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Our ref: P00905351

11 August 2020

Dear Mr Lewis

**T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015  
& Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990**

**HEYFORD PARK CAMP ROAD UPPER HEYFORD BICESTER OX25 5HD  
Application No. 18/00825/HYBRID**

Thank you for your letter of 4 August 2020 regarding further information on the above application for planning permission. On the basis of this information, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the application.

**Historic England Advice**

These comments refer to the ADP document Heyford Park Proposed New Primary School Design Update revision C, dated June 2020.

The proposed school would occupy part of the Victoria Alert Area, which consists of a number of open sided hangars connected by concrete apron. This is an interesting and important part of the site as it is an early version of the Quick Reaction Area (QRA) which is to be found in the north-western part of the site and protected by Scheduling. Both were intended to provide a fast response to any Soviet military action by ensuring that there was always a squadron of bombers ready to take off at a moment's notice. In both the bombers would be fuelled, armed with a nuclear payload and manned on a 24 hour basis. The Victoria Alert area represents a stop-gap which provided covered housing for planes that could be erected and made operational very quickly while the permanent solution, that was housed in hardened aircrafts shelters, was designed and built. It was originally surrounded by a fence similar to the Quick Reaction Area, which has been removed, but the lightweight hangars and the concrete aprons by which the aircraft housed in them entered and left remain intact and together tell an interesting story about a short but important chapter of the base's history.

In our initial response to this consultation (Tom Foxall's letter of 09 July 2018) we recognised the potential for a primary school on this site subject to a high quality



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design being arrived. After further design work took place and the requirements of the Country Council had been understood more fully it became apparent how difficult placing a school on this site would be and concluded that in their current form the proposals would entail a high level of harm to the significance of this part of the conservation area (our letter of 18 May 2020). Further design development has taken place and in our letter of 20 July 2020 we noted the requirement for an 8400 square metre soft PE area, which would inevitably involve the loss of a substantial portion of the hardstanding that links the individual shelters and explains how they were used and raised concerns about the potential for a fenced car park on the hard standing, which again would reduce the legibility of this feature.

The latest revision contains a parameters plan that shows the hangars retained but still includes the large soft landscaped PE area. This would involve the loss of a sizable area of the concrete apron in front of the Victoria Alert shelters, cutting off one of the shelters from the apron entirely. The possibility of a fenced car park is also shown on the apron which would also compromise an understanding of how this part of the base worked. The loss of a large part of the apron and the creation of a fenced car park would entail a high level of harm to the significance of this part of the conservation area. We also note that there is no guarantee that the sections of apron shown as remaining on the parameter plan would be retained as this would be subject to achieving the schools target areas for soft landscaping under BB103. We understand the need to resurface the concrete with tarmac to meet the County Council's requirements and are content with this as it would still preserve the functional relationships between the hangars.

The application needs to be assessed against the policies set out in the NPPF which state that great weight needs to be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset such as the Upper Heyford Conservation Area (paragraph 193) and that any harm or loss of significance to the conservation area should require clear and convincing justification (paragraph 194). We understand that it is difficult to meet the County Council's requirements for schools on this particular site and that it may not be possible to preserve the apron in its entirety and meet these requirements but we are yet to be convinced that a fenced car park on the apron and an extensive area of concrete that cuts the eastern-most hanger off from the apron entirely is necessary to create a school here and therefore justified.

The NPPF goes on to require that any harm is weighed against the public benefits of the proposals (paragraph 196). In order to do this these particular proposals need to be seen in their wider context of the scheme as a whole and its impact on the significance of the site but this balancing exercise can only be carried out once it is clear that the harm is justified.

We suggest that the parameters plans are revised to ensure that the harm entailed by school use is minimised. Specifically we suggest that the fenced car park on the apron





is omitted and that the plan clearly delineates the area of apron to be retained without qualifications. Ideally this should connect all 3 aircraft shelters to the taxiway. If this is not possible the document needs to explain why the shape and location of the soft play area cannot be altered or moved (if necessary extending the fenced area) and a landscaping scheme that preserves an indication of the relationship between the apron any shelter cut off from it devised.

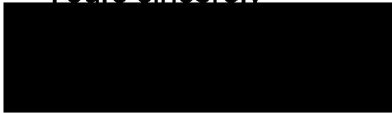
### **Recommendation**

Historic England has concerns regarding the application on heritage grounds. We consider that the issues and safeguards outlined in our advice need to be addressed in order for the application to meet the requirements of paragraphs 193, 194 and 196 of the NPPF.

In determining this application you should bear in mind the statutory duty of section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess and section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

Your authority should take these representations into account and seek amendments, safeguards or further information as set out in our advice. If there are any material changes to the proposals, or you would like further advice, please contact us.

Yours sincerely



**Richard Peats**

Team Leader

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