**Upper Heyford heritage Centre 16/01545/F**

**Committee Presentation 29 September 2016**

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Due to an invitation to the formal opening of *Cold War Frontier: The story of Little America, RAF Upper Heyford* at Banbury Museum I am unlikely to be able to make this presentation to Committee.

**Flawed/incomplete application**

Plan has the dimensions wrong, specifies **zero** employment and the plan that should show Listed Buildings and SAMs does not. No details of the pre-application advice that was provided to the applicant have been included.

**The 2009 appeal decision**

Yes, the appeal decision in 2009 did ‘allow’ for a different (larger **or** smaller) building to be used for this purpose but not without supporting evidence, as was at least partly provided to and discussed at the public inquiry.

**Policy**

‘NPPF 137. Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites and within the setting of heritage assets **to enhance or better reveal their significance**. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or

better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably.’ Proposals that obscure or deny their significance should be resisted.

In approving the Structure Plan Policy H2 in 2005 the Examining Panel said that **feasibility studies** should be carried out including interested parties, but they never have been. Cherwell Local Plan policy V5 is the successor policy adopted in similar terms and requires the same evidence before it can be properly applied and implemented. The ‘Development Framework’ recently commissioned by the Council and Dorchester Group recommends that a heritage impact assessments and visitor study be carried out. English Heritage (as was) has been recommending the appointment of a project officer. None of this has happened and, apart from what amounts to very small private enterprise (to which the owners generously contribute a minibus), **nothing** has happened on the site – despite the obligations set out in the 2010 appeal decision. Since the removal of the exhibition and showing of an excellent video **less** is being offered to the visitor than before 2009.

**The Proposal**

The applicant claims that Building 103 is a, “...more **appropriate** size…for the scale of the **potential** collection **available for display…”. No** evidence is being provided to support these claims. No conclusion on the **potential** is possible before extensive research and enquiries have been made; for example of the US Cold War Museum, the Strategic Air Command and Aerospace Museum, the Cold War International History Project (in Washington), about ten Presidential Libraries, Laing/Amey/Costains/ Heyfordian all involved in the hardening of the base and Northrop Grumman and General Dynamics whose heritage includes the F111. No reference has been made to Soviet archives or those in non-aligned countries. One positive reply would expose the folly of the proposed tenfold reduction in visitor/exhibition space.

**Historic England** recommend to CDC that it, “….takes specialist conservation advice…”. The approval in 2011 was based on the advice of an officer responsible for the degradation of the heritage asset and there is **no advice** from the Council’s Conservation officer or any other expert to support the officer recommendation of approval. Is the Chief Planning Officer saying, without looking for or receiving any specialist conservation advice on the matter, that the importance of understanding the Cold War has become ten time less in the last 6 years?

It is generally accepted that Upper Heyford is the best preserved physical remains from the most important global ‘event’ in the last hundred years. The Council should have been made aware that the 2010 application to have RAF Upper Heyford help to fill the gap called “the Cold War” in the World Heritage Site list is in abeyance pending research into which transnational sites should be included? Meanwhile there are 4 international conventions intended to protect heritage assets of this importance – including securing public access. **Cultural cleansing** is defined as, “The intentional destruction of cultural property absent military necessity, and has long been explicitly banned by international treaties, as well as customary international law.” In this case it is the deliberate physical limitation being placed on the interpretation of the Cold War heritage thereby making the site less attractive to those who might be interested in examining its aspects like nuclear deterrence, nuclear holocaust and international relations with the US, USSR (and now Russia) and the developing or non-aligned world.

### The Local Enterprise Partnership (to which CDC subscribes) has looked into the tourism potential of Oxfordshire and its *Creative* Culture *Heritage and* Tourism *Investment Plan 2016* recommends that visitors to Bicester Village continue their visit, not by going 5 miles and trying to find a way to visit the best preserved Cold War remains in the UK, but by calling in on … Crocodile World near Witney 25 miles away! People are waking up the scale of the damage being done to the heritage asset and nearly 7000 people, many from abroad, have signed a petition asking the owners to save the Water Tower and stop ‘destroying’ history at Upper Heyford.

There is a private exhibition in the Banbury Museum being formally opened by Sir Tony Baldry at 6pm this evening. The collection made by just one person could fill up the proposed exhibition space in 103 **before** any efforts are made by the owners to develop the heritage asset. Sir Tony should be very interested to see how this application is determined; whether the Council wants to maintain or deliberately restrict the heritage and tourist potential of the site.

**The Decision**

Despite the very unfortunate delay in establishing a Heritage Centre at Upper Heyford, this application should be refused, the cultural cleansing should stop, and the necessary feasibility studies be carried out into how the potential of the heritage asset could be realized. The owners have always expressed interest in the site’s heritage potential and we would be happy to help, as we have been trying to do for the last twenty years.