

HERITAGE STATEMENT

- 1.1 This Statement has been prepared in order to support an application for Planning Permission for use of the Flying Field for filming purposes. The application seeks to formalise the temporary use which has currently been operating on the site to allow for filming to take place for 125 days per year, including setting up and clearing the required equipment.
- 1.2 The application site comprises a large part of the RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area and the application boundary encompasses five Grade II Listed Structures (Nose Docking Sheds 325, 327 & 328, Control Tower 340 and Squadron HQ 234), as well as three Scheduled Monuments (QRA, Northern Bomb Stores and Avionics Building 299). The Hardened Telephone Exchange (Building 129) and Command Centre (Building 126), which are both Scheduled Monuments lie outside the application boundary to the south east.
- 1.3 Section 72(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires local authorities to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of a Conservation Area when exercising their planning functions in relation to development within or affecting the setting of a Conservation Area. Similarly, Section 66(1) states that:
- “In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any feature of special architectural or historic interest which it possess.”**
- 1.4 Therefore, this Statement considers the effect of the development proposals upon the character and appearance of both the RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area, as well as the setting of the various Listed Buildings (and Scheduled Monuments) which are located within the application site.
- 1.5 With regard to the development proposals, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that ***'in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage asset affected, including any contribution made by their setting'***.

The NPPF goes on to confirm that Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings, as well as Scheduled Monuments, are '**Designated Heritage Assets**' and as such great weight should be given to their conservation. Nonetheless, paragraph 137 states that '**Local Planning Authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas**'. In addition, paragraph 134 states that:

"Where a development proposals will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefit of the proposals, including securing its optimum viable use." (our emphasis)

1.6 As required by paragraph 129 of the NPPF, Cherwell District Council have identified and assessed the significance of the Conservation Area as a whole within the 'Former RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area Appraisal 2006' which states that '**the primary architectural and social historic interest of the airbase at RAF Upper Heyford is its role during the Cold War**' and that the site as a whole could be subdivided into three main character areas that largely reflected the divisions of function between the technical and domestic operations, being the flying field, the technical site and the domestic zone.

1.7 The application site is contained to the Flying Field only, and whilst this large area could be divided up into a number of areas and sub-areas, the general character of the Flying Field is:

"one of open grassland bisected by runways, taxiways and hardstanding. Around the periphery of this open area are strategically located HASs and areas with specific function, some self-contained within their own security fencing."

1.8 It is acknowledged that whilst a number of the structures and buildings on the Flying Field are individually Listed or Scheduled, all the buildings and structures across the Flying Field are protected by virtue of the Conservation Area designated and many of these have specific roles in serving to aid understanding of the former use of the site and contribute to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and thus its significance. Therefore any development proposals have the potential to impact upon the character and appearance of the site and thus its significance.

- 1.9 The development proposals see the use of the site for a total of 125 days per annum for filming purposes which will include the setting up of the production equipment and the subsequent removal of the equipment from site.
- 1.10 By their very nature, the development proposals are temporary in that the filming will not take place in a single location, but rather various locations at different times across the site for a limited number of days at each occurrence. Therefore any impact that the presence of film crews and equipment may have upon the appreciation of the Conservation Area or indeed any of the Listed Buildings Scheduled Monuments will be limited and temporary.
- 1.11 The proposals recommend that a Production Management Plan is prepared in advance of any proposed filming for more than two days. This will set out details of the proposed filming as well as setting out any requirements for temporary sets or set dressing, as well as a timescale for when this will be removed and how the area will be restored to back to its former appearance.
- 1.12 What makes the site desirable for filming is the existing character and appearance of the area, and therefore it is in the interest of both the Applicant and any film companies utilising the site to preserve this character and appearance. This is apparent in that many of the productions which have previously used the site have done so because it presents either a military site or a Russian or American set, such as World War Z, The Muppets Movie or Fast and Furious.
- 1.13 As confirmed by the Conservation Officer, given that the proposals do not involve any demolition of structures, and will only see the use operating on a temporary basis, for a limited number of days each year, it is considered that for the purposes of paragraphs 134 and 138 of the NPPF, the proposed development would amount to 'less than substantial' harm, and should therefore be weighed against the benefits of the proposals which include 'securing its optimum viable use'.
- 1.14 It is considered that notwithstanding the public benefits brought about by the investment into the local area as a result of the use of the site for filming purposes which are set out in full in the application documentation, the proposals represent a suitable, optimal and viable use for the site. The proposals do not involve and permanent physical alterations to any of the buildings or structures

across the Flying Field nor do they involve the construction of any permanent new buildings or structures within the Conservation Area. No permanent alteration to the character and appearance of the area is proposed, and no permanent change to the setting of any of the Listed Buildings or Scheduled Monuments will result, with any changes being on site for only a few days before being removed and the site restored to its former nature.

- 1.15 This temporary and appropriate nature of the proposed use is clearly demonstrated by the use of an area of the Northern Bomb Stores for filming in 2013.
- 1.16 Whilst in that instance planning permission itself was not required, Scheduled Monument Consent was sought from and granted by English Heritage (ref: S00053474) for the use of the site for filming purposes. This allowed temporary sets to be constructed on the site in consultation with English Heritage, with relevant Conditions being attached to the Consent to control the restoration of the site once the filming had concluded. English Heritage subsequently inspected the site and were happy that the site had been successfully restored and that the use had no lasting impact upon the Scheduled Monument, or indeed the wider Conservation Area.
- 1.17 As such, it is considered that the proposed use of the site, on a temporary basis, for filming purposes will serve to protect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the setting of the various Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments and represent an optimal use which allows for investment into the area without any permanent physical changes being made to the site which would adversely affect its established significance.