1. **Application Site and Locality**
	1. The application site for this proposal is part of the former RAF/USAF Upper Heyford base, with Camp Road being the main spine road running through it. The base was designated a conservation area in 2006 due to its role during the cold war. The designation acknowledges the special architectural interest and character which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. The designation also provides the context and framework to ensure the setting and appearance of sections of Cold War landscape is preserved.
	2. An outline application that proposed: “A new settlement of 1075 dwellings, together with associated works and facilities including employment uses, community uses, school, playing fields and other physical and social infrastructure (as amended by plans and information received 26.06.08)”, was granted in 2010 following a major public inquiry. Development has commenced on the initial houses of this application.
	3. The application site contains two sections of blast wall associated with Building 123. Building 123 was constructed post WWII during the USAF occupancy of the military base.
	4. The site is located within the RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area and is near to the locally listed buildings of ‘Building 345’ and ‘Building 125’. In addition, the site is located near two Scheduled Monuments (‘Cold War structures at the former Upper Heyford Airbase’).
2. **Description of Proposed Development**
	1. The application seeks permission for the demolition of the blast walls associated with Building 123. The demolition is to enable the construction of the agreed cat and dog fence, provide necessary parking associated with the consented use of the building, and to improve the overall appearance of the area.
3. **Relevant Planning History**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| App Ref | Description | Status |
| 07/02291/OUT | OUTLINE application for new settlement of 1075 dwellings, together with associated works and facilities including employment uses, community uses, school, playing fields and other physical and social infrastructure. | WDN |
| 07/02356/CAC | Demolition of existing structures as part of lasting arrangement of Heyford Park | PER |
| 08/00716/OUT | OUTLINE application for new settlement of 1075 dwellings, together with associated works and facilities including employment uses, community uses, school, playing fields and other physical and social infrastructure (as amended by plans and information received 26.06.08). | UNDET |
| 10/01619/CAC | Demolition of existing structures (as per Conservation Area Consent Schedule and Drawing No. D.0291 38-1) | PER |
| 10/01642/OUT | Outline - Proposed new settlement of 1075 dwellings including the retention and change of use of 267 existing military dwellings to residential use Class C3 and the change of use of other specified buildings, together with associated works and facilities, including employment uses, a school, playing fields and other physical and social infrastructure | PER |
| 12/00040/F | Change of use to allow the continued use of land, buildings and other structures and continued retention of security trench, concrete rings and temporary lamp posts until 1st April 2014. | PER |

1. **Publicity**
	1. The application was publicised by way of a notice displayed near to the site. No comments were raised by third parties.
2. **Response to Consultation**
	1. Upper Heyford Parish Council: No objections
	2. Cherwell District Council Conservation:

*Building 123 was constructed post WWII during the USAF occupancy of the military base. It is a rather unprepossessing building sandwiched between Building 125 (constructed in 1925 as the RAF Station Armoury), Building 126 (the hardened Battle Command Centre – nerve centre to USAF operations) and Building 129 (the hardened Telephone Exchange – the communication link to the rest of the world).*

*The presence of the blast walls testifies to the buildings location at the very operational heart of the base. The operational use of this building – and therefore its heritage significance – is unknown; however a central location and the fact that blast walls were constructed in order to protect the personnel working within hints at some functional importance. It is certainly the case that the building has limited architectural merit but then the aesthetic of a prefabricated building has nothing to do with its functional importance. True the walls have no apparent use (the site now being an unlikely target for attack) but that does not means that the blast walls are not an integral part of Building 123, the materials used and their construction appear to be contemporary.*

*The demolition of the blast walls would be one more small loss, one loss more amongst the accumulation of losses which is incrementally chipping away at the historic integrity of the site. That said there have been greater losses.*

*I view the blast walls as a curious by-product of the time Building 123 was erected. The walls have no aesthetic charm but are of interest in that they help illuminate the thinking behind defence strategies within military bases during the 1970s.*

*The usability of Building 123 will be enhanced by the removal of the walls and therefore this application is not opposed.*

1. **Relevant National and Local Planning Policy and Guidance**

**Development Plan Policies**

The Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 - Part 1 was formally adopted by Cherwell District Council on 20th July 2015 and provides the strategic planning policy framework for the District to 2031.  The Local Plan 2011-2031 – Part 1 replaced a number of the ‘saved’ policies of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 1996 though many of its policies are retained and remain part of the development plan. The relevant planning policies of Cherwell District’s statutory Development Plan are set out below:

Cherwell Local Plan 2011 - 2031 Part 1

ESD15 - The Character of the Built and Historic Environment

Cherwell Local Plan 1996 (Saved Policies)

C10 Historic Landscape

C28 Design Considerations

**Other Material Planning Considerations**

National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework)

Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

1. **Appraisal**

The key issues for consideration in this case are:

* Visual Impact, Heritage and the Conservation Area

**Visual Impact, Heritage and the Conservation Area**

1. The blast walls are visible from the public domain and the road adjacent to building 125. The presence of the blast walls suggests the importance of the surrounding buildings (being located at the operational heart of the base). As per the Conservation Officer’s recommendation - the operational use of this building, and therefore its heritage significance, is unknown; however a central location and the fact that blast walls were constructed in order to protect the personnel working within hints at some functional importance. The building itself has limited architectural merit and, at present, the walls have no use.
2. The usability of the surrounding buildings, in particular Building 123, will be enhanced by the removal of the wall.
3. It is considered that these works would have a limited impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Overall, it is considered that the proposal would accord with Policy C28 of the CLP 1996, Policies ‘Villages 5-Former RAF Upper Heyford’ and ‘ESD15’ of the CLP 2011-2031 and Government guidance contained within the Framework.
4. **Engagement**
	1. With regard to the duty set out in paragraphs 186 and 187 of the Framework, no problems or issues have arisen during the application. It is considered that the duty to be positive and proactive has been discharged through the efficient and timely determination of the application.
5. **Conclusion**
	1. Overall, it is considered that these works would have a limited impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. It is felt that the proposal would be in accordance with Policy C28 of the CLP 1996, Policies ‘Villages 5-Former RAF Upper Heyford’ and ‘ESD15’ of the CLP 2011-2031 and Government guidance contained within the Framework.
6. **Recommendation**

 Approval, subject to the following conditions:

1. The development to which this permission relates shall be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason - To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

1. Except where otherwise stipulated by condition, the application shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the following plans and documents: Application form, Heritage Statement AST CIR.D.0341 (dated 22 February 2016) and drawing numbered: D0341\_69.

Reason - For the avoidance of doubt, to ensure that the development is carried out only as approved by the Local Planning Authority and to comply with Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

1. Debris associated with the demolition of the building must be removed from the site immediately and must not be stored anywhere on the base without the grant of further specific planning permission from the Local Planning Authority.

Reason – To safeguard the appearance of the Conservation Area, to comply with Government advice contained in the National Planning Policy Framework on Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment.

**STATEMENT OF ENGAGEMENT**

In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 and paragraphs 186 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012), this decision has been taken by the Council having worked with the applicant/agent in a positive and proactive way as set out in the application report.

Case Officer: Matthew Coyne DATED: 12 April 2016