in this instance, to accept a post-determination condition. As the agent acknowledges, this does place all of the uncertainty over the presence or absence of significant archaeological remains and the time and resource required to address them until post-consent. The condition wording should therefore reflect that no development can commence until there has been an exploratory archaeological investigation along with any further mitigation measures required, should areas of archaeological interest be identified. Mitigation measures may include further detailed archaeological investigation in advance of development or redesign to remove or reduce impacts on buried archaeological remains. There may therefore need to be a significant hiatus between the granting of permission and the commencement of development to enable an appropriate programme of archaeological fieldwork to take place. The following condition is therefore recommended:

‘No development shall take place within the red line boundary shown on Baker Hicks’ Location Plan 30002949-BHK-XX-XX-DR-A-0001, dated 6 October 2023 until the applicant has secured and implemented a programme of archaeological field evaluation in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The results of the evaluation will inform the preparation of an archaeological mitigation strategy which will be submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the development. The mitigation strategy will provide for:

i) A programme of site investigation and recording, or alternative appropriate mitigation, within any areas of archaeological interest. Development will not commence within any area of archaeological interest until the site investigation has been satisfactorily completed.

ii) A programme of post investigation assessment, analysis, publication, dissemination and archiving. This part of the condition shall not be discharged until these elements of the programme have been fulfilled in accordance with the programme set out in the mitigation strategy or unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.’

**WC Climate Officer**

Based on the information on the application form this does not appear to be a major development. As such, I assume the consultation is because there is an element of renewable energy in the proposal consisting of a modest stand-alone array facing due south and angled to 40 degrees on a support frame. Subject to there being no shading these panels should operate with around 100% optimisation. The climate team would support the provision of these panels because they will generate renewable energy that is likely to support the operational energy needs of the site.

The development plan reflects that the generation of renewable energy is positive climate action with CP42 setting out support for renewable energy schemes. The NPPF is also positive and sets out a context for the need for planning to support the radical reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Central to achieving this is the shift to renewable energy which in a location such as Wiltshire currently means significant solar PV development. We do not have significant capacity for other forms of renewables. Furthermore, the government has aims for a five-fold increase in solar PV capacity by 2035 (March 2023 document Powering Up Britain).

Whilst the solar development is modest and the benefits are proportionate, this is positive climate action. Given it’s a modest array, the potential impacts on wider planning interests are similarly proportionate.

In terms of the wider development, this falls outside of my usual scope. However, I have briefly reviewed the proposals and there are a couple of simple points that should be made to the developer under CP41 of the development plan where the LPA should be supporting and encouraging the developer to take positive climate action.

• Technically BREEAM “Excellent” is required on all non-residential developments. As a rule of thumb, the development management team has only applied this on schemes over 1,000sqm in acknowledgement of viability.

• As such I suggest that in-lieu of BREEAM, a proportionate Sustainable Energy Strategy would be positive to identify how the proposal is seeking to address carbon emissions from the development.

• In this case I think it could be reasonably limited to operational carbon and I would encouraged the developer to take a fabric first approach to reduce energy demand and then seek to meet residual energy demand through low carbon and renewable energy technologies. For example,

heat pumps instead of any gas/oil boilers for heating/hot water. Building integrated solar PV can then often make a building net zero carbon in operation, or close. In this case the building design is sub-optimal due to its orientation and roof pitch. However, I would anticipate circa 84% optimisation could be achieved on this building still without a redesign.
• I cannot see any provision for electric vehicle charging in the car park. As we transition to net zero it is likely that a greater level of journeys will be made using electric vehicles and as such, I would encourage a proportion of the spaces to have EV charging. Building regulations Part S indicates as a minimum, considering the visitor car park alone, that at least one EV charge point should be provided and then a further 8 future proofed with cable routes for charge points.
• Unless there are operational security justifications then the developer should be encouraged to consider climate change adaptation measures. Nature-based solutions to address greater storm rainfall and overheating can also provide a visual betterment, biodiversity net gain and support health and wellbeing. SuDS and tree planting have potential at the site and would be reasonable in light of the expansive hard standing proposed. Climate change is a central issue to be addressed by the development plan. The direction of travel since its adoption in 2015 is very clear with the Council's adopted Climate Strategy in 2022 setting a framework for reducing carbon emissions in Wiltshire. Furthermore, the NPPF states that planning needs to shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

