


The Institute (B455) and the Sergeant's Mess (B457) Upper Heyford Airbase Oxfordshire



Heritage Assessment and Impact Study

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The Institute (B455) and Sergeants' Mess (B457), RAF Upper Heyford, Oxfordshire

Historic Building Assessment and Heritage Impact Statement

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The Institute (B455) and Sergeants' Mess (B457),

RAF Upper Heyford, Oxfordshire

Historic Building Assessment and Heritage Impact Statement

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology has been asked by The Dorchester Group to undertake a heritage statement relating to a proposed development at the former RAF Upper Heyford in Oxfordshire. The assessment concerns proposals for Building 455 (The Institute) and Building 457 (Sergeants' Mess) immediately to the south of Camp Road and opposite the main entrance to the former airbase on the north side of the road.
- 1.1.2 The proposal forms part of the much larger redevelopment currently being undertaken of the former airbase (Heyford Park). The assessment relates to a current planning application being made to Cherwell District Council.
- 1.1.3 The buildings are unlisted but they are within the Upper Heyford Conservation Area and among the more significant airfield buildings surviving to the south of Camp Road from the earlier phase of RAF Upper Heyford.
- 1.1.4 The aim of the current report is to identify the historic significance of the buildings and to assess the potential impact on that significance of the current proposals.
- 1.1.5 Both buildings 455 and 457 already have consent for the partial demolition of the structure and subsequent refurbishment.

1.2 Previous OA work at Upper Heyford

- 1.2.1 Oxford Archaeology has undertaken a series of investigations and programmes of research into the heritage of Upper Heyford Airbase in recent years in relation to the wider redevelopment (ACTA 2005, 2006). This research has formed the basis of the current assessment. The 2006 Character Assessment showed that these two buildings were part of a group of 1920s RAF structures built around the Parade Ground, and were prominent as the two principal buildings flanking the entrance opposite the main entrance across the road on the north side.
- 1.2.2 Among the previous work has been an Environmental Impact Assessment of the site (Evans 2007) which provided an outline assessment of the significance of the main buildings at the site. The EIA also divided the site into distinct character areas with its own level of significance. The two buildings in the current project were assessed as being of Medium Significance and they are each within Character Area OA12B: Barracks and Institutions (Parade Ground Buildings) which itself was assessed as being of low significance.

- 1.2.3 The CDC Conservation Area Appraisal for RAF Upper Heyford (2006) indicated both buildings as 'Locally Significant' buildings. The appraisal describes Building 455 as *'Institute (Building 455) originally constructed in the 1920s. It was policy during the mid 1920s to have a separate Airmen's Institute and Dining Rooms, during the RAF Expansion Period the building became the new Sergeants' Mess with airmen and corporals relocated to a new combined Dining Room and Institute'*.
- 1.2.4 The Conservation Area Appraisal describes Building 457 as *'Sergeant's Mess (Building 457) 1925 date stone occupies a prominent position overlooking the parade ground. The building, constructed in red brick, is in good condition. This is one of the few buildings that retains the original 1925 plan form'*.

1.3 Current proposals

- 1.3.1 The proposal will form part of the development of the new Heyford Village Centre. Each building will be refurbished and incorporated into a long block of connected buildings. The footprint of each building will be altered through the removal of various elements (mainly secondary extensions) and through the addition of new extensions. The two structures will also then be connected by the construction of new glazed link (village square).

1.4 Methodology

- 1.4.1 The assessment has been prepared from previous studies and reports, from analysis of the many airfield plans, site visits, and through the understanding of the site that OA has developed through the investigations undertaken there in recent years. The collection of plans is extensive for the period from 1926 to 1947 but there are few plans from the second half of the 20th century.

2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Summary of Upper Heyford Airbase

- 2.1.1 The history of RAF Upper Heyford and the US Air Force base has been detailed in other recent studies and can be presented here as a brief summary.
- 2.1.2 The origins of RAF Upper Heyford lie in the latter stages of the First World War and the establishment of a landing field with six hangars in 1918. After the war the airfield was released by the Air Ministry and the land reverted to New College, Oxford. In 1924 the site was re-purchased by the Government as part of the planned expansion of the Royal Air Force and Upper Heyford became the model on which airfields of this type were based in the 1925-1934 period. In the later 1930s, as the prospect of war with Germany became ever more likely, the aerodrome was attached to the RAF's Central Area which became No 1 Bomber Group of the new Bomber Command in 1936.
- 2.1.3 During WWII Upper Heyford principally served as a training base and this continued in the immediate post-war period. In 1950 the British Government approved the formation of permanent bases for the US Air Force and Upper Heyford was remodelled extensively to become one of the principal such bases. The base was upgraded between 1957 and 1959 but up to the mid 1960s it remained technically an RAF base. In 1965 it was officially transferred to the Americans as an USAF base and in the early 1970s it was

again remodelled to create what is now known as the 'landscape of flexible response'. By July 1971 it could claim to be the largest fighter base in Europe (ACTA, 2005). Between 1977 and 1980 the airbase was equipped with hardened shelters to protect the F111 fighters.

