



Historic England

SOUTH EAST OFFICE

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Direct Dial: 01483 252026

Our ref: P00506217

14 April 2016

Dear Mr Lewis

Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2015 & T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015

**BUILDINGS 485, 488 AND LAND SURROUNDING THOSE BUILDINGS (DORCHESTER PHASE 6) HEYFORD PARK CAMP ROAD UPPER HEYFORD
Application No 16/00263/F**

Thank you for your letter of 31 March 2016 notifying Historic England of the above application.

Summary

This application involves the demolition of buildings which make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area but have a complex planning history. Permission has previously been granted for their demolition but a subsequent application and masterplan involved their retention. We do not consider that a sound case has been made which demonstrates that they cannot be retained as is set out in the consented masterplan.

Historic England Advice

This application includes the demolition of Buildings 485 and 488 on the domestic part of the Upper Heyford site. Building 485 is a type B barrack block constructed in 1837 as part of the first phase of development on the site following re-occupation by the RAF in 1924. It stands at the south end of the parade ground and was identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal (2006) as making a positive contribution to the character of the area due to its value as part of a coherent group of 1920s buildings in the British Military style surrounding the parade ground. The appraisal recognised the strong building lines and campus quality of the parade ground area. This set of buildings are also of historical interest as Upper Heyford was the first of the interwar RAF airfields to be constructed and the buildings and layout served as a model for those that came later.

Building 488, the Airman's Dining Room and Institute, is slightly later and forms part of



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the expansion of the RAF base in the 1930s. This is also identified as a positive contributor in the Conservation Area Appraisal which notes its Art Deco styling and its coherent character with the H-blocks (buildings 489, 498 and 500), though this has been diluted by post-war alterations and additional buildings. We concur with the conclusions of the Appraisal and regard these buildings as good examples of their type which help tell the earlier history of the base, form a coherent group and thus contribute to the significance of the conservation area.

The value of these buildings was also recognised in the revised comprehensive planning brief for the site, issued in 2007, which identified them as to be retained. The subsequent application to redevelop the site 08/00716/OUT, which received planning permission following a public enquiry, recognised their significance (Pegasus Planning Ground drawing N.0111_18-1d of 2008) but included their demolition. Subsequently a revised scheme (10/01642/OUT) was submitted and received planning permission. This included the retention of both buildings 485 and 488 along with the restoration of the parade ground. However, it also involved the demolition of building 459, which again is a 1920s building identified as making a positive contribution to the Conservation Area which was to have been retained in application 08/00716/OUT. On balance we concluded that the masterplan set out in 10/01642/OUT represented a better outcome for the heritage of the base as Buildings 485 and 488 are of high architectural quality, better illustrate the function of this part of the base in the 1920s and allow a sense of the parade ground bounded by buildings to be retained.

The loss of these buildings would clearly harm the significance of the Conservation Area. While the defining characteristic of the Conservation Area is as a Cold-War airbase its early occupation by the RAF is an interesting aspect of its history. The buildings in question are among the more interesting and better preserved of the survivors from this phase on the site and therefore we conclude that their loss would entail a high, but not substantial, level of harm. In our view the Planning and Heritage Statement submitted in support of this application underplays the interest of these buildings and overplays the impact of alteration that have been made to them, leading to an underassessment of their significance. According to paragraph 132 of the NPPF *any* harm to a designated heritage asset (which includes Conservation Areas) requires a clear and convincing justification whilst paragraph 134 of the Framework requires harm to be balanced against the public benefits of the application. Furthermore, section 72 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 or appearance of that area.

We are aware that during the 2008 appeal the Inspector concluded that the demolition of these buildings were justified on the basis that the costs of conversion would not be justified by the quality of the result and that it would be difficult to integrate the new development within a new development of high quality design. At the time we accepted that these buildings could be demolished. However, the 2010 application



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demonstrated that they could be incorporated into such a scheme and the fact that the applicant submitted such a scheme suggested that they considered it feasible in economic terms. The Planning and Heritage Statement submitted in support of this application gives no justification for the harm beyond quoting the Inspector's views on the 2008 scheme. Given the presence of the 2010 scheme for the retention of these buildings in our view a more robust justification and explanation of the public benefits should be required if the Council is to accept the level of harm involved.

Recommendation

English Heritage recommend that this application is refused on the basis that a robust justification for the harm to the Character of the Conservation Area that the proposals entail has not been provided. The Council should only accept this level of harm if a clear case is made that implementing the masterplan set out in the permitted application 10/01642/OUT is not practical.

We would welcome the opportunity of advising further. Please consult us again if any additional information or amendments are submitted. If, notwithstanding our advice, you propose to approve the scheme in its present form, please advise us of the date of the committee and send us a copy of your report at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely



Richard Peats

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cc: Rose Todd, Cherwell DC



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