**WC Public Protection Officer:**
No comment received.

**Representations**
No third party representations have been received.

Concerns were raised by Cllr Yuill, the divisional member for the ward immediately to the west of the site which covers the area that traffic currently approaches the site, and clarification sought from the Highways Officer.

**Planning Considerations and Assessment**

Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 require that the determination of planning applications must be made in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

<u>Principle of Development:</u>
In respect of Military Establishments, Core Policy 37 states that new development and changes of use at operational facilities that help enhance or sustain their operational capability will be supported. Development at operational sites should enhance the overall character of the site. All development at operational sites should mitigate any adverse impacts on local infrastructure, and not erode the character of the surrounding area. All proposals must ensure that the cultural and historical significance of the military facilities located on the site are understood and inform the scope of future development of that site.

Therefore, whilst the site is situated in the countryside where there is a general presumption against new development, it is also located within an existing and operational MOD site. Development 'within the wire', which is required for military security purposes is acceptable as an exception to this general restriction. The principle acceptability is however subject to consideration of the detail in terms of the site specific impacts with regards to the character of the area; neighbouring amenities; highway safety; archaeology and design/sustainability. These matters will therefore be addressed in more detail below.

Visual/Landscape Impacts:

As is identified above, the site is situated within an existing MOD aerodrome site. Whilst aspects of this particular development are likely to be visible from the public domain from outside the site, the character of the site is inherently military and the development will also be seen very much against the back drop of the existing development within the established Boscombe Down facility. The proposed single storey reception building is of a modern design and its scale reflects the internal requirement for the reception and office facility at the entrance to the site. It is considered that the design of the building is appropriate for this setting. Overall it is considered that the siting, design and appearance of the proposed building within the military site will not introduce demonstrable harm to the character of the area. There are various other aspects of the scheme within the site, including the entrance gates, car parking and internal roads and footpaths and an array of solar PV panels. It is considered that these aspects of the scheme do not introduce any demonstrable adverse impact on the landscape character in the context of the existing site. There is also a footpath outside of the wire to provide a pedestrian link the new entrance, this is also considered visually acceptable.

Neighbour Amenity:

The proposed building is 'behind the wire' and therefore the proposed use of the building and separation distance to non-associated residential properties would ensure that there is no impact on neighbour amenity.

Highways Safety:

Access for all vehicles and pedestrians is currently gained via the main gate off a three-arm mini roundabout on the junction of Main Road with Stockport Road. This application proposes an alternative access arrangement which would providing a new vehicular and pedestrian access onto Stockport Road approximately 375 metres to the south of the existing access. The alterations are required for internal security reasons and to reduce congestion at the main gate. This will be achieved by the provision of a longer length of road between the junction and the reception building allowing more capacity for vehicles to queue within the site for security checks and controls etc, reducing the likelihood of vehicles queuing on the highway. The scheme also includes additional car parking and a new reception area.

The proposal does not include any built form other than that which is intended to replace existing reception facilities. As there is no associated increase in the use of the site, there is no increase in traffic movements to and from the highway. The main use of the existing access will cease concurrently with the opening of the new access but will continue to allow controlled access for pedestrians and cyclists who approach the site from the north, together with occasional abnormal loads. However, Amesbury Town Council have expressed concern that the transportation plan is not clear regarding increased traffic on Porton Road.

The Highways Officer notes that there is a bus stop located adjacent to the existing main gate which will continue to be of benefit to pedestrians who will still be able to access the site via the pedestrian gate in this location. There are alternative bus stops for the main services on Stockport Avenue further south. The proposed scheme includes the provision of a 2m footway with street lighting on the east side of Stockport Road to provide a continuous footway link from the proposed site entrance to the bus stops on Stockport Avenue. The footway will be constructed on the existing grass verge within the public highway. It is noted that additional internal footpaths will be provided to improve the connectivity within the site.

