

Heritage Statement

**Land West of Hook Norton Road,
Sibford Ferris, Oxfordshire**

For

Blue Cedar Homes Ltd



Prepared by:

Stephen Bond MA HonDArt FSA MRICS GradDipConsAA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This independent heritage statement provides an assessment of the significance of built and/or cultural heritage in the environs of the application site at Hook Norton Road, Sibford Ferris, and of the impact of the submitted development proposal on that significance. The statement has been commissioned by Blue Cedar Homes to inform the development of proposals for the site and to form part of the planning submission for the project. The statement focuses on built and/or cultural heritage, but also provides a brief overview of archaeology in its section 4.3.
2. The application site [NGR: SP 35390 37170] is an open field, lying on the western fringe of the village of Sibford Ferris. The village itself is located in northern Oxfordshire, roughly 7 miles west of Banbury. The site lies outside the boundary of the designated Sibford Ferris, Sibford Gower and Burdrop Conservation Area.
3. The statement describes in outline the development history of the site and its wider environs to the west of Sibford Ferris. It finds that the application site formed part of a very large field of pasture, which remained entirely undeveloped until the mid-1950s. Since then, development has occurred in the site's immediate environs and, in December 2019, outline planning permission was granted on appeal for development of up to 25 houses on that part of the historic open field lying immediately south of the current application site. As a result of this recent development history, the application site now comprises an infill parcel of land on the extended settlement edge.
4. After considering heritage assets in the wider environs of the site, the statement concludes that there are no potential built heritage receptors likely to receive impacts from the proposals, while also finding that there is a low potential for archaeological remains on the site, with little likely consequence in terms of adverse impacts of significant effect.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of statement

This independent heritage statement provides an assessment of the significance of built and/or cultural heritage in the environs of the application site at Hook Norton Road, Sibford Ferris, and of the impact of the submitted development proposal on that significance. The statement has been commissioned by Blue Cedar Homes to inform the development of proposals for the site and to form part of the planning submission for the project. The statement covers built and/or cultural heritage, and also provides an overview of archaeology.

The planning submission relates to a proposal for a residential retirement development of 6 no. dwellings on the site [Figure 1], which lies on the western fringe of the settlement of Sibford Ferris, outside the historic village core and Sibford Ferris, Sibford Gower and Burdrop Conservation Area [Figure 2].

The National Planning Policy Framework [NPPF], which since 2012 has incorporated the Government's heritage policy and is now in a third edition (published in June 2019), recognises that the historic environment is an irreplaceable resource whose fragile and finite nature is a particularly important consideration in planning. The Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 2 (entitled 'Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment' and published in July 2015), states:

'Development proposals that affect the historic environment are much more likely to gain the necessary permissions and create successful places if they are designed with the knowledge and understanding of the significance of the heritage assets they may affect. The first step for all applicants is to understand the significance of any affected heritage asset and, if relevant, the contribution of its setting to its significance.' [HEGPA 2, paragraph 4]

It also notes in introduction that:

'...the information required in support of applications for planning permission and listed building consent should be no more than is necessary to reach an informed decision, and that activities to conserve or investigate the asset needs to be proportionate to the significance of the heritage assets affected and the impact on that significance' [HEGPA 2, paragraph 3]

The Good Practice Advice advocates a logical step-by-step approach to dealing with heritage assets during the planning and design of development and subsequently in making a planning application – namely:

- *'Understand the significance of the affected assets*
- *Understand the impact of the proposal on that significance*
- *Avoid, minimise and mitigate impact in a way that meets the objectives of the NPPF*
- *Look for opportunities to better reveal or enhance significance*

- *Justify any harmful impacts in terms of the sustainable development objective of conserving significance and the need for change.*
- *Offset negative impacts on aspects of significance by enhancing others through recording, disseminating and archiving archaeological and historical interest of the important elements of the heritage assets affected.’ HEGPA 2, paragraph 6]*

This heritage statement has been prepared to fulfill this brief established by the NPPF and the Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 2. It has also been prepared to accord with guidance set out in Historic England's 2019 Advice Note 12 'Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets'.

