

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

This Environmental Statement (ES) has been prepared to accompany a full planning application to Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) submitted by Merseyside Pension Fund (from herein referred to as 'the Applicant'), for a proposed mixed-use development on a site at Fort Halstead, Crow Drive, Halstead (National Grid Reference TQ 49741 59317) (the 'application site').

### Scheme Background and Context

The Fort Halstead site was granted outline planning in 2015 by Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) for the following:

"Outline planning permission for the demolition of buildings and development of a mixed-use development comprising a business area (Use Classes B1 and B2 with ancillary energetic material testing) of up to 27,000 sq m GEA, 450 residential units, a hotel of up to 80 beds, a village centre (Use Classes A1-A3, B1a, D1 and D2), use of the Fort Area and bunkers as an historic interpretation centre (Use Class D1) with ancillary workshop space, and works associated with the development including roads, landscaping, security fencing, formal and informal open space, pedestrian, cyclist and public transport infrastructure, utilities infrastructure, sustainable urban drainage system, cycle and car parking (with all matters reserved); and detailed approval for two access points at Otford Lane/Crow Drive (primary) and Star Hill (secondary)." (Ref: SE/15/00628/OUT).

The application site is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) TQ 49741 59317. It is bounded by Star Hill Road to the west, Fort Road and Armstrong Close to the north, and land within the Applicant's ownership adjoins the remainder of the application site boundary, comprising mainly woodland and grassland. The application site is shown in Figure 1.1 at the rear of this chapter.

The application site is currently occupied in large part by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) and in part by QinetiQ, a specialist defence company, which provides scientific and technical research services to the Ministry of Defence (MoD). Due to the current consolidation and relocation of DSTL, the majority of the application site will be vacant thereafter and available for redevelopment.

Approximately 280 buildings are present on the site, some of which are vacant, with the main part (excluding the Fort Scheduled Monument) identified in SDC's Core Strategy [1] as a Major Developed Site (MDS) for employment. The Existing Site Plan Drawing provided in Figure 1.2 at the rear of this chapter shows the buildings on the application site and assigns a key reference number to each of those buildings. This ES uses these reference numbers when referring to relevant buildings. The MDS coincides with the extent of the built environment and employment-related development on the application site, which covers an area of approximately 40.1ha. The boundary of the MDS, is defined in the Allocations and Development Management Plan [2] pursuant to the Core Strategy.

There are circa 38 buildings that are considered heritage assets of varying sensitivity across the application site, these include one Scheduled

Monument (the Fort) that includes eight separate structures and four listed buildings (two of which are listed Grade II and the other two at Grade II\*).

Topographically, the application site and the wider surrounding area is dominated by a chalk escarpment that extends in a southwest/northeast direction. The application site is located on the top of the chalk escarpment ridge and is elevated above the surrounding area. Much of the site is relatively flat, with ground elevations ranging from approximately 160m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) in the north-eastern part of the site to 220m towards the western part of the site resulting in some gradual level changes across a large area. However, the southern part of the site slopes steeply from 210m to 180m.

The application site is located within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Green Belt. The Kent Downs AONB is noted for its distinctive chalk downland, steep scarps and woodlands. Ancient Woodland, as defined by Natural England and Kent Biological Records Centre data, is present in the north-west and western part of the application site. In addition, the trees on the application site are subject to Tree Preservation Orders.

A hybrid planning permission is being sought for a 'Mixed-use development comprising a business area (Use Classes B1 and ancillary B8) of up to 3.7ha, retention of QinetiQ (Use Classes B1 and ancillary B8), up to 750 residential units, a village centre (Use Classes A1-A3, B1a, C3, D1 and D2), use of the Fort area and bunkers as an historic interpretation centre (Use Class D1) with ancillary workshop space, and works associated with the development.'

The Applicant is submitting a hybrid application with all matters submitted in outline save for full details provided in relation to:

- The refurbishment and development associated with buildings Q13 and Q14 within the village centre; and
- Access.

QinetiQ intends to remain on the application site subject to the improvement of its premises as part of the redevelopment and will be located predominantly within the 'X' enclave (as per the existing site nomenclature).

### Planning Documentation

This Environmental Statement (ES) is one of a number of documents that have been submitted alongside the planning application. All of the documents that have been submitted are listed in **Table 1.1**.

**Table 1.1**  
Documents Submitted Alongside the Planning Application

HYBRID PLANNING APPLICATION SUBMISSION DOCUMENTS
<b>DOCUMENTS FOR APPROVAL</b>
Application Form
Site Location Plan and Existing Site Plan
Outline Parameter Plans:

### HYBRID PLANNING APPLICATION SUBMISSION DOCUMENTS

- Land Use and Green Infrastructure Plan
- Building Heights Plan
- Access and Movement Plan
- Demolition Plan

Detailed Plans:

- Village Centre (Q13-Q14) Proposed Demolition
- Village Centre (Q13-Q14) Proposal in Context
- Village Centre (Q13-Q14) Proposed Ground Floor in Context
- Village Centre (Q13-Q14) Existing Ground Floor Plan
- Village Centre (Q13-Q14) Existing First Floor Plan
- Village Centre (Q13-Q14) Existing Roof Plan
- Village Centre (Q13-Q14) Existing Elevations
- Village Centre (Q13-Q14) Proposed Primary Demolition
- Village Centre (Q13-Q14) Proposed Ground Floor Plan
- Village Centre (Q13-Q14) Proposed First Floor Plan
- Village Centre (Q13-Q14) Proposed Roof Plan
- Village Centre (Q13-Q14) Proposed Elevations
- Village Centre (Q13-Q14) Proposed Sections
- Village Centre (Q13-Q14) Street Elevations
- Village Centre (Q13-Q14) Bin and Cycle Store
- Star Hill and Pole Hill Access Plans

Detailed: Village Centre Document

### SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Outline Illustrative Masterplan

Outline Indicative Density Plan

Design and Access Statement

Design Principles Document

Planning Statement (inc S106 Heads of Terms)

AONB Report

Viability Statement

Statement of Community Involvement

Sustainability Statement

Energy Statement

### Environmental Impact Assessment

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a systematic process for ensuring that the likely significant effects of a new development on its surrounding environment are fully identified and taken into account before that development is allowed to proceed. The aim of the EIA process is to provide the relevant decision maker (the 'competent or lead authority') with the information necessary to consider potential environmental impacts, to ascertain whether these are acceptable, and, to secure measures to mitigate any impacts likely to result in significant effects, or remove them completely, prior to granting relevant consents/permissions.