In terms of vehicle movements, the Highways Officer notes that whilst it is acknowledged that the site attracts a significant number of vehicles, the proposal will not result in an increase in land use and thus no increase in trips. The relocation of the point of access is not expected to have any negative impacts on the surrounding highway network given that there will be no change to the traffic flows. The proposed site access arrangement will change from a roundabout to a priority T-junction. A junction analysis of the proposed site access has been provided in the Transport Assessment and demonstrates that the Ratio of Flow to Capacity (RFC) is below the threshold of 85% indicating that delays and queues are unlikely on Stockport Road and the junction should function efficiently. The Highways Officer is satisfied that the relocation of the access less than half a kilometre to the south of the existing access on Stockport Road would not alter traffic routes to and from the facility.

It is further noted that the proposed access is located within the national speed limit and that Stockport Road is straight and allows for good visibility in both directions for exiting vehicles and forward visibility of turning vehicles. The design of the access submitted with the Transport Assessment shows a lengthened taper to the south to accommodate the adjacent access which should be amended to provide a similar junction radius on both sides of the bellmouth. A pre-commencement condition is recommended to require full construction details of the new bellmouth access arrangement and the proposed footway from the new site entrance in a southerly direction to connect with the existing footway on Stockport Avenue, together with any necessary drainage, street lighting, surfacing, kerbs and tie-in to the existing carriageway, to be approved and constructed prior to the first use of the reception building and associated facilities. The works to the highway, including street lighting, are to be subject to a S278 legal agreement with Wiltshire Council Highway Authority.

Archaeology:

This application is supported by an archaeological desk-based assessment (Wessex Archaeology, August 2023). The assessment report sets out the known heritage assets within and close to the application site, assesses the likelihood of as yet unidentified buried archaeological remains to survive within the application site, and the likely impact of the proposed development on those buried remains. The principal conclusions of the assessment are as follows:

1. There are no designated heritage assets within the application site but there are several Scheduled Monuments, mostly Bronze Age barrows, on the downland around the site.
2. Two archaeological investigations have previously taken place within parts of the site, a trial trench evaluation in 2001, and a geophysical survey in 2016. There have previously been widespread and detailed archaeological investigations in the wider area, mostly in advance of the new housing immediately to the west of Boscombe Down, and so the archaeological potential of the area is well understood.

3. These investigations have identified mostly Neolithic, Bronze Age, and Roman monuments, settlements and burials, including the internationally important ‘Amesbury Archer’, one of the richest Beaker burials so far found in Britain.
4. From the post-Roman period, up to the creation of Boscombe Down airfield in the early 20th-century, the site was probably in agriculture, serving the small town of Amesbury. The military facility has a long and important history. From the limited evidence available, it does not appear that any significant structures from the airfield previously occupied the application site. Therefore, if any as yet unidentified buried remains are present, they are likely to survive in good condition.
5. The report assesses the potential for significant remains of Bronze Age and Roman date to be present on the site to be high. The proposed development has the potential to harm any such deposits.
6. The assessment therefore concludes that further archaeological investigation is likely to be sought and this might either comprise exploratory investigation or a strip, map and record exercise in advance of construction, should the scheme be permitted.