- 2.1.4 With the end of the Cold War in c.1989-91 the USAF began to close their European bases and in 1994 Upper Heyford was handed back to the RAF.
- 2.1.5 The historical significance of the site has been gradually recognised, particularly in the last decade, with the greater appreciation of military and Cold War structures nationwide. Many other pre-World War Two airfields survive better than Upper Heyford but the level of survival of its Cold-War airfield landscape is perhaps unique in Britain. As a reflection of this many structures were designated as Scheduled Ancient Monuments and the area has been awarded Conservation Area Status.

2.2 The Institute (Building 455)

- 2.2.1 The Institute is known to have been constructed as part of the original establishment of RAF Upper Heyford in the 1920s (with a datestone of 1925) and it is shown on the 1926 airfield plan. The building was then numbered No.46 in the airfield numbering system and the key confirms that it's original use was as an '*Institute with civilian accommodation*'. The Institute would have been a facility where airmen could have dined and relaxed. It would have incorporated dining rooms, card writing and games room.
- 2.2.2 The 1926 plan shows the building with a broadly similar plan to that existing today although the modern footprint includes two extensions which were not shown on the 1926 plan; these are at the eastern end of the south elevation and at the centre of the west elevation.
- 2.2.3 Subsequent plans through the 1930s and up to 1947 all show the building with the same (or very similar) footprint suggesting that no major extensions or alterations were undertaken until the post World War Two period. The 1947 plan shows that the building was then numbered 68 in the airfield's numbering system and a note on this plan shows that the building was then used as the Sergeants' Mess. The note relating to this building states '*Existing Accommodation to be used for A Crew, S/NCO's & Pupil NCO's without alteration except for addition of 1 No. 72 inch Range and 1 No. 1-Pan fish fryer in kitchen*'.
- 2.2.4 An aerial photograph from 1954 appears to confirm that the main extensions had not yet been constructed but a plan from 1984 does show the extensions.

2.3 Sergeants' Mess (Building 457)

- 2.3.1 The Sergeants' Mess is also known to have been part of the establishment of RAF Upper Heyford in the 1920s and it is shown on the 1926 airfield plan. It is shown with a broadly east to west plan form facing onto the Parade Ground and with several projections, the main ones being to the north. The plan suggests that the two main projections on the north side flank a distinct area which was probably a lower lobby area with flat roof or an external yard. The plan key confirms that the use of the building was as a Sergeant's Mess from its outset and that at this stage it was numbered 45 in the airfield numbering system.

- 2.3.2 The airfield plan of 1931 shows that by this date an extension had been added to the west end of the main range of the building. The same footprint for Building 457 is shown on the plans of 1937, 1938 and 1939. One of the plans from 1939 (a heating ducts plan for the buildings around the Parade Ground) labels Building 457 as the Sergeant's Quarters rather than the Sergeant's Mess and this slight change in use relates to the construction of the combined dining rooms at the south end of the Parade Ground. A site plan from 1945 shows that at this date the building was numbered 67 and it appears that various small alterations had been undertaken to the building.
- 2.3.3 The two main northern projections appear to be slightly shorter than on previous plans and the footprint of both ends of the main range are shown slightly different than before. It is possible that the differences partly relate to this plan being more schematic than earlier ones. A further plan from 1947 also shows this building as number 67 and labels it as the Sergeant's Single Quarters.
- 2.3.4 An aerial photograph from 1954 shows what appears to be a large extension at the north-west corner of the building and this is presumably the extension that survives today in this area. The roof of this extension stands out brightly in the aerial photo from the older ranges which at this date may have retained war-time camouflage paint. The aerial photograph is not clear enough to be able to trace the exact footprint of the building or identify the smaller extensions.
- 2.3.5 An airfield plan from 1984 appears to show the building largely as it survives today. The final use of the building was as an American fast food restaurant.

