Heyford Park Community Action Group: Written Representation

About Heyford Park Community Action Group

Heyford Park Community Action Group (HPCAG) is a residents' group representing the residents of Heyford Park, Oxfordshire. Our main purpose is to protect and enrich the lives of the residents of Heyford Park. We focus on calling attention to the issues which matter most to local people, and campaigning for Heyford Park to be a place where people can live well.

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Introduction to this submission

This response was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate during the Examination Stage of their assessment of the proposal for the Oxfordshire Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (OXSRFI).

Our submission focuses on the potential impacts of the proposed development on the current and future residents of Heyford Park. As such, it draws upon an online survey of members of the community action group, conducted in October 2025, asking their views on the proposed development.

This submission contains three main sections:

- About Heyford Park – a brief introduction to the current settlement of Heyford Park.
- Our response to the SRFI proposal – an overview of the main concerns to the proposed development, addressing both the impact on current residents and the ramifications for future residents.
- The views of local people – a summary of some of the results from our online survey, presenting both qualitative and quantitative snapshots of the views of current Heyford Park residents on the proposed development.

About Heyford Park

Heyford Park is a vibrant village located in the north of the county of Oxfordshire, with a population of around 2,500 people.[i] The village exists on the site of a former RAF airfield, which was used by the RAF in both WWI and WWII before being later taken over by the United States Air Force.[ii] The village contains a high street, hotel, restaurant, school, nursery, and an innovation centre, and is surrounded by acres of Oxfordshire countryside.[iii]

Over 1,200 new homes have been developed in the village over recent years, and plans for up to 9,000 further homes were submitted to Cherwell District Council in September 2025. The proposed development would include community facilities, employment space, and extensive green infrastructure. If approved, the population of the settlement is expected to increase to more than 25,000 people.[iv] As such, Heyford Park is a site of strategic importance in the drive to deliver much-needed future homes, and meet both regional and national targets for house building – including the current Government's target to build 1.5 million homes by the end of this Parliament.[v]

As such, any proposed developments in close proximity to Heyford Park must take into consideration not only the needs of the current residents of the village, but also the proposed plans to deliver further housing in Heyford Park and develop the settlement into a thriving future town.

Our response to the SRFI proposal

Heyford Park Community Action Group, and the local people it represents, are opposed to the development of a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI) by Oxfordshire Rail Freight Limited (ORL) on land adjacent to Heyford Park. We believe this proposed development raises numerous issues for both current and future residents of Heyford Park.

Size

HPCAG believes that the size of the proposed SRFI is inappropriate for its planned location.

The proposed SRFI includes significant development of the land immediately adjacent to Heyford Park, including approximately 6.5 million square feet of warehousing [APP 161, page 12, paragraph 3.8]. The size of this proposed development – covering an area approximately the size of 100 football fields and larger than the country of Vatican City – is inappropriate and will have a hugely detrimental impact on the location and surroundings of Heyford Park. The vast size of the development means it would dwarf the existing village, and reduce vital access to green space for residents.

Heyford Park is currently surrounded by countryside on all sides, providing the residents of the settlement with panoramic views, proximity to nature and biodiversity, and easy access to countryside activities such as walking and cycling through the network of footpaths and bridleways in the area.

Access to green space has been shown to improve the wellbeing of people, and to contribute to better mental health.[vi] The removal of 6.5 million square feet of this greenfield countryside and development of this area into warehousing will remove this vital access to green space for the local people.

This will impact not only the current residents of the town, but also the potential future residents of Heyford Park. The success of Heyford Park as a future town will rest partly on the desirable location of the new town, and people's willingness to buy or rent homes and settle into the area. A development of this inappropriate scale next to the town will severely diminish the desirable location of the proposed future new town, and risk Heyford Park failing to deliver the proposed housing in the area.

Historic environment

HPCAG believe the proposed development risks damaging the historic environment and landscape of Heyford Park.

The proposed SRFI includes development of land directly adjacent to Heyford Park, abutting the former RAF runway. The former RAF Upper Heyford airbase is designated as a conservation area, reflecting the role that the airbase played in

the Cold War years. It contains a number of Scheduled Monuments identified as 'Cold War Structures', as well as five listed buildings.[vii]

The proposals submitted by ORL show that the warehouse buildings will be visible from the runway, and will need the creation of extensive bunding and tree planting to attempt to reduce this impact [APP 166, page 36, View Point D].

The Cherwell Valley Local Plan makes it clear that views and vistas from the former runway require protection, and states that "New proposals within the Heyford Area will therefore need to take account of important views and vistas, seek to limit the impact of development on the surrounding countryside and preserve and enhance the historic environment." We therefore believe that the proposed development risks damaging the historic environment of Heyford Park.

Scale and length of disruption

HPCAG are concerned that the proposal, if approved, would include a long period of development time, during which there would be considerable disruption, noise, pollution and traffic works.

The scale of the proposed SRFI is considerable and inappropriate. It includes:

- 6.5 million square feet of warehousing
- A new rail terminal
- New earthworks and landscaping
- Highway changes, including changes to two motorway junctions, a new link road, and two new bypasses of local villages.