The Council's Archaeologist is in broad agreement with the conclusions of the assessment. It is noted that the report rightly notes the frequency and significance of buried remains identified immediately to the west of the application area in advance of recent housing and there is no reason to doubt that similar remains continue to the east into the area of Boscombe Down. It is further noted that the red line boundary of the site set out in the desk-based assessment report does not entirely match that submitted with the application. The proposed access road in the east of the site crosses a pair of undated, but probably prehistoric, ditches (Fig. 3). The assessment also notes two previous exploratory archaeological investigations within the application area, but these were limited in extent, and the Archaeologist considers that it is not clear if any of the 2001 evaluation trenches actually fell within the red line boundary of this application. Two trenches (15 and 16) immediately to the south of the application site certainly contained several archaeological features, albeit undated. The desk-based assessment does not reconcile the precise location of the previous archaeological surveys and trial trenches with the current application area. It is also an omission that the report does not mention Wessex Archaeology’s own recent monitoring of geotechnical investigations within the site area in May 2023 (Wessex Archaeology, 279930.03, June 2023). Unsurprisingly, given the small area examined, no archaeological deposits were identified but, notably, no deep or widespread modern disturbances were encountered.

The Archaeologist concludes that this is a site of reasonable area (c. 1ha) that the accompanying desk-based assessment concludes has a high potential to contain significant buried archaeological remains. This is exemplified by discoveries in the early 2000s to the immediate west of the site, including the internationally important ‘Amesbury Archer’. For this reason, it is recommend that this application is not determined until further information on the archaeological implications of this proposed development has been provided. It would be appropriate for an exploratory archaeological investigation (field evaluation) to be carried out so that a planning decision can be made based on authoritative information on the archaeological impacts of the proposal. This is in accordance with Paragraph 194 of the NPPF which states that ‘Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation’ (The Archaeology Service’s emphasis). The field evaluation should take the form of a trial trenching exercise, which will establish the presence of any buried remains, their significance, and the impact of the proposal upon them so that appropriate mitigation measures can be put in place.

Discussions have taken place with the agent regarding the use of a pre-commencement condition rather than pre-determination field evaluation. The Archaeologist has confirmed that this places a risk on the developer due to the uncertainty over the presence or absence of significant archaeological remains and the time and resource required to address them until post-consent. However it is agreed that if there is an issue of military security that inhibits archaeological investigation at this time, a post-determination condition would be accepted. This should reflect that no development can commence until there has been an exploratory archaeological investigation along with any further mitigation measures required, should areas of archaeological interest be identified. Mitigation measures may include further detailed archaeological investigation in advance of development or redesign to remove or reduce impacts on buried archaeological remains. There may therefore need to be a significant hiatus between the granting of permission and the commencement of development to enable an appropriate programme of archaeological fieldwork to take place.

Renewable Energy:

The Climate Officer advises that *the development plan reflects that the generation of renewable energy is positive climate action with CP42 setting out support for renewable energy schemes. The NPPF is also positive and sets out a context for the need for planning to support the radical reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Central to achieving this is the shift to renewable energy which in a location such as Wiltshire currently means significant solar PV development. We do not have significant capacity for other forms of renewables. Furthermore, the government has aims for a five-fold increase in solar PV capacity by 2035 (March 2023 document Powering Up Britain).* The proposal includes a solar PV array which is supported by the Council's Climate Officer on the basis that they will generate renewable energy that is likely to support the operational energy needs of the site. Whilst the solar development is modest and the benefits are proportionate, this is positive climate action, similarly given that it is a modest array, the potential impacts are similarly proportionate.

The application is not within the category of major development and therefore the remainder of the Climate Officer's comments are advisory having regard to CP41 of the development plan to encouraging the developer to take positive climate action. The developer has responded that in terms of BREEAM and the equivalent MOD's DREAM (Defence Related Environment Assessment) this was explored early in the design process however due to the small size of the building the costs to achieve compliance were disproportionate to the over project costs. The building presented within the application includes various sustainability measures and following construction will have an EPC rating of A, just marginally short of a A+.

The visitor's car parking to the front of the proposed reception building is intended to be a transient space only. Visitors will park there for a brief period of time whilst they are processed before then driving on to the base. Due to security risks, vehicles will be actively discouraged from being left there unattended. It is
therefore not appropriate in this case to provide EV charging facilities, however there is a separate programme of works on going to install EV charges on the base around the existing parking facilities.