3 OUTLINE DESCRIPTION

3.1 The Institute (Building 455)

- 3.1.1 The Institute is a large two-storied, red brick building with a slate-covered roof and a somewhat sprawling plan. The building incorporates several projections and steps in the roof profile, most of which have a hipped form with relatively deep eaves.
- 3.1.2 The plan form of the main primary building includes two main sections (to east and west) which are divided by a single-storey north-to-south corridor. The west half formed the main entrance and public face of the building but the character of this side has been substantially altered by the construction of an extension in the later 20th century. Other later 20th-century extensions have also been added, particularly at the eastern end of the south elevation and other phasing is evident in the form of various blocked doorways and the addition of a first floor to part of the east range. The east half of the building incorporates a small square plan yard which is accessible by a covered passage in the east elevation.
- 3.1.3 The windows have largely been replaced in the later 20th century with PVC framed glazing and similarly most of the doors are secondary. However, some primary features survive including a fanlight over the main entrance in the west wall and a date stone above this. In addition several primary 4-over-4 timber sash window survives facing into the internal yard as well as a smaller 4-light casement in the covered passage through to this yard.

- 3.1.4 The interior of the building has been much altered by a later 20th-century refurbishment with almost all rooms having modern surfaces, fixtures and fittings. The west half of the building includes a large open-plan area at ground floor while there are a series of smaller rooms along the north side of the building and in the east half.
- 3.1.5 Some of the modern ceiling panels have been removed at first floor level to reveal softwood king-post trusses commonly used in 1920s airfield buildings. The trusses have metal strengthening straps beneath the king post and towards the eaves. Although in its final incarnation the first floor ceiling was beneath the height of the tie-beams there survives an earlier higher ceiling up to purlin level so originally the trusses would have been largely visible.

3.2 Sergeants' Mess (Building 457)

- 3.2.1 The Sergeants' Mess is a single storey, red brick building located at the north end of the Parade Ground and it has a slate-covered roof. The main range is orientated east-to-west, with the principal elevation overlooking the Parade Ground, and it incorporates two substantial chimney stacks which project slightly from the main face of the wall. The primary roof incorporates a variety of gables, gablets and hipped ends.
- 3.2.2 The north side of the building has a less regular, cluttered character with several primary projections as well as secondary extensions. The main secondary extension is at the north-west corner of the building (Block B on Fig 2) and is a concrete frame structure with rendered walls and corrugated panel roof. As detailed it appears that this was constructed in the early 1950s. There is another similarly constructed extension at the west end of the south range (Block A on Fig 2) while the small extensions on the north side have a variety of constructional forms. Two of these are brick structures (Blocks D & E) while one is weatherboarded (Block C) and another is formed from corrugated metal panels (Block G).
- 3.2.3 Similarly to Building 455, the interior of Building 457 has also been radically altered in the later 20th century to form the American diner or fast food restaurant although this use adds to the interest of the building. The interior of the main range is now largely open plan with fixed tables and chairs, ceiling panels and a quarry tile floor. The windows have been largely (or entirely) replaced and there is a modern kitchen in one of the subsidiary rooms.
- 3.2.4 The fact that the main range was refurbished in the later 20th century means that it is in good condition although some of the northern extensions are not.

3.3 Setting and Historic Character Area

- 3.3.1 The character of the area containing Buildings 455 and 457 is currently changing due to the ongoing redevelopment of Upper Heyford and this slightly complicates discussing the setting of the buildings.
- 3.3.2 Historically the character of this part of the airfield would have been formed by large detached red brick buildings spread out from one another and with wide verges often lined with trees. Most of the buildings would have been visible from a distance and the horizontal character would have been emphasised by the largely hipped, slate-covered roofs with deep eaves. This character would have changed somewhat through various

additions, particularly through the second half of the 20th century, but it did substantially remain intact into the early years of the 21st century.

- 3.3.3 The Conservation Area Appraisal, written in 2006 describes the area containing Buildings 455 and 457 as: *'The 1920s, red brick RAF buildings to the south of Camp Road are laid out around and orientated towards the parade ground. The style of the buildings within the area is again British Military and because of their grid-like orientation the area has a strong campus character distinct from the Technical Site to the north on the other side of the road'*.
- 3.3.4 *The Landscape Character Assessment of the Airbase South of the Cold War Zone* was prepared by ACTA and OA in March 2006) and this identified a distinct area including Buildings 455 and 457 (Character Area 4B: Parade Ground Buildings) within the Barracks and Institutions Area'.
- 3.3.5 'This area is described in the assessment as *'This area is defined by Camp Road to the north, the East Huts and a line of mature trees on the east edge, the change to the late 1930s layout to the south and Carswell Circle to the west. Its framework is formed by the 1925-6 layout of the Sergeant's Mess (457), Institution (455), Cookhouse (474) and barrack blocks around the parade square. But all of the barrack blocks except 485 have been substantially altered or completely rebuilt and no longer have a 1920s character'*.
- 3.3.6 Currently the two buildings, having lost much of their historic setting to the south, remain as key linking elements between the two parts of the site, being situated opposite to the historic RAF site and its entrance building on the north side of the road.