1.2 Methodology and sources of information

This statement has been based on:

- A site visit carried out by the author to the site and its wider environs in 2021;
- Various original and modern documentary sources available for inspection in the Oxfordshire History Centre;
- Diverse published and unpublished evaluations of the local area and its historical associations;
- The local Historic Environment Record [HER];
- Historical documents available online;
- Other website information, including local newspapers and census information from www.findmypast.com and material from a range of record sources made available online, including at www.heritagegateway.org.uk, and from Historic England’s National Heritage List for England;
- Historical maps and plans of the locality;
- Examination of national and local policy documents and other relevant material produced by Historic England and Cherwell District Council, including its adopted 2012 Sibford Ferris, Sibford Gower and Burdrop Conservation Area Conservation Area Appraisal.

2 GENERAL BACKGROUND, DEVELOPMENT HISTORY, AND ANALYSIS OF THE APPLICATION SITE AND ITS WIDER ENVIRONS

2.1 Location and description

The application site [NGR: SP 35390 37170; Figures 1, 2] is an open agricultural field, lying on the western fringe of the village. The village of Sibford Ferris itself is located in northern Oxfordshire, roughly 7 miles (11.25 km) west of Banbury. As noted already, the application site lies outside the boundary of Sibford Ferris, Sibford Gower and Burdrop Conservation Area [Figure 1].

The site is bounded to the north and east by existing dwellings. Proposed residential development was granted outline planning permission on appeal [APP/C3105/W/19/3229631] in December 2019 for up to 25 dwellings on land to the south of the current application site, while west of the site beyond Woodway Road remains undeveloped. Thus, the site represents an infill parcel of land within variously existing and consented development.

With some slight undulation, the open field from the application site slopes down north westwards from a high point in its south east corner, with a total fall across the site from south east to north west of approximately 6 metres. The underlying bedrock geology of the area is shown on the British Geological Survey map to be part of the Northampton Sand Formation.



FIGURE 1: LOCATION OF THE APPLICATION SITE (©BBA ARCHITECTS)

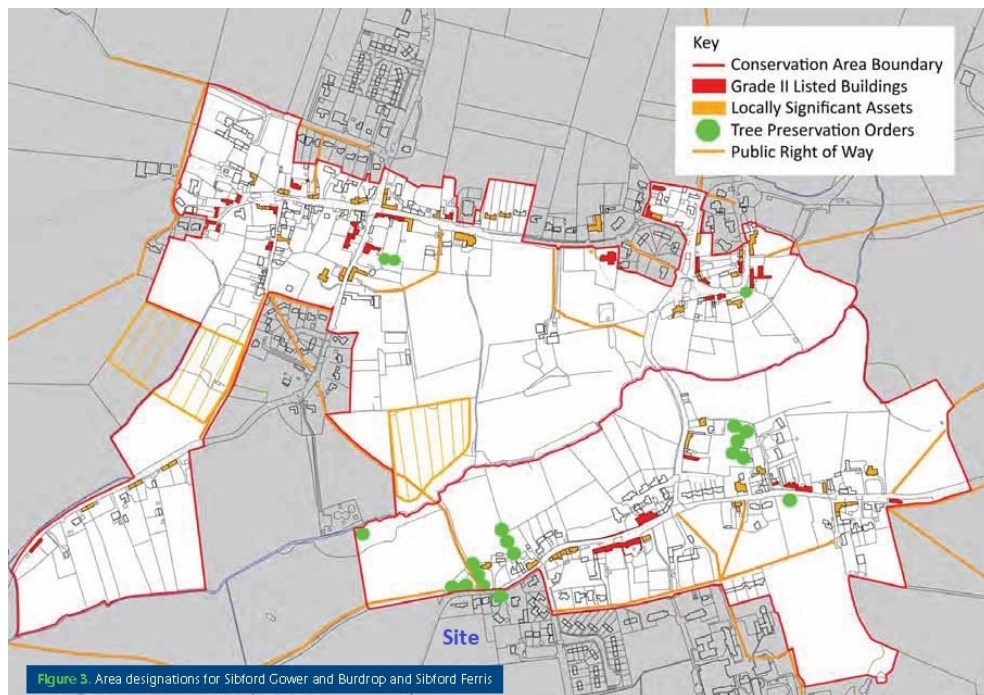


FIGURE 2: LOCATION OF SITE IN RELATION TO THE BOUNDARY OF THE LOCAL CONSERVATION AREA AND SHOWING HERITAGE ASSETS IN THE VICINITY (©CHERWELL DISTRICT COUNCIL)

2.2 Outline historical development of the application site and its surrounding area

2.2.1 Introduction

The following brief description of the historical development of the locality is taken from the 1983 Victoria County History volume on Oxfordshire and the Council's 2012 Conservation Area Appraisal, which is itself reliant almost entirely on the VCH for its historical source material.

