

News story: Demolition work begins at RAF Lakenheath

A total of 18 buildings are being brought down to make way for construction of a flight simulator facility, a maintenance unit, new hangars and storage facilities.

Last November DIO awarded a contract worth £160 million to Kier VolkerFitzpatrick to deliver infrastructure to ready RAF Lakenheath for the aircraft in late 2021.

The Suffolk airbase will be the first permanent international site for US Air Force F-35s in Europe and continues the base's long and proud history of supporting US Air Force capability in the UK.

Many of the old buildings were built with heavily reinforced concrete so contractors have had to employ specific techniques and equipment to bring the buildings down efficiently. They are using a hydraulic excavator equipped with specialised attachments that can break concrete and steel, effectively 'chewing' the structures apart.

Waste materials will be recycled wherever possible. Timber and metal will be carefully preserved for re-use if appropriate. The concrete waste will be crushed, graded and re-used on the project.

The metal reinforcements in the buildings will be separated from the concrete and sent away to be recycled, possibly returning to site or to another construction project as reinforcement or structural steelwork.

Keith Maddison, DIO Programme Director, said:

The demolition of these 18 buildings is an important step in preparing the site, to allow the enabling works to be completed in preparation for construction to begin in the summer of this year, we are all working to a single goal of having the first aircraft arrival in late 2021.

The US Visiting Forces Infrastructure Programme is an incredibly exciting series of projects to work on and is strengthening the historic military ties between the two nations and the operating partnership between the RAF and US Air Force.

Col. Christopher Leonard, 48th Mission Support Group Commander, said:

Through outstanding teamwork and collaboration with our Defence Infrastructure Organisation mission partners, the 48th Fighter Wing is excited to start the demolition of existing facilities to clear

the site for the F-35 campus.

This campus will be the home to the first two US Air Force F-35 squadrons in Europe, thus reassuring our commitment and enhancing interoperability with the RAF and our NATO allies.

We appreciate the Ministry of Defence and DIO's commitment and support of US Visiting Forces in the UK.

James Hindes, managing director of Aviation and Defence at Kier, commented:

The start of demolition is a major milestone at RAF Lakenheath. These works are vital in allowing us to prepare the site for construction on this prestigious Defence project from this summer.

This is a crucial piece of infrastructure for the RAF and US Air Force, and we look forward to continuing to work closely with the DIO and our local supply chain to deliver this.

Demolition work will make the site ready for the start of construction this summer. At the height of construction, it is expected that there will be up to 700 contractors on site. The investment will also provide wider benefits to the local economy with over 1,000 personnel and family members living at the base.

RAF Lakenheath plans to welcome the first of the new US F35s in 2021.