4 SIGNIFICANCE OF BUILDINGS 455 AND 457

4.1 Significance and Heritage Values: definition of terms

- 4.1.1 This assessment of the heritage significance of these two buildings is considered in the light of Historic England's *Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance* (English Heritage 2008) and analyses the site in terms of key area of value defined there:
- 4.1.2 **Evidential value** - this derives from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity. This includes physical remains as the primary source of evidence and the people and cultures that made them. Significantly, where there is a lack of written records the importance of the material record increases.
- 4.1.3 **Historical value** - this originates from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present. This may include illustrative value, such as its connection to an important development such as technology, or associative value such as the connection to an important event or person.
- 4.1.4 **Aesthetic value** - this is derived from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place. These may be related to the design of a place for example through defensive reasons, or the informal development over time such as the relationship of structures to their setting.

4.1.5 **Communal value** - this derives from the meaning of a place for the people who relate to it, this includes commemorative, symbolic, social and spiritual value. For example, some places may be important for reminding us of uncomfortable events in national history.

4.2 Assessment of Significance

4.2.1 In assessing the significance of the buildings it is appropriate to consider the two structures together because they share a similar history, location, function and level of alteration. The assessment below briefly comments on the individual types of significance as defined by Historic England in *Conservation Principles* and then includes a more general overall statement on the buildings' heritage significance.

4.2.2 The two buildings have evidential value in the potential they hold for furthering understanding of the structures themselves as well as of RAF Upper Heyford and the nature of 1920s RAF stations more generally. The phasing of the buildings can be gleaned from numerous areas of alteration or expansion to the fabric and this evidence can be added to the documentary sources. Some of the evidence will currently be hidden or obscured by later alterations

4.2.3 The buildings have considerable **historical illustrative value** by helping to illustrate the history of RAF Upper Heyford and also illustrating more widely the standardised form of RAF buildings from the 1920s.

4.2.4 The structures have an **historical associative value** through the relationship of the site with the original establishment of the Royal Air Force and conflicts since then (particularly the Second World War).

4.2.5 The two buildings each have a simple but attractive neo-Georgian design typical for the RAF in the 1920s and this provides them with some **aesthetic value**.

4.2.6 The buildings also have some **communal value**, partly due to the number of people who have been stationed at the airbase and who would have used the building, but also due to their prominent location facing onto Camp Road. These will be familiar buildings to the great many people who routinely pass along Camp Road and they can be seen as landmarks from RAF Upper Heyford.

4.3 Summary statement of significance

4.3.1 Buildings 455 and 457 are clearly of heritage value as surviving fragments from the 1920s RAF Upper Heyford and as illustrations of this phase of the site's airfield history. Previous studies have established that the main historic significance of the airbase are the buildings and landscape from the Cold War period but the earlier, pre-war RAF history is also of interest. The buildings that survive from the 1920s base add to the wider collection of airfield structures at Upper Heyford Airbase and illustrate the span of the aviation history at the site.

4.3.2 The *Environmental Statement* from 2007 which OA helped prepared assessed each of these buildings as being of Medium Significance. They were considered to be among the more significant buildings south of Camp Road (outside the Cold War Zone) but not of listable quality.

- 4.3.3 The recent loss of other early RAF buildings at Upper Heyford means that it is no longer possible to describe the Parade Ground area on the south side of Camp Road as being relatively intact with Buildings 455 and 457 comprising part of a group of 1920s buildings. The coherent character of the area that was intact when the Conservation Area was designated has already been lost. However, they now have value as being surviving examples of the buildings from the 1920s airfield, and do still form an important group with the other 1920s buildings north of the road around the airfield entrance. Other sites locally, as RAF Bicester, do still preserve a number of similar buildings of that era.
- 4.3.4 These are two typical inter-war airfield buildings and they provide a clear sense of the character of the former RAF Upper Heyford with red brick walls, slate-covered hipped roofs and spaced well apart from each other. They are prominent buildings located close to Camp Road and facing the parade ground. Their interiors have been much altered in later 20th-century refurbishments although evidence of their reuse by the US Air Force is also of some interest in its own right. Each building largely retains its original plan form (albeit with secondary extensions) which adds to their interest. The south elevation of Building 457 is the most prominent, coherent and significant side of this building.

