



Heritage Statement - July 2015

Land at Letchmere Farm, Upper Heyford

West Waddy ADP

The Malthouse
60 East St Helen Street
Abingdon
Oxfordshire
OX14 5EB

t: 01235 523139

f: 01235 521662

e: enquiries@westwaddy-adp.co.uk


Heritage Statement Upper Heyford July 2015

© West Waddy ADP

This document has been prepared in accordance with West Waddy ADP's quality control procedures and should be treated as a draft unless it has been signed and approved. The document should not be used for any other purpose than that for which it has been prepared without the written authority of West Waddy ADP. If the document is used for another purpose without consent, then no responsibility or liability for the consequences arising for such action will be accepted by West Waddy ADP.

Prepared by:

Rebecca Barnett, Graduate Town Planner



Checked by:

Geoff Huntingford, Heritage Planner



CONTENT

1. INTRODUCTION	2
2. LOCATION	2
3. HISTORICAL SUMMARY	2
4. GOVERNMENT AND LOCAL POLICY FRAMEWORK	
Government Policy.....	4
Local Plan Policy.....	5
5. A CONSERVATION ASSESSMENT	
RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area.....	6
RAF Officers Married Residential Area (Officers Housing).....	7
South East Hardened Aircraft Shelters (HAS's).....	8
6. ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE	10
7. THE CURRENT PROPOSALS	11
8. CONCLUSION	12

REFERENCES

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report relates to a proposed residential site to the south east of RAF Upper Heyford. The site neighbours the RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area, which represents a 'designated heritage asset' as set out in current government guidance. It was therefore necessary to assess and understand the significance of the conservation area and its relationship to the site.
- 1.2 The conservation area is broken down into a series of character zones. The 2 character zones relating to the site are the 'RAF officer's married residential area' (Officers Housing) and the Southeast Hardened Aircraft Shelter's (HAS's). These and the conservation area as a whole have each been individually assessed on their significance and relationship to the site.

2 LOCATION

- 2.1 Upper Heyford airbase lies within Cherwell District 6km northwest of Bicester and 11km southeast of Banbury. The site lies within the civil parish of Upper Heyford though the airbase crosses into Ardley and Somerton parishes also. The Cherwell Valley to the west of the airbase is designated as an area of high landscape value and the Rousham Conservation Area abuts the western edge of the airbase.
- 2.2 Camp Road runs through the south of the airbase, separating the main part of the airbase from the houses and service buildings. This connects to Somerton Road and the B430, which link the airbase to Lower Heyford Train Station, Banbury Road (Banbury, Kidlington and Oxford); and Bicester and the A34.
- 2.3 The site lies on Letchmere Farm, north of Camp Road on the eastern edge of the airbase, adjacent to the Officer's Housing and RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area. To the south of the site is a group of bungalows and the Heyford Leys Camping Park.

3 HISTORICAL SUMMARY

- 3.1 The airfield was originally built in World War 1, opened in late 1918 as a response to the requirement for adequately trained aircrews for the Royal Flying Corps. RAF Upper Heyford was built by Canadian Engineers; the best-equipped airfield of its time, it included a landing field with six hangers and a tarmac hanger apron. The first two squadrons of the infant Canadian Royal Air Force were established at the airbase in 1918 but the war ended before these squadrons became active and the land was reverted back to the previous landowners New College Oxford in 1919 following the end of the 1st World War.
- 3.2 In 1924 the president of the Air Council repurchased the airbase and funds were allocated to build an airbase to accommodate at least 3 squadrons, 54 aircraft, hangers, dispersals and related stores. Upper Heyford became the model on which airfields of its type were based in the period 1925-1934. The airbase was attached to the RAF's central area when the RAF was further expanded and re-organised following German-rearmament. During 1938 Vickers Wellesleys of the Long Range Development Flight were based

at the airbase where they made crucial progress in developing the navigational and endurance skills necessary to make the operation of a Heavy Long Range Bomber force possible.

