**From:** Rose Todd
**Sent:** 19 April 2016 13:24
**To:** Andrew Lewis
**Subject:** 16/00263/F - BUILDINGS 485, 488 AND LAND SURROUNDING THOSE BUILDINGS

This proposal is for the demolition of Buildings 485 and 488, which are identified within the conservation area appraisal document as make a positive contribution to the residential and parade ground area within the Conservation Area at former RAF Upper Heyford.

The planning history for this part of the Upper Heyford Airbase is complex. The buildings were identified within the Revised Comprehensive Planning Brief (2007) as structures which made a contribution to the significance of the conservation area and should be retained. However, permission, following a public enquiry (08/00716/OUT), was granted for their demolition. A subsequent approved application (10/01642/OUT) included a revised scheme which includes the retention of both Building 485 and 488 together with restoration of the parade ground.

The planning history aside it remains the case that Building 485 and 488 both continue to make a positive contribution to the character of the airbase and its significance. The loss of these buildings would clearly harm the significance of the Conservation Area.

The significance of the former Upper Heyford military base is derived from being both one of the earlier model RAF airfields upon which other airfields of its type were based during the interwar period expansion period, as well as being one of a limited number of bases that at the end of WWII were selected for transformation into a purpose-built airbase to house aircraft of the United States Air Force (USAF) and Strategic Air Command (SAC). This therefore gives both the RAF buildings and the later USAF-related buildings an intrinsic significance both in terms of their architecture and their role in military history.

Buildings 485 and 488 are located on the domestic part of the Upper Heyford site.

Building 485 is a type B barrack block constructed as part of the first phase of development on the site following re-occupation by the RAF in 1924. Building 488 - the Airman’s Dining Room and Institute - which stands behind Bld 485, was built as part of the expansion of the RAF station in the 1930s in contemporary Art Deco architectural style. Both buildings are good examples of their type and the cohesion of materials and style within this group of buildings ensure they both individually and collectively makes a positive contribution to the character of the residential area. This contribution is identified within the Conservation Area Appraisal (2006).

Both buildings are of a domestic scale and eminently capable of conversion as proved at former RAF Bicester where the domestic section of the former military airfield has been converted wholesale to residential accommodation. A case in point is Building 20 at former RAF Bicester. Conversion of existing buildings can both preserve and enhance and enhance the existing unique character of Heyford Park which is essence is military at heart (and not country village or urban extension). The conversion of existing buildings will provide units at a greater density than that of the proposed rebuild scheme.  The impact of  their removal is therefore two fold: a) the loss of a significant structures which makes a strong contribution to the Conservation Area, b) the reduction in development intensity on this area of the site has a knock on effect to other areas of the Conservation Area, with development potentially extending to other, more sensitive areas to meet the Local Plan housing allocation.

The character and layout of the proposed replacement housing is without any unique properties, at best it can only be described as bland and pedestrian. The proposal could be a housing estate located anywhere within Britain. It cannot be argued that the proposal contributes significantly to the unique character of the domestic area within the conservation area. The very opposite can be said of Buildings 485 and 488 which have become landmark buildings within the site.

Recommend refusal.

I do not consider that a sound case has been made which demonstrates that the these buildings cannot be retained as is set out in the consented masterplan. Further insufficient justification is provided to show that the level of harm is outweighed by the benefit of the replacement buildings.

Contra to Policy

NPPF

126 – the proposal fails to preserve, sustain or enhance the significance of the heritage asset.

131 – the buildings concerned in this application are capable of conversion and being put into viable use; the new development erodes rather than contributes to the local character and distinctiveness.

133 – the harm to the heritage asset does not outweigh any perceived benefit.

Cherwell Local Plan

ESD15 – erosion of local distinctiveness; failure to contribute positively to the character and identity of the conservation area; and failure to respect the layout, form, scale of the site.

Dr Rose Todd

Senior Conservation Officer
Design & Conservation Team
Development Management
Cherwell District Council
Extension: 1846
Direct Telephone: 01295 221846
mailto: rose.todd@cherwell-dc.gov.uk
[www.cherwell.gov.uk](http://www.cherwell.gov.uk)