5 PROPOSED WORKS AND IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Proposed Works

- 5.1.1 The proposed development will see various changes to buildings 455 and 457 as well as the immediately surrounding area. In summary these changes are:
- 5.1.2 The
- Demolition of extensions from Building 455: these are at the eastern end of south wall and at the centre of the west wall.
 - Demolition of the eastern half of Building 455
 - Construction of new extension to eastern half of Building 455
 - Construction of new extensions at north and south ends of Building 455
 - General refurbishment of interior of Building 455.
 - Demolition of extensions from Building 457
 - Construction of new extensions to Building 457
 - General refurbishment of Building 457
 - Construction of new glazed link (Covered Market) between the buildings
- 5.1.3 As referred to above planning consent has already been granted for the partial demolition and refurbishment of Buildings 455 and 457. A more detail description of the potential impact of these proposals is given below [5.3].

5.2 Assessment of impact of proposals

- 5.2.1 The current proposals are for these two buildings to be retained with some modifications and incorporated into the redevelopment of Upper Heyford. The fact that they will not be lost as many other RAF buildings have been in the ongoing redevelopment means that the structures will form a reminder of the RAF history of the site and they will help Heyford Park retain an important link with its past as a group of early RAF buildings at the main historic entrance.
- 5.2.2 Since the buildings are currently disused it is beneficial to re-purpose the structures in order to ensure their maintenance and long-term survival. The proposed use of the

buildings will be similar to their historic use and it will ensure that they are accessible to everyone rather than their being converted to private dwellings.

- 5.2.3 The proposals will see considerable changes to the fabric of the buildings, their character and the immediately surrounding area. Some of the changes such as the loss of the modern extension at the west end of the Institute (B455) will have a positive impact on the character of this building but other changes will have a detrimental impact on the heritage of the buildings. Approximately half of the footprint of each building will be lost and replaced by new structures. The principal (or most prominent) range of each building will be retained and many of the areas being lost are secondary extensions but there are a number of original 1920s elements which will be lost. These are largely service projections to the rear of the principal range and therefore possibly of less significance but they are still of interest in illustrating how the overall building functioned.

5.3 Detailed impact assessment

- 5.3.1 The potential impact of these proposals on the two historic buildings is described in more detail in the following table:

| <i>Proposal</i> | <i>Notes on impact</i> |
|--|---|
| Demolition of extensions from Building 455: these are at the eastern end of south wall and at the centre of the west wall. | These two secondary extensions date from the second half of the 20 th century (possibly 1970s or early 1980s?) and they are of no particular historic significance. The extension at the western end currently has a detrimental impact on the character of the building. ► This proposal will have no detrimental impact on the heritage value of the building. |
| Demolition of the eastern half of Building 455 | The eastern half of the building is part of the primary Institute dating from 1925 and it helps illustrate the original form of the building. The removal of this part of the building will diminish the understanding of this as a large, sprawling structure enclosing a series of spaces with various uses. ► This proposal will have moderate detrimental impact on the heritage value of the building. |
| Construction of new extension to eastern half of Building 455 | The proposed extension to the east half of Building 455 has been designed to complement the remaining portion of the building in terms of scale and materials. It will not overshadow the original fabric and its design will not imitate the primary building. Therefore it should still be clear what is the surviving old building. The extension will be within the footprint of the current building so to some extent it will follow historical precedent. ► The construction of the new extension will have no detrimental impact on the heritage value of the building beyond what is referred to above related to the demolition of the current structure. |
| Construction of new extension at north end of Building 455 | The construction of a new range at the north end of Building 455 will partially obscure the original north end of the building. This elevation faces onto Camp Road and it is therefore a familiar element of the former airbase. ► This proposal will have minor detrimental impact on the heritage value of the building. |
| Conversion of Building 455 and general refurbishment of interior | The interior of Building 455 has been significantly altered since its original construction and the internal refurbishment will not cause substantial harm. The internal layout will be altered but the proposed |

