

## **Heritage Statement**

### **Plots 532-535, Phase 9, Heyford Park, Camp Road, Upper Heyford, Bicester, OX25 5HD**

#### **Introduction**

This Heritage Statement accompanies the planning application submitted by Pegasus Group on behalf of Elgin Investment LLP for a development comprising:

**“Change of Use of Housing Plots 532, 533, 534 and 535 to Temporary Sales Area, together with erection of 1 no. Sales Building and 2 no. Show Homes with Associated Visitor Parking Area and Landscaping”**

This Heritage Statement is required due to the site falling within the Conservation Area at the former RAF Upper Heyford Airbase, which is designated for both special architectural and historical interest.

#### **Legislative and Policy Context**

This assessment has considered relevant national and local legislation, policy and guidance, including:

- Town and Country Planning Act 1990;
- National Planning Policy Framework (“NPPF”) (updated July 2021);
- The Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Adopted July 2015);
- RAF Upper Heyford Revised Comprehensive Planning Brief (supplementary planning document) Sustainability Appraisal March 2007.

The NPPF sets out the Government’s planning policies on the conservation of the historic environment and the rationale for its conservation. It covers all aspects of the historic environment within a common set of policies, which recognise that heritage assets are a non-renewable resource, and that heritage conservation has wider benefits, while accepting that the level of conservation should be commensurate with the significance/sensitivity of the assets concerned.

This Heritage Statement provides information with regards to the significance of the historic environment to fulfil the requirement given in paragraph 194 of the Government’s National Planning Policy Framework (“NPPF”) which requires:

***“an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting.”***

A heritage asset is identified by NPPF as an environmental component that holds meaning for society over and above its functionality. This term includes buildings, parks and gardens, standing, buried and submerged remains, areas, sites and landscapes, whether designated or not and whether or not capable of designation.

**PLANNING | DESIGN | ENVIRONMENT | ECONOMICS**

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The Cherwell Local Plan (Adopted July 2015), represents the most up to date plan to be considered within the planning process. The policy most relevant to archaeology and cultural heritage is Policy ESD15: The Character of the Built and Historic Environment, which states that new development should:

**“Contribute positively to an area’s character and identity by creating or reinforcing local distinctiveness and respecting local topography and landscape features including skylines, valley floors, significant trees, historic boundaries, landmarks, features or views, in particular within designated landscapes, within the Cherwell Valley and within conservation areas and their setting**

**Conserve, sustain and enhance designated and non-designated ‘heritage assets’ (as defined in the NPPF) including buildings, features, archaeology, conservation areas and their setting, and ensure new development is sensitively sited and integrated in accordance with advice in the NPPF and NPPG. Regeneration proposals that make sensitive use of heritage assets, particularly where these bring redundant or under used buildings or areas, especially any on English Heritage’s [now Historic England’s] At Risk Register, into appropriate use will be encouraged.**

**Include information on heritage assets sufficient to assess the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. Where archaeological potential is identified this should include an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.”**

### Site Context

The application site (“the site”) lies to the south of Camp Road in the south west corner of the RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area. It lies within the area that was formerly populated by prefabricated school buildings and adjacent to areas used for organised sports such as baseball.

The site and immediate surroundings have in recent years become part of the wider Heyford Park development, a new settlement envisioned under Policy Villages 5 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031, which will consist of circa 1600 new dwellings and associated facilities. A number of buildings that once stood on the former RAF Upper Heyford site have since been demolished, in part to facilitate the delivery of the new settlement.

With reference to the RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area Appraisal (April 2006), the site lies mainly within Area 9 (“Technical Area”) and partially in Area 10 (“Residential Area 10”). Within the conservation area there are a number of scheduled monuments and listed buildings.

### Built Heritage Assets

Five Cold War structures within the former RAF Upper Heyford were scheduled in December 2006 under Section 1 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act of 1979 (all OA 1128). These are:

- The Hardened Telephone Exchange;
- The Battle Command Centre;
- The Quick Reaction Alert Area (QRAA): this includes hardened aircraft shelters, security fence, watch tower, fuel supply point and hardened crew buildings;
- The Northern Bomb Store and Special Weapons Area: this is contained within a security fence and includes 'special' and conventional bomb stores; and
- The Avionics Maintenance Facility.