2.2.2 Outline of development history

The ancient parish of Swalcliffe contained the settlements of Swalcliffe, Epwell, Shutford East and West, Sibford, Sibford Gower, along with Burdrop, lying between the two Sibfords. In 1841, the ancient parish was divided by the creation of the ecclesiastical parish of Sibford Gower, which included Sibford Ferris and Burdrop. Epwell was added to this parish in 1905.

The area has been settled from an early period. There are Iron Age barrows at Sibford Gower and Swalcliffe. The remains of an extensive camp, Madmarston, lie north east of Swalcliffe village. It was probably occupied from the 2nd century BC until the 1st century AD when it appears to have been deserted, except for a brief period of reoccupation in the 4th century. Close by lies one of the largest Roman occupation sites in the county, covering 50 acres. The site was occupied throughout the Roman period, and possibly earlier. The settlement which was quite large in the first century AD seems to have

declined in the second, but flourished again in the late third and fourth centuries. Placename evidence suggests that Saxon settlement of all the principal hamlets was comparatively early.

Sibford Gower and Sibford Ferris (*Sibba's ford*) lie close to the parish's western boundary with Warwickshire, about ¼ mile from each other on either side of the steep valley of the river Stour. Burdrop, which lies between them, is probably a rather later settlement.

Sibford Ferris takes its second name from the Ferrers family, earls of Derby, the medieval lords of the manor. Indeed, as early as the Domesday survey (1086), the manor of Sibford Ferris, assessed at 10 hides (perhaps 300-350 hectares), was held by Henry de Ferrers.

A community of Cistercian monks existed for a period of about 150 years (1194-1349) living on the border between Swalcliffe and Sibford Ferris. Holwell (*holy well*) Grange comprised a chapel, farm, and living quarters for the small community. A spring gushes here from a rocky outcrop: this is the source of the River Stour and was the monks' water-supply.

By the 16th century, trade in woollen cloth had become Britain's richest export. Like much of north and west Oxfordshire, the Sib valley provided good conditions for sheep farming, due to the local topography with its steep valleys, and this had become the mainstay of the economy of the parish by the late 16th and early 17th centuries. The wealth generated funded the building of a number of fine houses in the locality, as well as providing improved everyday housing for the hired agricultural labourers. The Council's CA appraisal makes the point that *'This practical application of the traditional attitudes of mutual help and sharing, which is a fundamental part of the Quaker legacy, marks the villages as essentially different from other villages in the area'*. The strong Quaker presence in the Sibford area led to the establishment of a Quaker school in Sibford Ferris in 1842. The VCH tells us that it opened with 26 boys and 22 girls, many of whom came from outside Oxfordshire. In recent years, it has numbered over 300 pupils, including a number of non-boarders, thus increasing the educational capacity of the parish. The school has also provided employment and strongly influenced the social life of the village.

The VCH notes that the village contains a number of *'carefully modernized 17th and 18th century farm-houses and cottages. The consistent use of local stone, at least until the 20th century, make it a good example of the regional style of building'*.

The 1922 3rd Edition OS map [Figure 3] reflects the extent of the settlement to the western side of Sibford Ferris's historic core as it had indeed been for much of the 19th century. Land south of today's Woodway Road, then a gated track, and west of Hook Norton Road comprised a single large undeveloped field of pasture. By 1955 [Figure 4], development had just started in the north east corner of this large field, while four years later, the 1959 OS map depicts Woodway Road as a public road.

In the past 60 years, land to the east of Hook Norton Road has been developed significantly in the 1970s and, to its west, adjoining the application site, both then and in the subsequent three decades. As noted above, in 2019 outline planning permission was granted on appeal in December 2019 for development of up to 25 dwellings on the section of the former large field immediately south of the current application site.



FIGURE 3: 1922 OS MAP OF WESTERN END OF SIBFORD FERRIS ((©NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SCOTLAND; ORDNANCE SURVEY PMCL 100061726)



FIGURE 4: 1955 OS MAP OF WESTERN END OF SIBFORD FERRIS ((©NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SCOTLAND; ORDNANCE SURVEY PMCL 100061726)

3 THE IDENTIFICATION OF HERITAGE ASSETS BEING POTENTIAL RECEPTORS OF IMPACTS FROM THE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Heritage assets and their potential to experience impacts from the development

The NPPF defines a heritage asset as being *‘a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest’*.

From a heritage perspective, built and other assets in the environment are either heritage assets or ordinary assets. Those that are classified as heritage assets may be designated (for example, a listed building or conservation area) or non-designated. The National Planning Policy Framework [NPPF], which contains the Government’s national heritage policy, defines ‘designated’ heritage assets (being World Heritage sites, scheduled monuments, listed buildings, protected wreck sites, registered parks and gardens, registered battlefields or conservation areas), but not non-designated heritage assets. However, in defining the term ‘heritage asset’, it does by implication determine that those assets which are non-designated are *‘assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing)’*.

More helpfully, under the heading *‘What are non-designated heritage assets?’*, paragraphs 039 and 040 of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government’s 2021 ‘Planning Practice Guidance: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment’ states:

‘Non-designated heritage assets are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by plan-making bodies as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets.

A substantial majority of buildings have little or no heritage significance and thus do not constitute heritage assets. Only a minority have enough heritage significance to merit identification as non-designated heritage assets. [Paragraph 039]

There are a number of processes through which non-designated heritage assets may be identified, including the local and neighbourhood plan-making processes and conservation area appraisals and reviews. Irrespective of how they are identified, it is important that the decisions to identify them as non-designated heritage assets are based on sound evidence. [Paragraph 040]’

Once its definitions are drawn together, the NPPF identifies heritage assets as being components of the historic environment that can be positively identified as having a degree of archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic interest meriting consideration in planning decisions. Simply being old, being part of an ensemble or area that is - as an assemblage - recognisable as a heritage asset, having a history of use, bearing a similarity to components in the locality that are heritage assets, or

conversely being physically distinctive within its setting or wider context does not *per se* transform a built (or other ordinary) asset into a heritage asset. Building on the definition of 'heritage' set out in English Heritage's *'Conservation Principles'* (2008) (being *'all inherited resources which people value for reasons beyond mere utility'*), heritage assets can be distinguished from other components of the environment by the meaning for society that a heritage asset holds over and above its functional utility. So to be regarded as a heritage asset, a building or structure must have some meaningful archaeological, architectural, artistic or historical interest that gives it a value to society transcending its functional utility.

The NPPF makes the point that significance (which it defines as *'The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest'*) derives *'not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting'*. It defines the setting of a heritage asset as being:

'The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.'

Paragraph 194 of the NPPF demands that:

'In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance...'

Moreover, as has already been explained, the Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 2 reiterates this requirement in its advocated approach to dealing with heritage assets, which begins *'Understand the significance of the affected assets'*.

Accordingly, by extension, this heritage statement is required by this policy and associated guidance to identify:

- Designated heritage assets within or (if a designated area-wide asset) including the site, which might potentially receive direct impacts from the development of the application site;
- Non-designated heritage assets within the site, which might potentially receive direct impacts from the development;
- Designated heritage assets beyond the boundaries of the site, whose settings might potentially receive indirect impacts from the development, leading to harm to significance of the heritage asset;
- Non-designated heritage assets beyond the boundaries of the site, whose settings might potentially receive indirect impacts from the development, leading to harm to significance of the heritage asset.

3.1.2 Types of impacts

The NPPF notes that harm can be caused to the significance of a heritage asset by its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting. Put another way, impacts – whether beneficial or adverse – that might affect the significance of a heritage assets will either be:

- Direct physical impacts on its built fabric or character; or,
- Indirect impacts on the contribution made by its setting to its significance.

3.1.3 Assessing significance

The NPPF defines the significance of a heritage asset as being *‘The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting’*.

As noted above, Paragraph 194 of the NPPF demands that:

‘In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance...’

The significance of heritage assets that are identified in this section as being potential receptors of impacts from the development proposals will be described below to the extent and level of detail that might be considered proportionate to comply with NPPF Paragraph 189 – that is, *‘proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance’*. In addition to describing their significance in words, it is useful and desirable to give some idea of their relative heritage interest by using a form of weighting.

Various hierarchies to ‘quantify’ or ‘measure’ the comparative significance of heritage assets have been utilised in recent years. They all have strengths and weaknesses, given the inevitability that such comparisons will always be somewhat subjective in their nature.

However, at present, the only such hierarchy sponsored from within central Government is that set out within the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB; HA208/07, Volume 11 Section 3 Part 2) jointly published the Highways Agency, Transport Scotland, the Welsh Assembly Government, and the Department for Regional Development Northern Ireland (2013 edition). It has the added benefit of having been subjected to scrutiny within the planning system, including Public Inquiries. It is this hierarchy of significance that has been adopted for use in this statement of significance, as a result.

With minor adaptation under ‘negligible’ to bring the 2013 hierarchy into line with the NPPF, across two Annexes, DMRB provides the following terminology and definitions for a cultural heritage hierarchy of significance:

Level of Significance	Criteria
Very high	<p>World Heritage Sites;</p> <p>Assets of acknowledged international importance;</p> <p>Assets that can contribute significantly to acknowledged international research objectives;</p> <p>Historic landscapes of international value (designated or not) and extremely well preserved historic landscapes with exceptional coherence, time depth, or other critical factor(s).</p>
High	<p>Scheduled Monuments and undesignated assets of Schedulable quality and importance;</p> <p>Grade I and II* Listed buildings (Scotland category A);</p> <p>Other Listed buildings that can be shown to have exceptional qualities in their fabric or associations not adequately reflected in their Listing grade;</p> <p>Conservation Areas containing very important buildings;</p> <p>Undesignated structures of clear national importance;</p> <p>Designated and undesignated historic landscapes of outstanding historic interest (including Grade I and Grade II* Registered Parks and Gardens); undesignated landscapes of high quality and importance of demonstrable national value; and well preserved historic landscapes exhibiting considerable coherence, time depth or other critical factor(s);</p> <p>Assets that can contribute significantly to acknowledged national research objectives.</p>
Medium	<p>Designated or undesignated assets that contribute to regional research objectives;</p> <p>Grade II (Scotland category B) Listed buildings;</p> <p>Historic (unlisted) buildings that can be shown to have exceptional qualities in their fabric or historical association;</p> <p>Conservation Areas containing important buildings that contribute significantly to their historic character;</p> <p>Historic townscapes or built up areas with important historic integrity in their buildings, or built settings (for example including street furniture or other structures);</p> <p>Designated landscapes of special historic interest (including Grade II Registered Parks and Gardens); undesignated landscapes that would justify such a designation; averagely well preserved historic landscapes with</p>

Level of Significance	Criteria
	reasonable coherence, time depth or other critical factor(s); landscapes of regional value.
Low	<p>Designated and undesignated assets of local importance including those compromised by poor preservation and/or poor survival of contextual associations;</p> <p>Assets of limited value, but with potential to contribute to local research objectives;</p> <p>Locally Listed buildings (Scotland category C(S) Listed Buildings) and historic (unlisted) buildings of modest quality in their fabric or historical association;</p> <p>Historic townscape or built-up areas of limited historic integrity in their buildings or built settings (for example including street furniture or other structures);</p> <p>Robust undesignated historic landscapes; historic landscapes with importance to local interest groups; and historic landscapes whose value is limited by poor preservation and/or poor survival of contextual associations.</p>
Negligible	<p>Assets with very little surviving archaeological interest;</p> <p>Buildings of little architectural or historical note;</p> <p>Landscapes with little significant historical interest.</p>

Table 1: DMRB Hierarchy of Value

Whilst, inevitably, some subjectivity is at times involved in making value judgements, this hierarchy of values has to be appreciated as a continuum and there may be ‘shades’ of interpretation where, for instance, an asset lies close to the borderline between the descriptions of ‘high’ and ‘very high’ significance.

3.2 Designated heritage assets within or including the application site

The application site does not contain any individual designated built heritage assets within its boundary and it lies outside the boundary of Sibford Ferris, Sibford Gower and Burdrop Conservation Area. There are no other designated built or cultural heritage assets within or including the application site.

3.3 Non-designated heritage assets within or including the application site

There are no non-designated heritage assets identified on the Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record [HER] or visually evident within or including the application site.

3.4 Designated heritage assets within the wider environs of the site

The identification of designated heritage assets lying within the setting of the site and its wider environs that might experience positive or negative impacts from the application's development proposals has primarily relied upon examination of the National Heritage List for England [NHLE] maintained by Historic England, together with an understanding of the nature and extent of the proposed works, as set out in the application drawings and Design and Access Statement [DAS]. The NHLE database is the 'official list of buildings, monuments, parks and gardens, wrecks, battlefields, World Heritage Sites and other heritage assets considered worthy of preservation' and so provides information on the location of all designated heritage assets in England, with the exception of conservation areas (which are regarded as being the preserve of local planning authorities).

The NHLE search of the immediate environs of the application site [Figure 5] reveals that there are no designated heritage assets located in a position likely to mean they could receive impacts from development of the application site, due to the shielding provided by existing surrounding development. The nearest listed building, Grade II Old House, lies well to the east of the site.



FIGURE 5: EXTRACT FROM NATIONAL HERITAGE LIST FOR ENGLAND SHOWING DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS, EXCLUDING THE CA, IN THE WIDER ENVIRONS OF THE SITE (LISTED BUILDINGS ANNOTATED WITH BLUE TRIANGLES) (©HISTORIC ENGLAND)

3.5 Non-designated heritage assets within the wider environs of the site

As has already been seen, non-designated assets are essentially those that have been identified by the local planning authority as having some meaningful archaeological, architectural, artistic or historical interest that gives the asset a value to society transcending its functional utility, making it a material consideration in the planning process. Figure 3 of the Council's 2012 Conservation Area Appraisal identifies 'Locally Significant Assets'. The nearest lies north of Woodway Road, fully shielded by other development from the application site. This statement concludes that there are no built non-designated heritage assets located in a position likely to mean they could receive impacts from development.

4 ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS

4.1 Introduction and general observations

As has been noted at the start of this statement, it has been prepared to comply with paragraph 194 of the NPPF, which requires an applicant whose proposals may affect one or more heritage assets ‘to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting’ to a level of detail that is ‘sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance’. This concluding section of the statement reviews likely impacts on relevant heritage assets in the light of the foregoing analysis and findings.

As has already been mentioned in section 3.1.2, impacts – whether beneficial or adverse – that might affect the significance of a heritage assets will either be:

- Direct physical impacts on its built fabric or character; or,
- Indirect impacts on the contribution made by its setting to its significance.

4.2 Potential built heritage receptors of impacts

In sections 3.2 to 3.5 of this heritage statement, it has been demonstrated that there are no designated or non-designated heritage assets within or including the site or in its wider environs that may be affected by the development proposal. Put another way, there are no potential built heritage receptors likely to receive impacts from the proposals.

4.3 Archaeology

A detailed desk-based archaeological assessment of the land immediately to the south of the current application site, once forming an adjoining section of the same large open field described in section 2.2 above, was undertaken by Orion Heritage in 2018. This DBA formed part of the planning submission documentation for the appeal-consented outline permission granted on that land in December 2019. The DBA concluded that adjoining site had a low potential for archaeological remains of all periods, although it is noted that previous archaeological investigation of the wider area at the western end of the village had been limited.

No better desk-based evidence is available for the current application site than that identified for the abutting site in 2018. While the current site will clearly require archaeological evaluation to see whether the limited archaeological remains of low interest noted in the 2018 DBA continue into it, it has been concluded that would be best done by geophysical survey and follow-up trial trenching, all being subject to agreement of a Written Scheme of Investigation. Some further archaeological mitigation may then be required on condition, if archaeological remains continue into the site from

the south. For the moment, it is provisionally concluded that the current application site also has low potential for archaeological remains of all periods.

4.4 Conclusion

On the basis of the foregoing, it is concluded by this heritage statement that there are no potential built heritage receptors likely to receive impacts from the proposals, while it is considered there is a low potential for archaeological remains, with little likely consequence in terms of adverse impacts of significant effect. This conclusion mirrors that of the Conservation Officer considering the substantially larger development proposed in the planning submission [ref. 18/01894/OUT] for the now appeal-consented scheme on the adjoining land to the south, who commented:

'In principle it is considered that the proposed development will not harm the character of the conservation area or the setting of any Listed Buildings and as a result the significance of the heritage assets will not be harmed in line with...the NPPF.'

The Planning Inspector for the 2019 appeal [APP/C3105/W/19/3229631] concurred with this assessment.

Stephen Bond MA HonDArt FSA MRICS GradDipConsAA

Heritage Places

e: sbond@heritageplaces.co.uk

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