| <i>Proposal</i> | <i>Notes on impact</i> |
|--|---|
| | <p>use of the building (a hotel) is similar to the historic use of the building.</p> <p>► This proposal will have minor detrimental impact on the heritage value of the building.</p> |
| Demolition of secondary extensions to Building 457 | <p>This proposal will see the demolition of various ranges which were added to Building 457 after its original construction. These are mainly from the second half of the 20th century and the largest is probably from the very early years of the 1950s. These extensions are considered to be of less historic significance than the primary building although the structures from the 1950s are of some age and potential interest in their own right. They do partially obscure the north side of the primary building and they give this side of the structure a cluttered character.</p> <p>► This proposal will have a very minor detrimental impact on the heritage value of the building.</p> |
| Demolition of primary projections to north side of Building 457 | <p>Two northern projections which were part of the original 1920s building are proposed for demolition. These structures formed subsidiary elements to the Sergeants' Mess building (eg kitchens etc) and their loss will impact on the overall understanding of the original building. This was always the rear of the building and from its original construction its character would have been less regular than the south elevation.</p> <p>► This proposal will have a moderate detrimental impact on the heritage value of the building.</p> |
| Construction of new extensions to Building 457 | <p>The construction of a new L-shaped building to the north of the surviving part of the primary Sergeants' Mess will hide the surviving original building from Camp Road. This new range will extend along the full width (east-to-west) of the historic building and return northwards towards Camp Road. As referred to above this side is very much the rear of the building so although the proposed structure will hide original fabric it will not be obscuring a formal designed elevation intended to be seen.</p> <p>► The proposed work will have minor detrimental impact on the heritage value of the building.</p> |
| General refurbishment of Building 457 | <p>The interior of the surviving part of Building 457 will remain as a bar/brasserie and this will thereby retain an element of historical continuity in the function of the building.</p> <p>► If it is undertaken sensitively the work to re-purpose and refurbish the remaining part of Building 457 should have no detrimental impact on the heritage value of the building.</p> |
| Construction of new glazed link (Covered Market) between the buildings | <p>It is proposed to construct a new link structure (a Covered Market) between Buildings 455 and 457 to form a covered circulation space.</p> <p>Although it will still be possible to see the formerly external walls of the two buildings, enclosed within the new Covered Market structure this proposal will cause a considerable change in the setting of the two buildings. The original character of this part of the airfield would have been formed from spaciouly laid out, free-standing structures visible from a distance. This general character has been slightly compromised over the years by infill and altered more substantially by the current overall redevelopment at Upper Heyford. Although the new structure will be easily read as modern fabric the construction of the linking 'Covered Market' will still obscure the</p> |

| <i>Proposal</i> | <i>Notes on impact</i> |
|-----------------|--|
| | original character of this part of the airfield. ▶ It is likely that the work can be undertaken without significant direct impact on the two buildings but it is considered that this proposal will have a minor detrimental impact on the setting of the two buildings. |

6 PLANNING FRAMEWORK (NPPF)

6.1 National Planning Policy Framework

6.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), was published in 2012 to provide planning guidance for sustainable development. It replaces the previous PPS5, PPG15 and PPG16.

6.1.2 The document emphasises the value of the historic environment and its contribution to our cultural, social and economic life. National policies are set out to which local planning authorities are expected to adhere in their plan making and development management functions. These range from collecting information and protecting heritage assets in local plans to detailed policies and principles to be followed when determining applications for development involving or affecting such heritage assets.

6.1.3 The NPPF states that '*Local planning authorities should set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay of other threats. In doing so, they should recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance.*'

6.1.4 **Policy 12 (128)** states that '*Local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of the heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting.*'

6.1.5 **Policy 12 (131)** states that '*In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:*

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.'

6.1.1 **Policy 12 (134)** states that '*Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.*'

6.2 Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031

6.2.1 The Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 was adopted in July 2015 and contains two principal policies relevant to the application.

6.2.2 *Policy ESD 15: The Character of the Built and Historic Environment* seeks to preserve the historic environment, including Conservation Areas and heritage assets (designated and undesignated). Considerations for new development proposals include the proviso that: '*Proposals for development that affect non-designated heritage assets will be*

considered taking account of the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset as set out in the NPPF and NPPG. Regeneration proposals that make sensitive use of heritage assets, particularly where these bring redundant or underused buildings or areas, especially any on English Heritage's At Risk Register, into appropriate use will be encouraged.'

