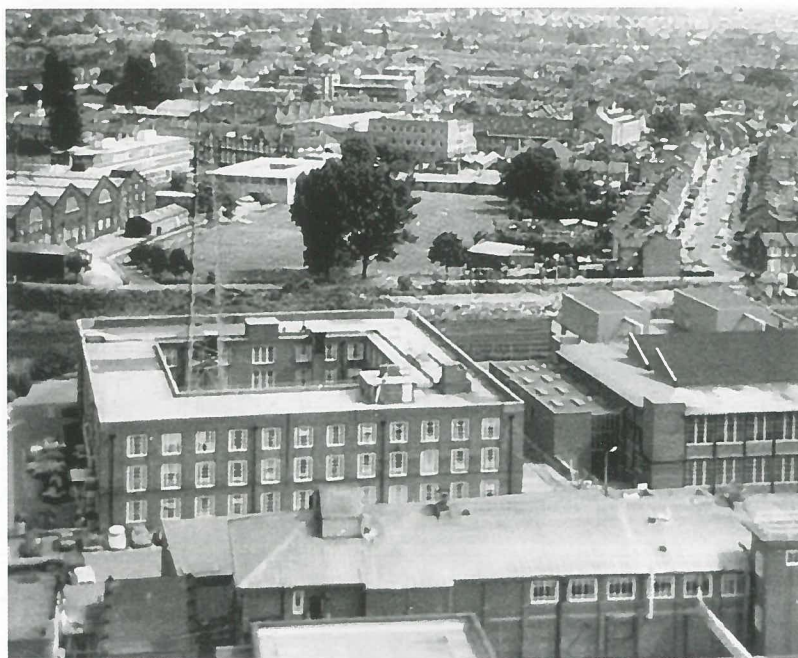




STATION 'Z'

Similar in design to the Admiralty Citadel in Cricklewood, the Air Ministry war room, known cryptically as STATION 'Z', was, as we have already learned, built beneath the courtyard of the HMSO printing works on Headstone Drive at Wealdstone in Middlesex. Construction started in 1938 and the bunker was ready for occupation in October 1940. The role and scope of the Air Ministry expanded exponentially throughout the Second World War and increased in importance in the post-war years as it took command of the nuclear deterrent, a responsibility it handed over to the Royal Navy in June 1969. The expanded wartime role required additional administrative accommodation resulting in the Air Ministry occupying a substantial segment of the Rotunda complex in Horseferry Road, described elsewhere in this section.

The Air Ministry remained at Cricklewood until 1955 when the site was handed over to the Home Office Directorate of Communications which was responsible for, amongst other things, the Civil Defence Radio Network and the Hilltop Radio System, both of which were important elements in the plans for the continuity of government in the event of nuclear war. The prominent radio antenna in the station's inner forecourt was erected at that time. In 1966 the bunker was earmarked as a temporary home for the regional government bunker (Sub-Regional Control 6.2) that would oversee the governance of



Above left: This aerial view shows the open quadrangle, enclosed by a three-storey office block, which together with the two-level bunker below ground comprises STATION Z.

Above right: The Air Ministry citadel lies beneath the courtyard in the foreground. Two ventilation stacks rise from the bunker on each side of the central bay of the surface office. The aerial mast to the left is a feature of the later Home Office occupancy of the site.

Below: Layout plan of the lower floor of the Cricklewood bunker.