- 3.3 The airfields role changed during the 2nd World War when its operational squadrons were put on a war footing and the airfield was returned to being predominantly a training base. In addition to providing training for all nationalities from the commonwealth and allied nations, the base continued to be involved in the development of military radio and radar technology.
- 3.4 'The primary historical and archaeological interest of the airbase is its role during the Cold War.' In 1946 the U.S. Strategic Air Command (SAC) was formed and in the same year there were discussions with the British Government about stationing American bombers in Britain. In 1950 the British Government approved the formation of permanent United States Air Force (USAF) bases in Britain and by 1960 there were 32 'Principal United States Airfields' in England and SAC used 14 of these. The airfield remained RAF property however, and therefore continued to be referred to as RAF Upper Heyford.
- 3.5 The airfield was remodelled extensively and during this decade it became one of the SAC's principal bases in Britain, providing a base for the rotations of USAF aircraft deployed overseas. Approximately 170 new buildings were erected including new nose dock sheds and further accommodation for base staff. In addition to this, improvements were made to runways, aprons, hard standings and dispersals with further runway improvements between 1957 and 1959 and a new air traffic control centre for the 1268th Airways Communication Service.
- 3.6 In 1965 the USAF stopped regular SAC rotations in England and Upper Heyford was transferred to United States Air Force Europe as a dispersed operating base of the 7514th Combat Support Group, though the base continued to be used as a forward area for SAC deployments. France withdrew from North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in 1966 and therefore U.S. aircraft on French bases had to be redeployed, and in 1966 the 66th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing of the 4th Allied Tactical Force (3rd Air Force) was moved to Upper Heyford. This required a new construction of hangarages in 1968 and widening of the runway.
- 3.7 Upper Heyford underwent a further round of building in the early 1970's in order to house the three fighter squadrons of 20th Tactical Fighter Wing including a helipad in 1972, runway improvements in 1976, new engine workshops, fuel and bomb stores and extended aprons and dispersals. From July 1971 Upper Heyford was the largest fighter base in Europe equipped with F111 'Aardvark' whose role was to target key Warsaw Pact military installations in Eastern Europe. Hardened Aircraft Shelter's were provided between 1977 and 1980 to house the F111's because of their perceived vulnerability on the fixed airfields. Ground crews would often decorate these in the same theme as the attended aircraft.
- 3.8 The decline of the Soviet Union as a threat from the mid 1980s culminated in the planned withdrawal of the 20th Tactical Fighter Wing from Upper Heyford. With the end of the Cold War the USAF began to reduce the

European limits of its UK bases. The flight line was closed in 1993 and the base was handed back to the Ministry Of Defence (MOD) in 1994.

- 3.9 After the USAF left, the airbase was declared surplus to requirements by the MOD and in 1995 the Upper Heyford Working Group set up by Cherwell District Council agreed a mission statement for the redevelopment and regeneration of the airbase. The MOD formed a joint venture partnership with NOC (Wimpey Homes, Taywood Homes and Westbury Homes) in 1996 and since has brought houses on the base back into use, reopened the food store, community centre and chapel, provided play facilities whilst agreeing the long term future of the airbase. A planning application was since permitted for 1076 homes in 2010 currently in the process of construction.

4 GOVERNMENT AND LOCAL POLICY FRAMEWORK REGARDING THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

Government policy

- 4.1 Government policy regarding built heritage is contained in Chapter 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) Under this document, the conservation area is a 'designated heritage asset'. This report in reviewing the development history of the site and the relative significance of the site complies with the requirement of the NPPF that the applicant 'describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting' (paragraph 128). The level of detail should be proportionate to the asset's importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

- 4.2 The NPPF retains two concepts: 'heritage asset' and 'significance', introduced by PPS5 (March 2010). Heritage assets are defined in the Framework as:

"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. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing)". (Annex 2)

- 4.3 Significance for heritage policy purposes is defined as:

"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 heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting. (Annex 2)

- 4.4 Like significance, setting is defined only in terms of heritage policy:

"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. (Annex 2)

- 4.5 In the exercise of their planning powers, local authorities should avoid or minimize conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal by taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise (paragraph 129).

Local Plan policy

- 4.6 Policy C10 of the adopted Local Plan relates to historic landscapes, parks and gardens and historic battlefields stating that development which would have a detrimental effect upon the character and appearance of historic landscapes, parks and gardens and battlefields and their settings will normally be resisted.
- 4.7 Policy C11 relates to Rousham Park, south west of the RAF base. The policy protects the vista and setting of Rousham Park by the strict control of new buildings and structures within the conservation area. The site lies outside of the conservation area but proposals for change of use of agricultural land in the area should demonstrate that careful consideration has been given to ensure the visual integrity of the park.
- 4.8 Policy ESD 16 of the Cherwell Draft Local Plan states that designated and non designated 'heritage assets' (as defined in the NPPF) should be conserved, sustained and enhanced, including buildings, features, archaeology, conservation areas and their settings, and new development should be sensitively sited and integrated in accordance with advice in the NPPF. 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. 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 At Risk Register, into appropriate use will be encouraged. Proposals should 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.
- 4.9 The Draft Local Plan recognises the heritage significance of RAF Upper Heyford and includes within the site allocation policy; Policy Villages 5 several points relating specifically to the conservation of the airbase. Those policies relating to the application site include:

'Proposals must demonstrate that the conservation of heritage resources, landscape, restoration, restoration, enhancement of biodiversity and other environmental improvements will be achieved across the whole of the site identified as Policy Villages 5.'