6.2.3 There is also an expectation that proposals will: *'Include information on heritage assets sufficient to assess the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.'*

6.2.4 *Policy Villages 5: Former RAF Upper Heyford* deals with several aspects of the future development of the whole site, with provision for a variety of approaches on the flying field, technical core and residential areas, and amongst the stated principles includes: *'The construction of the settlement on the former technical core and residential areas should retain buildings, structures, spaces and trees that contribute to the character and appearance of the site and integrate them into a high quality place that creates a satisfactory living environment.'*

6.3 The current development

6.3.1 The present report has set out the history and described the structures and their setting, together with an assessment of their significance. The retention of these buildings meets the requirements of the NPPF at Para (131) and CDC Policy Villages 5 in retaining the historic buildings and providing them with viable uses and so makes a positive contribution to the conservation of historic assets on the site, and the maintenance of historic character on the site.

6.3.2 With regard to NPPF at Para (134) and CDC Policy ESD 15, the proposed development has a varied impact on the historic fabric of the buildings, as described above, but the harm is less than substantial, and on balance the benefits of retention and adaptation to a viable use will outweigh any harm.

7 CONCLUSION

7.1.1 The Sergeants' Mess (B457) and the Institute (B455) form the main surviving original 1920s buildings from RAF Upper Heyford. This phase of Upper Heyford's history is recognised as being of less significance than the later Cold War phase on the north side of Camp Road and neither of these buildings is of sufficient historic significance to warrant being statutorily listed. However this area south of Camp Road is still of some interest as it adds to the overall aviation history of Upper Heyford and it is within the Upper Heyford Conservation Area. The two buildings were assessed in the 2007 Environmental Statement for the former airbase as being of Medium Significance and therefore among the more significant buildings in the former RAF part of the site.

7.1.2 The current proposals are for these two buildings to be retained with some modifications and incorporated into the redevelopment of Upper Heyford. The fact that they will not be lost means that the structures will form a reminder of the RAF history of the site and they will help Heyford Park retain an important link with its past as a group of early RAF buildings at the main historic entrance.

7.1.3 Since the buildings are currently disused it is beneficial to re-purpose the structures in order to ensure their maintenance and long-term survival. The proposed use of the

buildings will be similar to their historic use and it will ensure that they are accessible to everyone rather than their being converted to private dwellings.

- 7.1.4 The proposals will see considerable changes to the fabric of the buildings, their character and the immediately surrounding area. Some of the changes such as the loss of the modern extension at the west end of the Institute (B455) will have a positive impact on the character of this building but other changes will have a detrimental impact on the heritage of the buildings. Approximately half of the footprint of each building will be lost and replaced by new structures. The principal (or most prominent) range of each building will be retained and many of the areas being lost are secondary extensions but there are a number of original 1920s elements which will be lost. These are largely service projections to the rear of the principal range and therefore possibly of less significance but they are still of interest in illustrating how the overall building functioned.
- 7.1.5 New ranges will largely obscure the historic buildings from Camp Road. With regard to Building 457 this will have no meaningful impact on the building's heritage significance because this side of the structure already has a number of secondary extensions (now proposed for demolition) and this aspect of the building forms a negligible part of its significance. For Building 455 the primary north elevation does currently address Camp Road visually and this view will be slightly compromised although the elevation will still be partially visible from the road.
- 7.1.6 In addition it is proposed to connect the historic structures by constructing a large covered, shared circulation area (the Covered Market). It is often the case that redevelopments of historic sites can successfully incorporate modern structures alongside or adjoining historic buildings. As a typical inter-war RAF station, the historic character of the current site would have been formed by widely spaced buildings separated by verges, lawns, pavements and lines of trees and although the buildings will no longer be detached the glazed nature of the proposed linking structure will retain an air of openness as well as retaining views of building facades.
- 7.1.7 Although the proposals will see considerable changes to the structures which will have an overall detrimental impact on the heritage of the site it is acknowledged that they are buildings of local significance rather than statutorily listed structures and it is clearly positive that the principal range of each structure is to be retained. Overall, it is considered that the harm to their historic fabric is less than substantial, and on balance the benefits of retention and adaptation to a viable use will outweigh any harm.