With regards to ecology and bio-diversity net gain, due to the site being an active airfield, planting trees and undertaking measures to increase the site fauna would increased risk of bird strikes and jet engine ingestion to the aircraft operating from the active airfield.

Flood Risk:
The site lies in flood zone 1 and is not identified as at risk of flooding from other sources.

**Conclusion:**
The proposal is for the relocation of the existing access to the MOD site and associated new reception and car parking facilities to the south of the existing entrance. The proposal is required to improve security and operational efficiency of the site access. The principle of development is supported by Core Policy 37 and the highways implications of the proposal are considered acceptable to the Highways Officer subject to a condition together with a S278 agreement which falls outside of the planning permission. The scale of the reception facility, access and associated car parking is not considered to have significant visual impact on the site or surroundings in the context of the existing airfield base. The site is located in an area which has potential for archaeological significance and the Council's Archaeologist has recommended pre-determination investigation, however it has been agreed that this can be dealt with by pre-commencement condition due to the security issues advised by the applicant. The proposal includes a modest PV array which is supported by the Council's Climate Officer. It is concluded that there would be no significant adverse impact on the site or surroundings to indicate reasons for refusal of the scheme when assessed against the benefits for the operational efficiency of the MOD site.

---

**Conditions:** (4)

1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

REASON: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and documents:

Location Plan 30002949-BHK-XX-XX-DR-A-0001_Rev P2
Existing Site Plan30002949-BHK-XX-XX-DR-A-0002_Rev P2
Proposed Site Plan 30002949-BHK-XX-XX-DR-A-0003_Rev P2
Proposed Site Plan - Key Area 30002949-BHK-XX-XX-DR-A-0004_Rev P2
Proposed Ground Floor and Roof Plan 30002949-BHK-XX-XX-DR-A-0005_Rev P1
Proposed Elevations 30002949-BHK-XX-XX-DR-A-0006_Rev P1
Proposed Sections 30002949-BHK-XX-XX-DR-A-0007_Rev P1
Proposed Security Fence details 30002949-BHK-XX-XX-DR-A-0008_Rev P1

Additional Details for Planning 30002949-BHK-XX-XX-DR-A-0009_Rev P1
Transport Statement 30002949-IRY-0001_BOSCOMBE GH_TS_REV P1
Design and Access Statement 30002949-BHK-XX-XX-RP-A-0001_Rev P1
Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment 282750_MOD Boscombe Down Reception_ADBA

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3 No development shall take place within the red line boundary shown on Baker Hicks' Location Plan 30002949-BHK-XX-XX-DR-A-0001, dated 6 October 2023 until the applicant has secured and implemented a programme of archaeological field evaluation in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The results of the evaluation will inform the preparation of an archaeological mitigation strategy which will be submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the development. The mitigation strategy will provide for:

i) A programme of site investigation and recording, or alternative appropriate mitigation, within any areas of archaeological interest. Development will not commence within any area of archaeological interest until the site investigation has been satisfactorily completed.

ii) A programme of post investigation assessment, analysis, publication, dissemination and archiving. This part of the condition shall not be discharged until these elements of the programme have been fulfilled in accordance with the programme set out in the mitigation strategy or unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To enable the recording of any matters of archaeological interest. A pre-commencement condition is necessary to ensure any matters of archaeological interest are recorded before any construction takes place.

4 No development shall commence on site until full construction details of the new bellmouth access arrangement and the proposed footway from the new site entrance in a southerly direction to connect with the existing footway on Stockport Avenue, together with any necessary drainage, street lighting, surfacing, kerbs and tie-in to the existing carriageway, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Highway Authority. The bellmouth access and footway shall be constructed in accordance with the approved drawings prior to first use of the reception building and associated facilities.

REASON: In the interests of highway safety. A pre-commencement condition is necessary in this instance to ensure that the new access is satisfactory.

**Informatives:** (1)

A S278 legal agreement with Wiltshire Council Highway Authority will be necessary to enable the works to the public highway to be undertaken. S278 drawings should be sent to Highways Development Control for approval. A street lighting scheme will be

required.