The nearest of these scheduled sites to the site, The Avionics Maintenance Facility, lies c.150m to the north of the application site and the back side of both the protective earth bank and the concrete structure will be intervisible with the site.

Several structures around the site have recently been listed at Grade II by the DCMS (April 2008). These are:

- Three Nose Docking Sheds;
- Squadron Headquarters; and
- The Control Tower

The nearest of these Listed Buildings, the Nose Docking Sheds, lies approximately 600m to the northeast of the site and has no intervisibility with the area.

The historic village centre of Upper Heyford lies entirely within the Rousham Conservation Area and extends from the Heyford/Somerton road down to the Oxford Canal and River Cherwell. At the bottom end of the village lies the Grade II Listed Manor Farmhouse with its medieval barn, a scheduled monument, near to the Grade II\* Listed church of St Mary. Most of the historic village buildings lie in the single street rising up to the top of the village and include ten Grade II Listed buildings dating between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. None of these have any intervisibility with the site.

The historic village centre of Lower Heyford lies entirely within the Rousham Conservation Area and extends from the Heyford/Somerton road down to the Oxford Canal and River Cherwell. At the bottom end of the village lies the church and primary village centre, while Freehold Street rises up the hill, with seven Grade II Listed Buildings falling within the Study Area dating between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. None of these have any intervisibility with the site.

The Grade I Registered Park and Garden of Rousham is one of the most renowned English designed landscapes, and of outstanding importance. Notwithstanding, only the perimeter of Phase 9 Heyford Park is potentially just visible in winter as a small part of a much wider view, when viewed from the terrace above the 'Praeneste Arches' (by the Dying Gladiator statue). It is not anticipated that clear views of the site would be achievable from this viewpoint, given the distance and presence of intervening buildings and topography.

### Archaeological Heritage

No archaeological sites have been identified within site itself apart from a series of former areas of hardstanding associated with the original 1930s RAF airfield and a former field boundary seen on the first edition 6" OS map of 1885. These features were previously found to be of negligible/minor sensitivity in conservation terms.

### Development Impacts on Built Heritage

There are no significant impacts on Listed or unlisted buildings in either of the village Conservation Areas of Upper and Lower Heyford, or the Listed or unlisted buildings found within the former RAF Upper Heyford site.

### Development Impacts on Conservation Areas

There are no significant impacts on the village Conservation Areas of Upper and Lower Heyford, or their setting.

The impact of the proposed development on the RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area will be no greater than that granted planning permission in 2020 under reference 16/02446/F. The minor external differences associated with the Sales Building are considered negligible in the wider context of the site, as is the inclusion of the proposed landscaped area and visitors car park.

### Development Impacts on Historic Landscapes

The proposed Sales Area would be screened from Rousham Park by surrounding residential development, and visual impact reduced further still by the significant distance (over 3km) and intervening topography.

Given that the siting, scale, and overall massing of the proposed Sales Area buildings will not differ from the development that was granted permission by Cherwell District Council in 2020 under reference 16/02446/F, the impact on historic landscapes is acceptable.

### **Overall Conclusions**

While the proposals do have some potential for impacts to the designated sites and Conservation Areas around the site in Upper and Lower Heyford, Rousham, as well as to the Listed heritage assets within the former RAF Upper Heyford (itself a Conservation Area in its own right), the effects would be no more than slight, and in most cases negligible.

The setting of the proposals would be framed by the surrounding new residential development, forming part of the wider new settlement of Heyford Park, with the buildings proposed being directly comparable to those granted planning permission in 2020 under reference 16/02446/F.

The minor elevational changes, principally affecting Plot 533 (the proposed Sales Building), would not be widely perceptible when viewed from mid to long distances, and the remaining buildings would appear as conventional housing stock, which would not mark a departure from the consented scheme.

The inclusion of a small visitors parking area to serve the Sales Area, with landscaping treatment to the rear of the subject buildings, would not result in harmful impact to the special characteristics of the Conservation Area or to the significance or setting of any Listed heritage assets.

It is also important to note that the application proposals are temporary in nature, with the intention being for the temporary Sales Area to revert to conventional housing stock in due course, to reflect the development approved in 2020 under reference 16/02446/F.

Overall, the proposals do not constitute a marked departure from the scale or quantum of development granted planning permission in 2020 under reference 16/02446/F and are considered to be acceptable in heritage terms.