Oxford Archaeology
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APPENDIX A. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND ARCHIVE SOURCES

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Figure 1: Site plan (c. 2014)

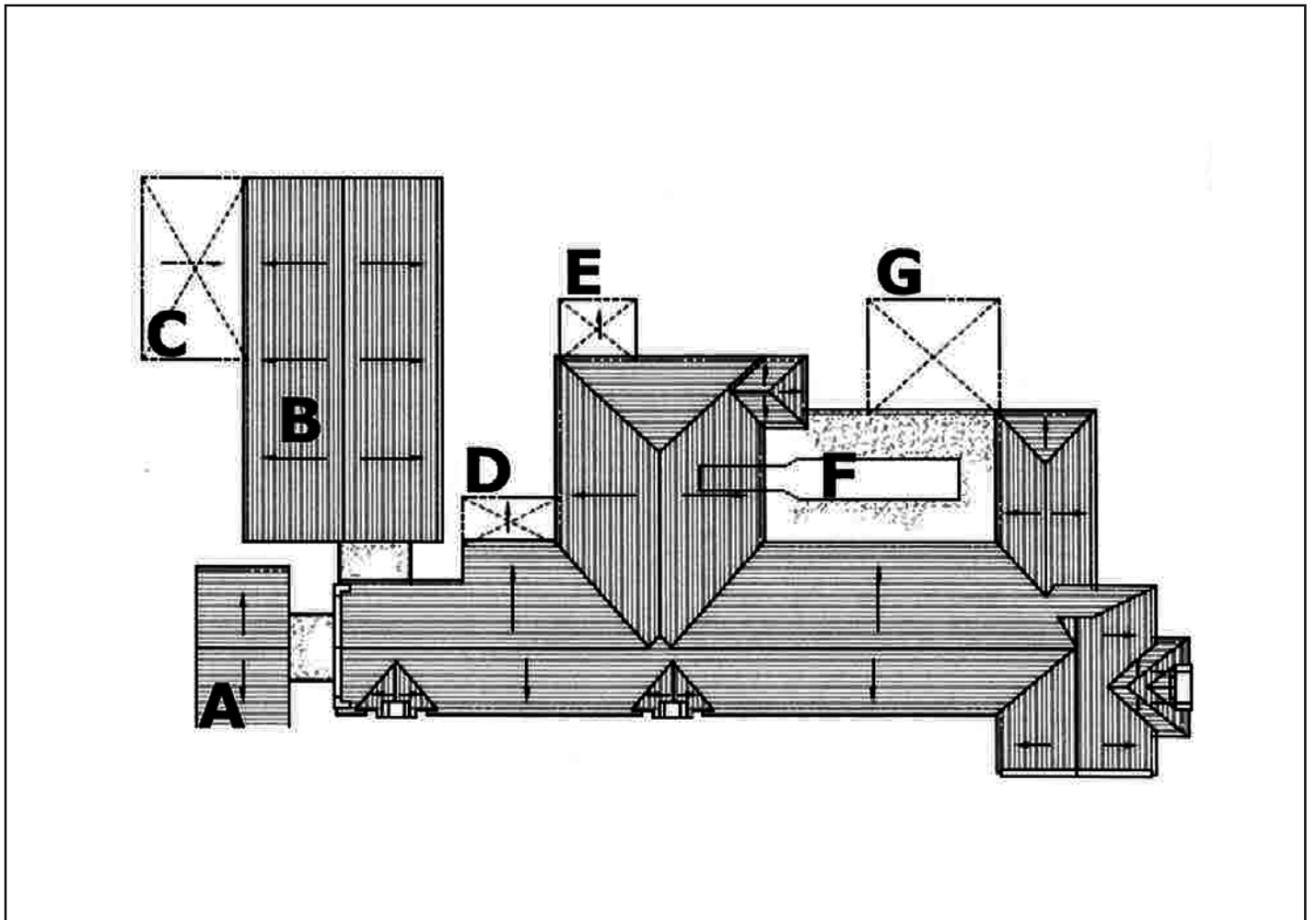


Figure 2: Block referencing for extensions of Building 457



Plate 1: West front of Institute (B455) with extension to centre



Plate 2: Building 455 from south-west



Plate 3: South side of Building 455



Plate 4: East side of Building 455



Plate 5: Ground floor room in main range of Building 455



Plate 6: Ground floor room in main range of Building 455



Plate 7: Staircase in Building 455



Plate 8: King post truss above later suspended ceiling in Building 455



Plate 9: South elevation of Sergeants' Mess (Building 457)



Plate 10: East elevation of Building 457



Plate 11: Rear (north) elevation of Sergeants' Mess (B457)



Plate 12: Interior of diner range in former Sergeants' Mess (B457)



Plate 13: Interior of diner range in Building 457



Plate 14: Interior of diner range in Building 457



Plate 15: Doorway within Building 457



Plate 16: View within secondary extension to B457 (Block B)