'In order to avoid development on the most historically significant and sensitive parts of the site, new development is to be focused to the south of the flying field and on limited greenfield land to the south of Camp Road (and one greenfield area to the north of Camp Road, east of Larsen Road)'

'The release of greenfield land within the allocated site Policy Villages 5 will not be allowed to compromise the necessary environmental improvements and conservation of heritage interest of the wider site.'

'New development should reflect high quality design that responds to the established character of the district character areas where this would preserve or enhance the appearance of the Former RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area.'

'New development should also preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Rousham, Lower Heyford and Upper Heyford Conservation Area, as well as the Oxford Canal Conservation Area, and their settings.'

'A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment as well as a Heritage Assessment should be undertaken as part of development proposals and inform the design principles for the site.'

5 A CONSERVATION ASSESSMENT

RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area

- 5.1 It is the duty of local planning authorities to designate as conservation areas any “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance” (Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, s.69) and to review their boundaries from time to time. They furthermore have a duty, under Section 72 of the Act, to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area in the exercise of any of their planning functions. This duty applies equally to the setting of a conservation area, or to views into or out of that area.
- 5.2 The RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area was designated in 2006 following the preparation of a conservation plan in 2005. A planning application was turned down at appeal in 2003, the application a result of a comprehensive planning brief for the site, adopted by Cherwell District Council in 1999. In Parallel with this, English Heritage was assessing the Cold War (1945-1989) features of the airbase as part of the National Monuments Protection Programme (MPP); and subsequent to this they recommended a number of buildings in the area to be listed. A revised structure plan following the appeal reduced the protection for heritage assets on the site, which led to the Council, NOC and English Heritage jointly funding the preparation of a conservation plan and giving the site conservation area status.
- 5.3 The conservation plan focused on the airfield as the most historically significant area but some reference is made to the area south of this within the airbase as context for the airfield and to understand the history and

significance of the airbase as a whole. Cherwell District Council have subsequently produced a Conservation Area Appraisal to cover the entire conservation area including those areas outside of the airfield.

- 5.4 English heritage define the 'special interest' of 'RAF Upper Heyford as the structures and layout that contributed to its role as a Cold War airbase during the period of hostilities known as 'flexible response.' The Conservation Area Appraisal describes the base as follows:
- 5.5 *'RAF Upper Heyford retains many of the features of its operational heyday. The base, though the site is now shabby and the spaces divided up by modern fencing, still exudes 'Cold War character' and engenders a sense of awe and foreboding in the visitor. The prominent hardened aircraft buildings, the enclosure fences around operational areas, the planned layout of the functionally related groups of buildings and the spaces in between, together with 'campus' nature of the site all contribute significantly to the 'Cold War' character of the site.'*
- 5.6 The heritage significance of the RAF base is evident from its conservation area designation in 2006. The World War structures in the south and residential area are generally of less significance than the airfield and those structures relating to the Cold War history of the airbase.
- 5.7 The impact of the proposal would be negligible as the site is located away from the Flying Field and the more historically significant and sensitive parts of the conservation area, neighbouring a less significant part of the airbase. The trees to the west of the site contribute to the character of the conservation area and therefore will be retained allowing for only discreet pedestrian routes through to the Officers Housing area. Planting will be used on property boundaries alongside the track to the west of the site to provide a second layer of screening to the airbase. This will maintain the contained views and character of the conservation area whilst still allowing for pedestrian connectivity to other parts of the settlement This mature line of trees makes the site invisible from views within the conservation area.
- 5.8 Rousham Park and Conservation Area lie to the south west of the airbase and therefore the existing residential area prevents views towards the site. Development of the site will therefore have no impact on the setting of Rousham Park.

RAF officers married residential area (Officers Housing)

- 5.9 The Officers Housing forms part of the eastern boundary of the conservation area, and the western boundary of the site. The remainder of the airbase cannot be seen from within this zone and therefore it appears as a self-contained unit, visually separated from the surrounding site.
- 5.10 The housing is set in large, uncluttered and well-tended domestic plots creating a pleasant leafy suburb. The buildings are angled within their plots diagonal to the plot boundaries, mostly consisting of tall planting creating glimpses through to the individual dwellings. This provides large front gardens within a formal grid

of streets. Maps prior to this period show field boundaries following a similar layout, maintaining the southern and eastern boundaries and creating new roads parallel to these.