A development of this scale will take considerable time to be completed. During this time, the people living close to the development can expect to suffer significant disruption, including noise from building works, air pollution from construction works, and considerable traffic disruption. One of the proposed changes to the traffic network includes the replacement of the current link road to the B430. This road provides access to the M40 from Heyford Park, and is one of the major access points to the village. The proposal also includes changes to both Junction 9 and 10 of the M40. These are the two closest junctions to Heyford Park. All of these changes will create years of roadworks and temporary traffic solutions, which will lead to years of disruption and delays for local residents.

This disruption – noise, air pollution and traffic changes – will all be detrimental to the current residents of Heyford Park, who live on land directly adjacent to the proposed development. This disruption will also impact any future residents of Heyford Park. As such, the scale of this disruption will risk undermining the potential for new homes in the area to be delivered successfully, as potential residents may be deterred from buying or renting homes in the area during this period.

Road transport

HPCAG are concerned that the proposal, if approved, would have considerable impacts on the transport networks of the local area.

We are concerned about the considerable increase in traffic on local roads that the SRFI proposal, if approved, would entail. Although the proposal includes traffic adjustments, we are concerned that these will not be sufficient to meet the increased need created by 9,600 members of staff and hundreds of HGVs arriving at the site per day. As a residents' group, detailed traffic modelling is beyond the scope of our response, but it is our hope that other groups will also raise in-depth objections about the impacts of the proposal on traffic levels in our local area.

Passenger rail transport

HPCAG are also concerned about the impact of the proposed development on future plans to develop a passenger rail station on the site of the disused train station at Ardley.

A passenger rail station was opened in Ardley when Great Western Railway opened its Birmingham to London line in 1910, and remained in use until it was closed in 1963.[viii] In September 2025, Oxfordshire County Council consulted on its 'OxRail 2040: Plan for Rail'. This consultation included a proposal to open a station at Ardley, with the aim of this station being to 'serve Heyford Park housing'.

Documents submitted as part of the SRFI proposal state that it would not prevent the creation of a passenger station at Ardley in the future. However, the plans fail to provide details on several key questions, including:

- Whether there would be space alongside the proposed SRFI site for a station building large enough to meet the needs of the location. With an expected population of more than 25,000 people in Heyford Park in the future, any passenger train station would need to be large enough to service this population. It would also require enough space to provide accessible routes and facilities, to ensure it meets the needs of any disabled residents of the area.
- Whether there would be space alongside the proposed SRFI for car parking for a passenger train station. The proposed SRFI includes development along the south of the existing railway line. To the north of the railway line is an area of historic woodland called Ardley Wood Quarry, which contains geological features of national importance as well as abundant wildlife.[ix] As land to the north of the railway line is unlikely to be suitable for development as a carpark, and land to the south is included in the proposal for the SRFI, it is unclear whether the proposed SRFI allows enough space to provide adequate parking at the passenger rail station.
- What the active transport options to the passenger station would be. As the proposed station location is within walking and cycling distance from Heyford Park, it is expected that many future passengers would access the station through these methods. However, the SRFI proposals do not clarify how passengers would be expected to access the passenger station. The safety implications of any proposed walking or cycling routes are a particular concern.

A passenger railway station on the previous Ardley station site is a vitally important future development for the people of Heyford Park. It would allow Heyford Park residents to travel to Bicester, London and Birmingham directly, conveniently, and in a manner which is environmentally-friendly and emits lower carbon than equivalent journeys by car.

The environmental impacts of the passenger rail station will be particularly significant as the population of Heyford Park increases. With a future expected population of over 25,000 people, a passenger rail station located on the Ardley site is vital for ensuring that the residents of Heyford Park are able to travel in a low-carbon, sustainable manner, and are not reliant on car transport.

Ardley station is, additionally, cited as part of the upcoming Puy du Fou theme park's plan to have half of its visitors arrive by public transport, showing the importance of Ardley station for other local stakeholders. This compounds our pre-existing concern about sufficient land area being provided for the passenger demand the station can expect.

Oxfordshire County Council states in its Strategic plan for 2025-2028 that its vision is to make Oxfordshire a 'greener, fairer and healthier county', with one of its objectives being to 'cut carbon emissions from transport'. A passenger railway station at Ardley, servicing the residents of Heyford Park and the wider area, as well as visitors to Puy du Fou, is vital to meeting this objective.

PFAS 'forever chemicals'

HPCAG are concerned that the proposed development would be built on land which is contaminated by PFAS, or 'forever chemicals'.

The proposed site for development lies to the east of Gallos Brook, a small stream flowing down from the old Heyford Park airfield. In May 2026, testing of this stream found concentrations of PFAS chemicals at a concentration of 43,274 ng/L – which is 43,000 times greater than the Environmental Quality Standard. We are concerned that this stream is indicative of contaminated soil across the land surrounding the old airfield, and that disturbing this soil will put residents, construction workers, and any future SRFI staff at risk of exposure to these chemicals. Until more is understood about the level of contamination, and the precise nature of these health risks, we do not believe any building work should be carried out in this area.

Cumulative impacts

HPCAG are concerned about the cumulative impact of multiple proposed developments in the area closely surrounding Heyford Park.

In addition to the proposed SRFI, several other large-scale developments are proposed for the area in close proximity to Heyford Park.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- An application submitted by Dorchester Living for a further 9,000 homes at Heyford Park. In addition to the new homes, this will also include new

schools, healthcare and community facilities, including cafes, leisure centres and retail spaces.[x]

- An application submitted by Puy de Fou to create a theme park between Heyford Park and Bicester. The site would include four period villages, live shows, hotels and restaurants, and expects to attract 1.47 million visitors per year once the attraction is completed.[xi]
- Approved plans for new warehouses and offices at Baynards Green, by Junction 10 of the M40.[xii]
- Ongoing building work led by David Wilson to create over 100 new homes at Heyford Park.[xiii]

Heyford Park Community Action Group is concerned that consideration has not been paid to the cumulative impact of these developments on the local area. We are concerned that our local area is being asked to absorb an unprecedented amount of development in a rapid timeframe, without consideration being fully paid to the cumulative impacts of these developments.

We are concerned that the SRFI proposals, including proposals for traffic adjustments (both on local roads and on the M40), discussions of air quality, and consideration of disruption during construction are unlikely to fully grasp the severity of the cumulative proposed changes. Going ahead with such a level of development without proper consideration of the cumulative impacts caused by multiple proposed developments risks irreversibly damaging our local area and creating uncontrollable levels of congestion, air pollution environmental degradation and urban sprawl.

Heyford Park Community Action Group are not in opposition to all development in the local area. We are supportive of many of the proposals being put forward to develop the local area. However, we believe that the proposed development of Heyford Park as a future town, delivering key future housing, and the proposed SRFI are in contradiction with one another, and are fundamentally not possible to reconcile. We believe the SRFI, if accepted, would risk undermining the success of Heyford Park as a future town.

The views of local people

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we are opposed to this proposed development because it goes against the express wishes of the local people we represent.

In October 2025, Heyford Park Community Action Group undertook an online survey of members of the community action group. This survey asked members their views on the proposed SRFI development, and asked them to provide reflections on why they felt this way.

The survey was circulated to all 500 members of our group at the time. Of these members, 80 took part in the quantitative part of the survey, while 16 provided further detailed, qualitative reflections on their view of the proposed development.

Of the 80 participants who took part in the quantitative part of the survey:

- Some **87%** told us they oppose the proposed SRFI development being built.
- Some **11%** told us they do not feel they have enough information on the SRFI proposal to decide.
- Some **2%** said they support the proposed SRFI development being built.

The 16 participants who submitted further qualitative responses reflected on their views on the proposed SRFI development.

Several of the participants focused their responses on the environmental impacts of the proposal:

> *"There are multiple reasons to reject this proposal, but some of the key ones in summary are…[it is] a 'trojan horse' for an extra-large warehouse estate, served by lorries. There are no commitments for a particular share of traffic to arrive or depart by train…The Chiltern line is already heavily used, and there is minimal spare capacity for trains, let alone slow-running freight trains… The project is 100% focuses on diesel population, which is environmentally unsustainable… By the developers own admission, 88% of employees will arrive on site by private car. There is no provision for passenger rail to the site…What is even worse is that the proposal effectively blocks the development of a high-grade Ardley passenger station."*

> *"Destruction of a lovely green area with rights of way. The developers claim that they expect a 'net gain' in biodiversity is simply laughable."*

Other participants focused on the proposals' impact on traffic and the disruption this would cause to local people:

> *"There's far too much infrastructure required to make this type of project workable. The A34 would need significant improvement down to the M4… and loads of local roads."*

> *"Roads can't handle the lorries now – one M40 accident & cannot get in or out of the area."*

> *"Traffic, traffic, traffic!"*

Finally, some participants highlighted the lack of consideration for the local area, and the incompatibility of the scheme with the proposal for a new town at Heyford Park:

> *"Overall a lack of consideration of how this really fits into the whole area. With the new town proposal as well they are going to massively increase residential traffic while overloading access with more commercial traffic as well….the new town proposal… makes more sense that the freight initiative and its isn't possible to do them both."*

> *"The connections between this area and the other terminals provide no strategic need for the wider economy, or even the local economy…As was evidenced in their documentation saying it would only provide £321million*

to the local economy…. New town predictions have their impact to growth at £3.2 billion."

This opposition from local people was reflected in the responses to the statutory consultation run by the developers in the autumn of 2025, with the consultation summary [APP 147, section 6.2.42] acknowledging a large number of responses from the residents of Heyford Park objecting to the scheme.

The members of the local community who are opposed to this scheme are the people who will suffer the most from the disruption, ecological damage, and loss of character of their local area, but will see little in terms of benefits. We believe that a development of this size and impact should not go ahead without the support of the local community who will be impacted the most.

References

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