

## *Historic Environment Character Zone*

### **LVMW      Lambourn Valley Military Welford**

#### **Historic Character**

RAF Welford is one of the major USAF stores for conventional munitions in Europe. The site is occupied by a dense mix of bunkers and later 20<sup>th</sup> century military buildings. Military use of the zone began in the Second World War when an airfield was established on the site. Following the war the base fluctuated between RAF and USAF control and became a munitions store in 1955. The USAF took sole control of the base in 2002.

Prior to military usage the zone had the same kind of agricultural landscape found in surrounding areas. The zone was covered by a mix of woods and pre-18<sup>th</sup> century fields created from enclosure of open fields. A single farm, Poughley Farm, and two field barns were the only buildings in the zone. The construction of the base entailed large-scale earth-moving and the removal of previous landscape features over most of the site. The area around Poughley Farm was less heavily landscaped and parts of the earlier landscape, including woodland, survive. Some of the farm buildings, including the farmhouse, were retained and re-used by the base.

#### **Historic Environment**

Due to the nature of land-use that occurs in much of this zone, little archaeological work has been conducted and information on features prior to WWII is scarce. RAF Welford lies in the midst of known prehistoric and Roman activity and it is likely that this activity was present in the area of the base. However, such deposits are likely to have been removed during construction. Poughley was the site of a priory established in AD1160 and the farmhouse contains structural elements thought to be that of the Prior's lodge. Above ground remains of other priory buildings, including the church, no longer survive. The farmhouse itself is a listed building and in addition to the remains of the priory, there is a significant 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century domestic building. Surveys of the building in the 1990s noted deterioration in the building's condition and highlighted repair priorities for its continued survival. The area around the farm seems to have been less heavily developed and it is possible that below ground remains of the priory are present. RAF Welford is itself a significant 20th century military monument relating to both World War Two and the Cold War. Its primary role as a functioning military base is likely to conflict with the historic importance of the site, as changing requirements may require modification/demolition of historic structures.

#### **Historic Environment Potential**

Poughley Farm contains significant ecclesiastical and domestic structural remains. The site of the farm and surrounding areas are also likely to contain below-ground archaeological deposits relating to the priory. The potential for pre-WWII archaeological deposits across the rest of the base is likely to be low due to ground disturbance during construction. It is possible that some buried deposits survive but they are likely to be highly truncated. The base contains structures relating to WWII, the Cold War and the history of Britain's post-war relationship with America. The importance of these structures must be assessed and taken into account during any re-development. If modification or demolition of any structures is proposed, a programme of research and recording may be required.

#### **Historic Environment Action Plan**

##### Conservation Issues

- Need to ensure that management of change within the military base is carried out with appropriate levels of consultation and discussion.

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- Need to understand in more detail the significance of the military, WWII and Cold war features that survive on the site.
- Redundancy of historic buildings related to the Priory.

#### Research Priorities

- What is the level of survival of archaeological features within the airfield?
- Do the surviving structures associated with the priory contain any information about the medieval monastic institution? What is the condition of the buried remains of the priory?
- Does the airfield and munitions store include any archaeological features of significance for understanding 20<sup>th</sup> century military and political history?