- 5.11 The area is one of the earlier parts of the airbase, formed during the first wave of expansion from 1924 when funds were allocated by the Air Council to expand the airbase. Part of this expansion included the residential area of the airbase. Residential areas were often split according to rank and the Officers Housing would have housed the higher rank officers working on the airbase and their families.
- 5.12 High boundary planting on the eastern, southern and western edges separates the zone from the Technical Area, Camp Road and the proposed site, outside of the airbase. To the north of the zone sparser vegetation separates the area from the later Airmen's Housing and Bungalows, and a public open space. This creates a weaker division and glimpse views between the zones whilst still providing a landscape boundary to the area.
- 5.13 The houses have an Arts and Crafts inspired character, typified by predominantly detached housing of red brick with simple detailing. These were mostly built in the 1920's in the interwar period between the 1st and 2nd world war. The style of architecture is typical of suburban expansion and Garden City development in this period, a return to traditional forms and materials often inflected by Georgian, and Tudor styles and details. The Officers Housing includes a mixture of styles including Garden City Style and Georgian Revival architecture.
- 5.14 The junior officers housing in the north of the area was added in the 1950's as infill development. These are of lesser architectural importance but considered as contributory to the groups suburban appearance.
- 5.15 The proposal is outside of the area and separated from the character area by a mature boundary of trees, which will be retained. There would therefore be no direct impact on the area, landscape or dwellings. A second layer of planting will further strengthen this self containment so that the character area is visually separated from other parts of the airbase and the surrounding countryside. The indirect impact would therefore be negligible. Retaining and enhancing the tree boundaries will continue this self containment and maintain the same relationship of the area to its setting.
- 5.16 The new scheme is designed to follow the same Arts and Crafts inspired architecture of the Officers Housing forming a high quality extension to the residential area connected by pedestrian routes. These proposals will therefore preserve the character of the conservation area. Existing and new planting will continue the self containment of the 'Officers Housing' character area.

South East Hardened Aircraft Shelter's (HAS's)

- 5.17 The South East HAS's form part of the Cold War history of the airfield, a group of 7 Hardened Aircraft Shelter's amongst 56 built in that period. The Conservation Plan states that 'area has a distinctive character







because the HAS's and ancillary structures are relatively close together but the visual link with the major part of the landscape of flexible response is poor'

- 5.18 The South East HAS's are 7 of the 20 HAS's built in 1979 by Richard Costain Ltd as a response to North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) policy in the late 1970's to harden its main facilities against conventional, chemical and biological attack.
- 5.19 The HAS's were designed to each house a single jet aircraft in a secure blast proof environment. NATO policy worked to harden and dull down the key airfields. 3 of the shelters roofs can be viewed from the site because of their height and massing.
- 5.20 The majority of the shelters on the airfield are 8.3m high, 36.5m in length and 21.5m wide (internal). This size allowed engines to be started inside the shelters to provide an instant response. The shelters were built to create strong structures to contain aircraft as replacements to the flimsy lightweight steel structures used in previous periods. The HAS's were constructed from corrugated galvanised steel anti-spall plates assembled in deep vertical corrugated arches for additional strength and covered with reinforced concrete.
- 5.21 The HAS's are a distinctive element of the Cold War landscape and therefore of national significance due to the repetitive design and layout of the structures. A large number of these were constructed in a small period of time and therefore their construction dramatically altered the landscape of the airbase as new taxiways and areas of hard standing were needed to serve the structures.
- 5.22 Their layout and relationship to each other is a result of the requirement that; for any attack no more than 2 could be hit on a single bombing run. The layout of the group was therefore important for their functioning and a significant part of their history. The South East HAS's group is however a closer group than others on the airfield and the relationship to the airfield is not as strong as in other cases.
- 5.23 This weaker relationship to the airfield may have been the reason for 2 of these hardened aircraft shelters to be later adapted to function as personnel shelters offering protection from chemical and biological attack.
- 5.24 The HAS's have survived relatively complete, with the mechanical operations for the main doors and the lower and upper vents still extant. Many of the HAS's still have extractor fans to the rear, a winch system, winch pulley, complex floor markings and an external 'officer commanding' board.
- 5.25 The architectural and technical details of the HAS's are illustrative of changes in NATO policy during the Cold War and the social and architectural consequences of this. The proposal has no impact on the form, details or layout of the buildings and therefore creates no harm to their significance.

6 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

6.1 Given the above analysis, it is possible to assess the relative historic significance of the relevant elements of the RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area, incorporating the criteria listed in 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance' (English Heritage, April 2008), as follows:

	Evidential Potential to yield primary evidence	Historical Means of connecting with the past	Aesthetic Sensory and intellectual stimulation	Communal Meaning for collective experience and memory	Overall
Officers Housing	Part of airbase expansion after the First World War	Representative of ranked residential areas, social military history between the First and Second World War	An attractive suburban residential area, showing examples of arts and crafts and Neo-Georgian inspired architecture, visually separated from other parts of the airbase	Private houses and part of early 20 th century residential development	
South East HAS's	Relatively unaltered examples of Hardened Aircraft Shelters during the Cold War including original technological details and artwork	Layout, structures, technological features and artwork reflecting NATO policy towards hardened facilities in the Cold War	Distinctive hardened structures contributing to the Cold War character of the airbase	Unattractive to local population but with some meaning for those and their families who lived or worked on the airbase during the airfields operation	
RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area	Relatively unaltered example of USAF airfields during the Cold War	Part of the move west after threats to the eastern airfields and representative of airfield operation during the Cold War	Airbase relatively unaltered and therefore still maintains its Cold War character and appearance	Meaning for those and their families linked to the airbase during its operation	

	Exceptional significance		Little significance
	Considerable significance		Neutral significance (none)
	Some significance		Intrusive (none)

7 THE CURRENT PROPOSALS

7.1 Finally, it is useful to assess the current proposals for their potential impact against the significance of the various assets (whether designated heritage assets or not) as listed in the table in paragraph 6.1 above.

This can be most conveniently set out in another table, as follows:

Asset	Significance	Impact of proposal on significance
Officers Housing	Some – Attractive suburban development, self-contained from other parts of the airbase, but forming part of the airbase’s expansion in the 1920’s-1940’s.	Negligible impact- Proposal will not be visible due to a planted boundary on the eastern edge of the conservation area, maintaining this separation.
South East HAS’s	Considerable – Group of Hardened Aircraft Shelters built in 1979 to house jet aircraft in the Cold War, significant as part of the airfield layout and function, and architectural and technological examples of war related buildings from the Cold War.	Negligible Impact – Proposal will not affect the layout or architecture of the group.
RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area	Exceptional – An airbase originally built in World War 1, but most significant as a base for the USAF during the Cold War, a minimally altered example of airfields from this period.	Negligible impact – Proposal will not harm any significant buildings on the airbase, or the layout or architecture of the airfield.

8 CONCLUSION

- 8.1 RAF Upper Heyford has been a conservation area since 2006 when English Heritage funded the preparation of a conservation plan to protect unlisted structures on the airbase during a planned redevelopment.
- 8.2 The conservation area covers both the residential and airfield parts of the airbase. The airfield is however considered to be the most significant principally for its use during the Cold War as a base for the United States Air Force.
- 8.3 The Officers Housing area forms the part of the conservation area closest to the site, built during the first phase of expansion of the airbase prior to the Second World War, it forms an attractive garden suburb, reflective of the ranking of residential areas in the design of airbases during this period. It is a self-contained area due to the substantial boundary planting and open spaces within the area. The proposal does not alter anything within the area and views into the area are limited. The areas self-containment and individual identity is therefore unharmed.
- 8.4 The South-east Hardened Aircraft Shelter's can be viewed from the site. These are significant as examples of the effects of NATO policy during the Cold War, hardening buildings and increasing security against increasing threats. These maintain their original form, layout and technological detailing of the time. The proposal does not alter the layout, form or detailing of these buildings and therefore their significance is unaltered by the proposal.
- 8.5 The proposal would create an attractive entrance to the conservation area whilst maintaining its own separate identity and not harming the other character zones within the conservation area. The site is located away from the airfield and the more historically significant and sensitive parts of the airbase. The potential impact is therefore reduced. The design will ensure that the proposal does not impact on the neighbouring zones of the conservation area.

REFERENCES

ACTA: 'Former RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Plan, Volume 1 and 2' September 2005

ACTA: 'Former RAF Upper Heyford Airbase Landscape Character Assessment of the Airbase South of the Cold War Zone' March 2006

Airfield Research Publishing: 'RAF Upper Heyford' March 1996

Cherwell District Council: Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031

Cherwell District Council: 'RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area Appraisal' April 2006

Cherwell District Council: 'Former RAF Upper Heyford Revised Comprehensive Planning Brief' March 2007

English Heritage website: The national heritage list for England

English Heritage: 'Domestic 4: The modern house and housing' April 2011

English Heritage: 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment' April 2008

National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment'