



**GALLIARD HOMES**

**OXFORD STADIUM  
SANDY LANE, COWLEY**

**HERITAGE ASSESSMENT**

**11 APRIL 2013**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Heritage Assessment is submitted on behalf of Galliard Homes to inform the built heritage considerations associated with proposals for the residential-led redevelopment of Oxford Stadium.

Oxford Stadium currently is being considered by Oxford City Council for inclusion on its 'Heritage Asset Register', which is the equivalent of a 'local list' or a 'non-designated' heritage asset.

We have visited the site and undertaken research including at the local archive.

The buildings on the site are not suitable for statutory protection through listing. Although we acknowledge that the site has some limited local communal value, it has been subject to much alteration and modernisation, which has eroded this. We have assessed the site in relation to the Oxford City Council Heritage Criteria set out for assessing local heritage assets. The Oxford Stadium does not meet those criteria.

We consider that the most appropriate response to the proposals would be to record the site prior to redevelopment. We consider that this approach would conform to up-to-date national planning policy guidance on non-designated heritage assets.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Heritage Assessment is submitted on behalf of Galliard Homes to inform the built heritage considerations associated with proposals for the Oxford Stadium.
- 1.2 A separate statement prepared by CgMs considers 'below-ground' archaeological heritage assets and associated matters.
- 1.3 Galliard Homes has recently submitted a planning application to Oxford City Council for the residential-led redevelopment of the site. The City Council has during the validation process associated with the application requested the submission of a heritage assessment. This should consider built heritage matters relating to the proposed redevelopment of the site, particularly with regard to the significance of the existing structures and other elements of the site such as the track.
- 1.4 Montagu Evans was appointed in March 2013 to consider the built heritage significance of the site and to prepare this heritage assessment. Our report has been prepared by dual-qualified RTPI and IHBC members.
- 1.5 We visited the site on 18 March 2013 and also undertook research at the local Cowley Archives.
- 1.6 The application site was built originally as a greyhound racing stadium in the 1930s. It subsequently held motor racing events including speedway.
- 1.7 The site is currently being considered by Oxford City Council for inclusion on its 'Heritage Asset Register', which is the equivalent of a 'local list'. We have therefore in this Heritage Assessment considered local and national planning policies relating to 'non-designated' heritage assets.
- 1.8 The site does not contain any designated heritage assets such as listed buildings and is not located in a conservation area.

### Report structure

- 1.9 Section 2.0 of this report describes the application site and Section 3.0 its historical development. Section 4.0 provides a statement of significance for Oxford Stadium. The application proposals are described in Section 5.0 and the relevant built heritage policy considerations in Section 6.0. Section 7.0 assesses the proposals. Section 8.0 provides references. The single appendix then follows.

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 In this section, we provide a description of the existing application site. Reference is made throughout to the numbered site photographs at **Appendix 1.0** of this report.

### Main stand

2.2 The main stand of the stadium is located on the south side of the track and is visible from Sandy Lane, set back behind a car park (**Photographs 1 and 2**). It is faced in red brick with a grey synthetic roof. The main elevation of the building facing the south side of the greyhound racing track is largely faced with glazed panels (**Photograph 3**). The interior of this 1980s building was not inspected.

2.3 Red brick walls contemporary with and adjacent to the main stand provide a pedestrian entrance to the stadium via a turnstile (**Photographs 4 and 5**).

2.4 The greyhound racing track includes modern lighting and fences, and has a go-kart track at its centre (**Photograph 6**).

### Tote Building

2.5 The Tote building is on the eastern side of the track. It is a 3-storey building with an external stair, mono-pitch roof and yellow stock bricks to the flank walls. A small concrete terrace is attached to the north side (**Photographs 7 and 8**).

2.6 The front elevation of the building has been re-clad, signage has been added, and modern windows have been inserted (**Photograph 9**). Additionally, we understand that a former ground floor seating area has been removed. We were advised on site that a former Tote board is present behind the new cladding to the front elevation. However, we could not verify this. If it is present it is unclear what sort of condition the board will be in.

2.7 No mechanism is present to the interior of the building, which has been subject to some subdivision. The original structural steelwork is however still visible.

### Kennels

2.8 Further to the north of the Tote building (to the northeast of the track) are a range of kennels. These are of an expedient design, formed from blockwork, with asbestos roofs and timber doors. They are arranged around a grassed area with paving, and various walls and fences (**Photographs 10-12**).

2.9 A separate structure constructed of painted brickwork contains further kennels, of a different, double-height, design (**Photographs 13 and 14**).

### **Northern Terrace**

- 2.10 The north side of the track is largely devoid of structures (**Photograph 15**). A small concrete terrace with painted brick walls is present towards the western end of the track (**Photographs 16**).

### **Western terraces**

- 2.11 A curved terrace is present on the west side of the stadium, following the curve of the greyhound racing track. This is formed from concrete with associated timber and metal fencing (**Photographs 17-19**).
- 2.12 At the centre of the terrace is a painted brick and blockwork structure which is open at its sides (**Photographs 20-21**). This is potentially a former commentary position as the front elevation includes timber shutters allowing views towards the track.
- 2.13 Below this structure is an access from the track to a yard area to the rear of the western terraces. Painted steel structural elements are present to the side walls of the access (**Photographs 22-23**).

### **Yard to rear of western terraces**

- 2.14 The yard areas contain a range of painted ancillary buildings which appear to have formerly been used as changing rooms and a pit area associated with Speedway events at Oxford Stadium (**Photograph 24**).
- 2.15 Beyond the yard area is a large surface car park (**Photographs 25**).

### **Nissen Hut**

- 2.16 This has a curved roof form and has a glazed lean-to extension to the front (**Photographs 25-27**). The building was initially used as the Director's Bar (see Section 3.0 below) but we were advised on site that the last use was as a storage garage for equipment used to service the greyhound racing track.
- 2.17 Although we were unable to access the interior of this building it appears to be largely open and devoid of internal features (**Photograph 28**).

### **Kiosk adjacent to Nissen Hut**

- 2.18 A flat-roofed painted brick kiosk is present adjacent to the Nissen Hut (**Photograph 29**). Its main elevation includes serving hatches and it is assumed that the building was used to provide refreshments to spectators.

### 3.0 Historical Development

#### Background of Greyhound Racing in England

- 3.1 The first recorded attempt at greyhound racing on a straight track in England was made beside the Welsh Harp Reservoir at Hendon in 1876 but this experiment did not develop into a popular pastime. The sport emerged in its recognisable modern form, featuring a circular or oval track, with the invention of the mechanical or artificial hare in 1912 by an American named Owen Patrick Smith.
- 3.2 It was introduced into England by another American, Charles Munn in association with Brigadier-General Alfred Critchley and Sir William Gentle. They set up the Greyhound Racing Association and built the first purpose-built greyhound racing stadium in the country in Manchester in 1926. The Belle Vue Stadium held its first meeting on 24th July, 1926 when 1,700 people went through the gates to watch six races of seven greyhounds take place. Within weeks of the first race meeting crowds of 11,000 were attending each of the following events at the Stadium – such was the immediate popularity of the new sport.
- 3.3 The popularity of greyhound racing spread quickly and soon greyhound stadia were appearing all over the country. Expansion into London occurred in the following year with the acquisition by the Greyhound Racing Association of the White City Stadium, which had been originally constructed for the London Olympics in 1908. It was adapted for greyhound racing and formally opened in 1927.
- 3.4 Greyhound racing became an extremely popular pastime with rising attendances up to the start of the World War II. Attendances suffered during the war years as was the case with most recreational activities; however, in the period that followed greyhound racing experienced its biggest attendance boom which continued throughout the 50s and 60s, from when it has been in decline.
- 3.5 Total attendances at licensed fixtures are presently over 2 million, according to the Greyhound Board of Great Britain website (<http://www.thedogs.co.uk/>). This is down from 3.32 million in 2007, from 3.9 million in 2001 and from 15 million in 1960.
- 3.6 Reflecting the decline in attendances, the number of licensed greyhound racecourses has fallen significantly more than halving from 64 in 1960 to the present 25.
- 3.7 There are currently 25 greyhound tracks operating according to the website of the Greyhound Board of Great Britain, the governing body for greyhound racing (<http://www.thedogs.co.uk/default.aspx>). The Donoughue report, *An Independent Review of the Greyhound Industry* in Great Britain, published in 2007 provides a useful summary of the industry and its decline.

*“Greyhound racing was launched on a commercial basis in the UK by the Greyhound Racing Association on 24th July 1926 at Belle Vue, Manchester. The sport enjoyed immediate popularity and grew rapidly, to the extent that, in December 1927, some 28 racecourse promoters met (at Wembley*

*Stadium) to consider the establishment of a national control organisation. It was agreed to establish a Greyhound Club “somewhat along the lines of the Jockey Club” and National Greyhound Racing Club was thus formed in January 1928 with the first set of Rules of Racing published in April of the same year.*

*Greyhound racing went on to enjoy its heyday in the immediate pre and post Second World War years. It has suffered steady decline in recent decades and is now, perhaps unfairly, not always seen as a major national sport. Outside of the specialist and trade channels, the media coverage of greyhound racing is surprisingly limited. In some ways it exhibits the engaging features of a cottage industry, conducted by and for enthusiasts and bookmakers - though the pleasures it can give deserve to go much wider than that. Historically, it has enjoyed a ‘colourful’ image, with rumours of ‘dodgy’ practices, which is part of its attraction to many of us.*

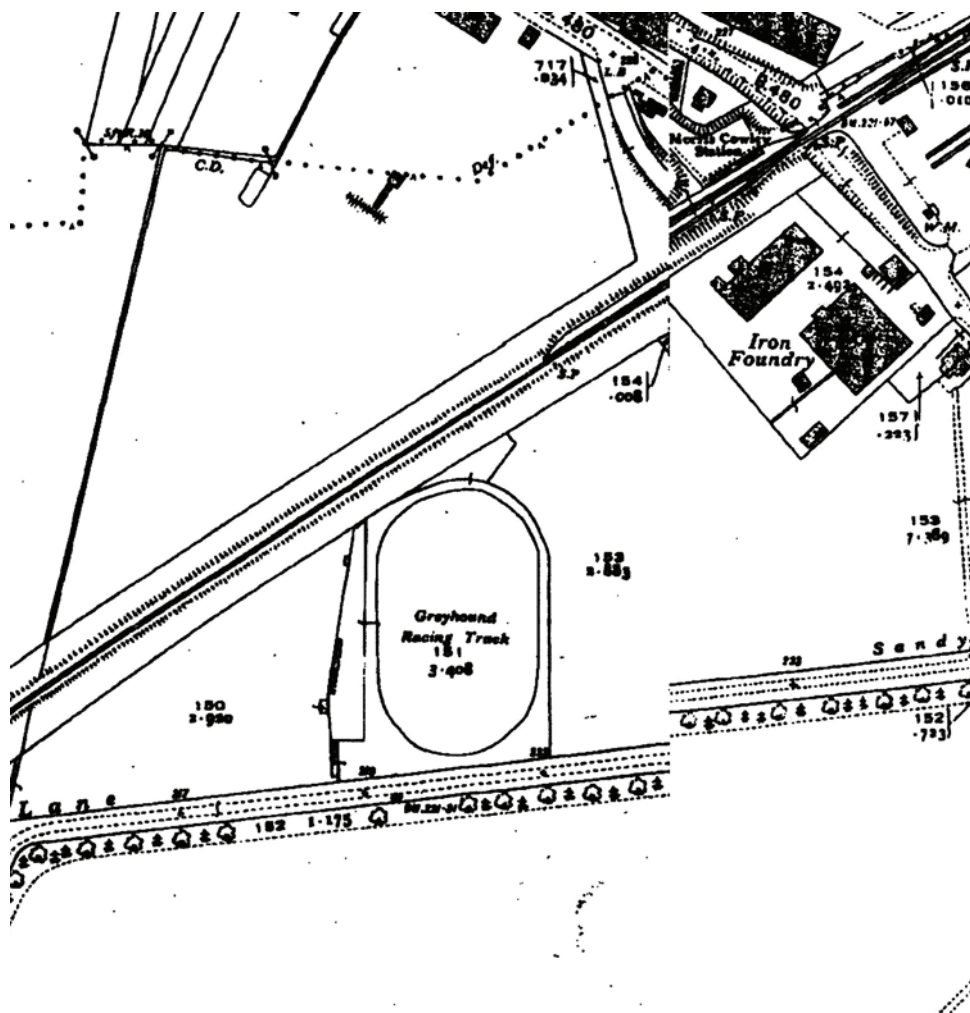
*The statistics of the sport’s decline are not always easy to obtain and verify (ours were provided by track Promoters, the British Greyhound Racing Board and the National Greyhound Racing Club). The number of licensed greyhound racecourses has fallen significantly, more than halving from 64 in 1960, though recently steadying to the present 30, with the recent reopening of Hull. The number of independent tracks has slumped even more sharply, down from 87 in 1960 to some 14 now - and more than halving in the past 10 years. Those figures may soon be affected still further by current welfare legislation, with its imposition of the costs of rising welfare standards. Some independent tracks may be forced out of business; other independents may upgrade and cross the line to join the licensed ranks.” Page 9*

### **Development of Oxford Stadium**

- 3.8 The historical development of Oxford Stadium is considered in a year-by-year account written and published by Gary Baiden, the longest serving Racing Manager at the Oxford Stadium. His book – *The History of Oxford Stadium* – has provided a helpful insight into the running of the stadium as well as the major events that took place. This report also references the CgMs Archaeological Report submitted with the planning application. In particular, reference is made to the historic Ordnance Survey mapping contained in the report.
- 3.9 In addition, *The Story of Oxford Speedway*, provides a yearly account of Oxford Speedway but provides little information on the Stadium.
- 3.10 This Heritage Assessment is also supplemented by images of Oxford Stadium where these are available.
- 3.11 Greyhound racing was already taking place on the Sandy Lane site before the Oxford Stadium was built (Oxford Mail, 24.07.1976). The composite OS plan of 1932/3 and 1936/39 indicates an informal Greyhound Racing Track aligned north-south between

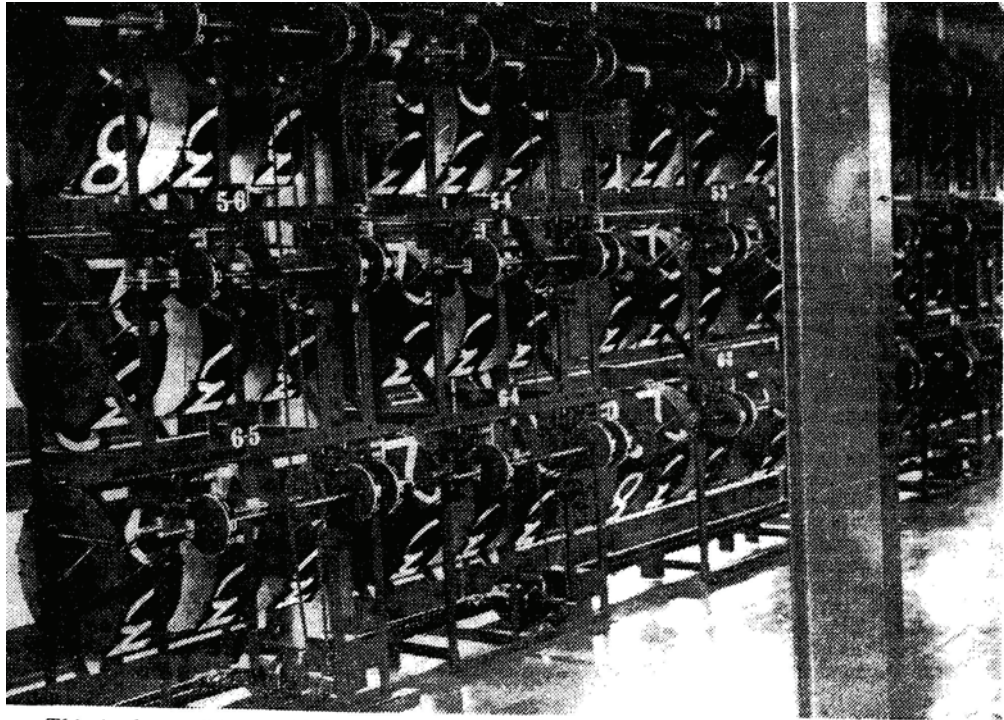


Sandy Land and the railway line (**Fig 1**). The track was a ‘flapping’ track where owners turned up with their greyhounds and raced them around the track. ‘Flapping’ was unregulated. The track was located away from the industrial development of Cowley and its motor industry which was established at Cowley by Morris in 1912.



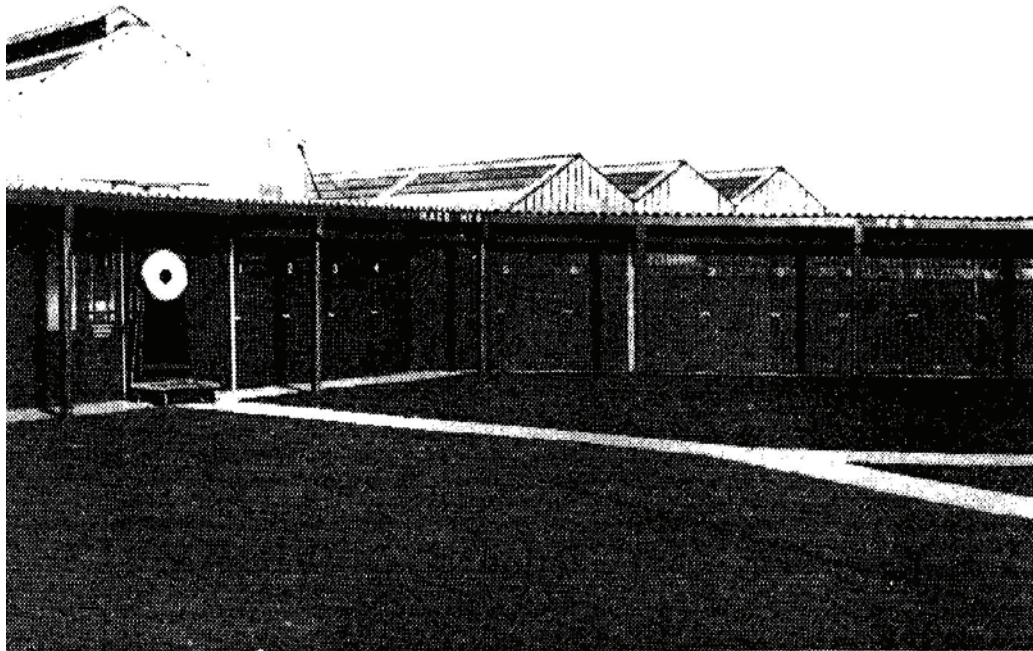
**Fig 1: Ordnance Survey map (composite 1932 and 1936/9)**

3.12 According to Baiden the land for Oxford Stadium was leased from LV Calcutt by a Mr Johnson on a 99-year lease (Baiden, p. 3). Calcutt started work in Morris's factory before moving into construction. Johnson and Calcutt began building the stadium in 1938 (ibid, 3 and Oxford Mail, 24.07.1976). Oxford Stadium opened by Lord Denham on 31 March 1939. Lord Denham was also a service steward of the National Greyhound Racing Club (Oxford Mail, 30.03.1939). The stadium comprised the track a stand, bar and dining room and the totalisator building. A photo in the Oxford Mail shows the machinery required for the totalisator to calculate the winnings (Oxford Mail, 30.03.1939) and is reproduced in this report (**Fig 2**). The Bell Punch totalisator system was replaced in 1982 by computerised tote switches (Baiden, p. 48). None of these mechanisms survive. The Oxford Mail article included a photograph of the paddock and kennels with weighing machine (30.03.1939) and it is reproduced at **Fig 3**.



*This is the machinery which works out how much you will get back from the Totalisator if you have backed a winner at the Oxford Stadium.*

**Fig 2: Totalisator equipment (from *Oxford Mail*, 30.03.1939)**

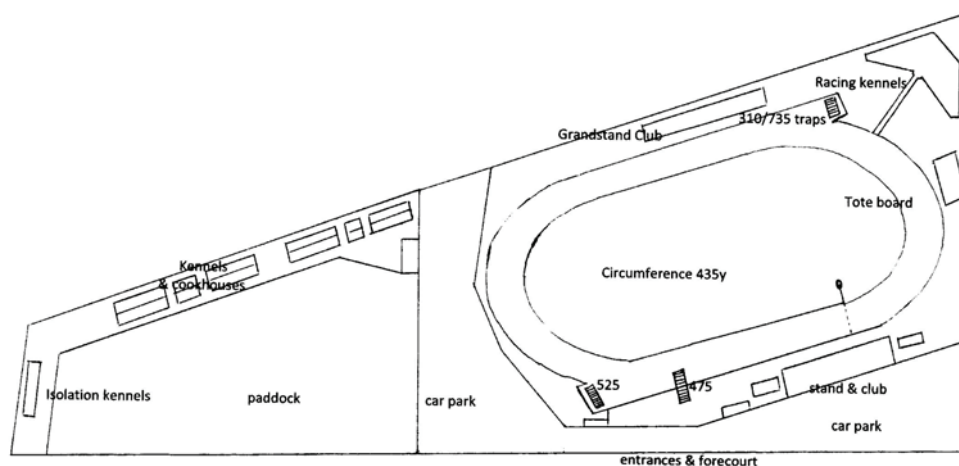


*The Paddock at the Oxford Stadium.*

**Fig 3: The paddock and kennels in 1939 (from *Oxford Mail*, 30.03.1939)**

3.13 In April 1939 Speedway racing took place for the first time. However, it was intermittent until reintroduced by Calcutt in 1949.

- 3.14 The first OS map showing the finished stadium is that of 1955, however, much change had already taken place by this time. Baiden's book contains a plan showing the layout of the stadium in the 1940s. We have not been able to corroborate the plan but it is reproduced in this report for information purposes and is useful to compare with the 1955 OS map (**Fig 4** and see Figure 6 CgMs report).



A diagram of Oxford Stadium in the 1940's

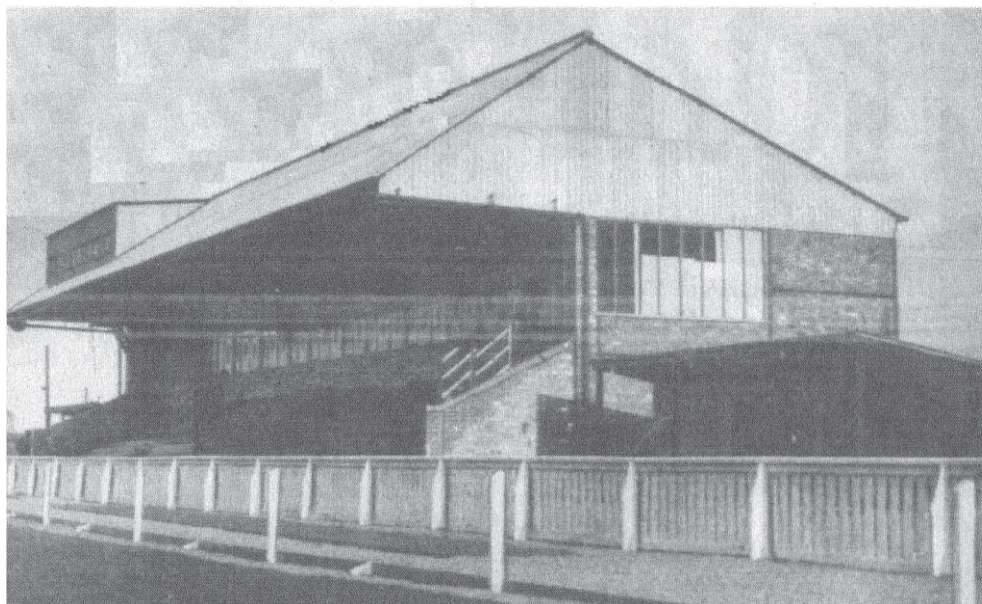
**Fig 4: 1940s plan of Stadium (from Baiden)**

- 3.15 The 1940s plan shows the track with a circumference of 435 yards. The stand and club are located on the southeastern side of the track in front of the finishing line. The grandstand club is directly opposite on the long straight. To the NE end are the racing kennels where the greyhounds were kennelled before being led out to the track and starting traps. The totalisator is located at this end of the stadium. Opposite to the southwest and outside the stadium is a large area with kennels, cookhouse surrounding a paddock. The entrance to the stadium is to the south from Sandy Lane.
- 3.16 The stadium was aligned parallel to the railway line taking advantage of the triangular site between the railway and Sandy Lane and interestingly on a different alignment to the earlier flapping track.
- 3.17 A photograph of January 1941 shows the totalisator in the distance (**Fig 5**). The photograph indicates the window on the south flank wall but the external stepped access to the upper floor is not visible.



**Fig 5: Totalisator building in 1941**

- 3.18 In 1942 (Baiden suggests 1944) a fire destroyed the main stand but racing continued the next day (Oxford Mail, 24.07.1976). A photograph of the main stand is reproduced from Baiden at **Fig 6**. It is reported that the fire was started by a newspaper blowing onto a heater. It is not known when the new stand was built but it is illustrated on the 1955 OS map (see CgMs report, Figure 6, and text below).



**Fig 6: Main stand before destroyed by fire (from Baiden)**

- 3.19 In 1948 a photo finish system was installed (Baiden, p 12). The first photo finish system was installed at the White City in London in 1945 (Oxford Mail, 24.07.1976).

Greyhound racing was the first sport to introduce the photo-finish. A description of the stadium facilities in 1948 was published in a greyhound encyclopaedia: -

**Track Characteristics**

A good six course with full use made of length of straight. Good run-up to the first bend.

**Type of Hare**

Inside (McWhirter track-less)

**Distances (Yards)**

290, 455, 500, 715 and 500 hurdles

**Principal Events**

Regular open and restricted races

**Kennel Facilities**

Situated at the stadium with accommodation for 132 greyhounds, at one guinea per week. 3s per day.

**Amenities**

Oxford Stadium club 5s enclosure, Oxford Stadium racing club 2s 3d enclosure.

Instaprint photo finish installed. Totaliser units 4s win and forecast.

**Nearest Railway stations**

Morris Cowley (G.W.R) half-mile, Oxford (L.M.S) 3 miles, Oxford (G.W.R) 3 miles. (Baiden, p. 12)

- 3.20 In 1949 Calcutt re-introduced speedway racing to the stadium and in March of that year a competition was held to name the team with the "Cheetahs" the winning entry. The first race took place 21 April 1949 (Baiden, p 13).
- 3.21 Calcutt announced the closure of Oxford Stadium in 1951 as a result of the taxes imposed by the government. It was to be the first time since opening in 1939 that the stadium would close. However, some racing still took place but it was not until March 1952 that racing returned to the stadium (Baiden, pp, 15-16). Calcutt died in August of that year and the Bristol Greyhound Racing Association (later Bristol Stadium Ltd) took control of the stadium.
- 3.22 The imposition of the 10% tax on totalisator betting took its toll at greyhound courses and there was a steady decline from 1946. Racing at Oxford was down to one race a week by 1955.
- 3.23 The 1955 OS map illustrates the layout of the stadium (see CgMs report, Figure 6). Although showing a similar layout to that of the 1940s plan there are significant differences. The main stand and club had been replaced following the fire in 1942, the Director's Bar close to the main entrance had been built, the terrace on the railway side had been extended and more buildings added to the rear of the main western terrace. Temporary or wooden stands are indicated on the map by broken lines. Photographs of the totalisator and the Director's Bar dating to 1959 are reproduced in Baiden and in this report (**Fig 7 and Fig 8**). The Director's Bar

appears to be the long “Nissen” type building which survives on site but has been significantly extended.



**Fig 7: Totalisator building in 1959 (from Baiden)**



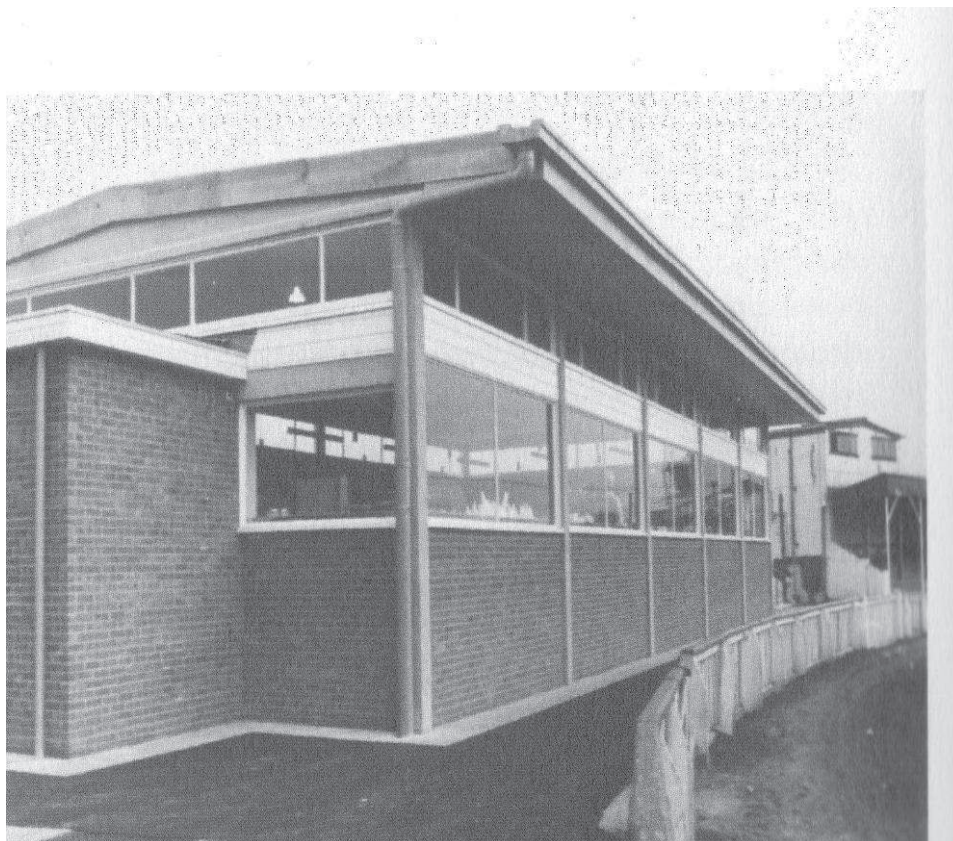
**Fig 8: Former Director's Bar in 1959 (from Baiden)**

- 3.24 Greyhound racing was first televised in 1960 with a transmission from Park Royal in 1960 but it was several years later that races from Oxford were televised (Baiden, p. 23).
- 3.25 The 1961 OS map (see CgMs report Figure 7) shows the same layout as in 1955. The railway tracks to the north of the stadium had increased with the introduction of sidings. North of the railway a large works building associated with the motor industry is shown for the first time as well as residential development south of Sandy Lane. This layout is also shown on the early 1960s aerial photograph reproduced in Baiden, p. 23.
- 3.26 In January 1963 stadium staff worked all day to clear over two feet of snow from the track so that the meeting could go ahead (Oxford Mail, 24.07.1976). A photograph of 1964 shows the resident trainers with greyhounds in front of the western terrace (see **Fig 9** and Baiden, p. 27).



**Fig 9: Resident trainers in front of western terrace in 1964 (from Baiden)**

- 3.27 In 1967 Oxford Stadium's most spectacular doping scandal took place according to the Oxford Mail (24.07.1976). Reportedly eight dogs were found to have been "got at" although none were allowed to race. 1967 was also the year when Oxford was used by the Bookmaker's Afternoon Greyhound Service (BAGS) to provide betting shops with business during the winter months when jump racing was abandoned but greyhound races were held (Oxford Mail, 24.07.1976).
- 3.28 In 1967 planning permission was granted for the erection of a building to provide a new club room with toilet accommodation, bar, kitchen, ancillary accommodation and tote booths (OCC ref: 67/19249/A\_H). This was presumably for the new supporters club which is illustrated on the 1971 OS map (Figure 8 of the CgMs report) to the east of the main stand. Photographs of the club are reproduced in Baiden at page 33 and here at **Fig 10**.



**Fig 10: New supporter's club (from Baiden)**

- 3.29 Baiden reports that in 1969 a small explosion took place in the Director's Bar as a result of a water heater blowing up (p. 33). This building had been extended by the 1971 OS map and probably represented the extension works proposed in an application for an extension to bar, additional lavatories and new kitchen, approved in 1962 (OCC ref: 62/12744/A\_H).

### **Recent History**

- 3.30 The 1971 OS map indicates the new supporters club and the extension to the building (referred to here as the Director's Bar) close to the main entrance. Public conveniences are indicated for the first time on the OS map. The rest of the stadium remains unchanged in 1971. The residential development to the south of Sandy Lane has extended to the east.
- 3.31 In 1972 planning permission was granted for the use of the stadium as an open air market on Sundays between 9am and 2pm (OCC ref: 72/25634/A\_H). In 1972 proposals to close the stadium and erect housing on the site were submitted to Oxford City Council. The first planning application for outline permission for residential development at a density of 16 units per acre was refused (OCC ref: 73/00990/A\_H). A second outline planning application for 112 units and 228 car parking spaces was also refused by Oxford City Council but allowed on appeal in 1973 (OCC ref: 73/00315/A\_H). A further planning application submitted in 1973 for light industrial development at the stadium was refused.



- 3.32 The national power crisis of 1973 resulted in the installation of an emergency generator, illustrated in Baiden, p. 37. This photograph taken to the south of the kennels looking towards the totalisator provides a glimpsed view of the north flank wall of the building (see **Fig 11**). Unfortunately the windows on the flank wall are obscured by trees (no longer in place). The photograph also shows the temporary wooden stands that were located either side of the walkway between the kennels and the starting traps.



**Fig 11: Totalisator building and temporary generator in 1973 (from Baiden)**

- 3.33 The potential closure of the stadium and the proposed residential development of the site sparked off protests and the Save Our Stadium group was formed (Oxford Mail, 24.07.1976). This resulted in a two-year reprieve being given by the Council. Speedway promoters placed a bid of £220,000 to buy the stadium but could not match the Council's bid. The stadium was sold to the City Council housing group in October 1975 for £235,000 (Baiden, p. 39). At this time the stadium was renamed Cowley Stadium but it closed for three months at the end of 1975 (Baiden, p. 39).
- 3.34 Speedway racing resumed in 1976 with greyhound racing a few days later. By the end of 1976 no buyer had been found for the stadium. In 1977 the stadium ceased

operating for four months before Northern Sports agreed a deal to buy the stadium from the Council for a reported £250,000 (Baiden, p. 42). Also in 1977 television coverage in the form of “ATV Today” commenced with live racing on the programme. Northern Sports took over in April 1978 with the proviso that the stadium must be used as a recreational stadium until 1983 (Baiden, p. 43).

- 3.35 In 1974 a planning application to change the use of the paddock to the west of the stadium to car parking was submitted to OCC and granted permission (OCC ref: 74/01190/A\_H). This change of use is indicated on the 1994 OS map which illustrates the area as open space, with most of the buildings demolished (see Figure 9 CgMs report). In 1976 a further planning application for the change of use of the car park to allow a Sunday market between 9am and 2pm was submitted and approved (OCC ref: 76/00316/A\_H). An application to use the stadium kennels areas as a market area and the provision of additional on-site parking to serve the market in the centre of the stadium was submitted and approved in 1980 (OCC ref: 79/01085/A\_H). The kennels were demolished in 1980 according to Baiden.

#### **Proposed redevelopment 1982**

- 3.36 Northern Sports announced plans to build a new complex at the stadium in 1982 and a planning application was submitted in 1983 and subsequently approved. The outline application was for the erection of a new leisure centre building incorporating a gymnasium and dance hall and improved car parking (OCC ref: 83/01031/NO).
- 3.37 According to Baiden, in 1984 Northern Sports threatened to scrap the plan for the £1.5m upgrade to the stadium if they were unable to charge a 15p parking fee. After months of wrangling permission was given to charge the parking fee and the development plans were back on.
- 3.38 Eventually the new development was completed and unveiled on 22 July 1986, two weeks after the official planned opening. The new development, Oxford Sports & Leisure Centre, comprised: -
- 150 seat Grandstand restaurant;
  - Four squash courts;
  - Six snooker tables;
  - A gymnasium;
  - Sun beds; and
  - a sauna.
- 3.39 Although no planning application appears to have been submitted, the racing kennels at the eastern end of the stadium were rebuilt and a photograph of the newly built kennels is contained in Baiden’s book, dating the replacement to 1987 or 1988 (pp 54-55). The new kennels are indicated on the 1994 OS map with an additional wing behind the left hand temporary terrace (see CgMs report Figure 9).
- 3.40 In 1985 the “Cheetahs” were crowned the British League Champions and also won the Knock-Out Cup and Midland Cup (Bamford & Shailes, p.132). The success was marked by a civic reception and the team paraded through the streets in an open-top

bus (Bamford & Shailes, p. 133). The Cheetahs' success continued into 1986 and they won the league for the second time and repeated again in 1989. In 1990 Oxford staged the first Test match between England and Denmark which the home nation won (Bamford & Shailes, p. 144).

- 3.41 In 1989 the centre green was converted for use as an American Football pitch (Baiden, p. 57).
- 3.42 In 1990 planning permission was obtained for the demolition of the north stand and its replacement with a single storey stand (OCC ref: 90/00485/NF). A photograph of the stands prior to demolition is presented in Baiden, p 44, and reproduced in this report at **Fig 12**.



**Fig 12: North stand prior to demolition in 1990 (from Baiden)**

- 3.43 Motorcycle training was allowed to take place Monday to Saturday within the car park when other events were not taking place. The proposal was allowed following a planning appeal (OCC ref: 90/01135/NF).
- 3.44 The mid to latter part of the 1990s were an uncertain period for Northern Sports when the parent company, Hawkins of Harrow, suffered because of the downturn in the construction industry and the company went into receivership. This meant an uncertain period for the stadium. In 1996 the stadium was sold to new owners, Oxford Stadium Ltd. In the same year a new computerised photo-finish was installed.
- 3.45 Planning permission was granted in 1997 for the change of use of the disused squash courts to allow the building to be used for car auctions (OCC ref: 96/00643/NF). Also in 1997, planning permission was granted to construct a tarmac track for go-karting in the inner circuit (OCC ref: 97/00788/NF).

### **1999 Proposals**

- 3.46 In 1999 a deal was struck with GRA Ltd and Oxford Stadium was sold for a reputed fee of around £4m (Baiden, p. 71). The GRA immediately sought planning

permission to improve facilities at the stadium obtaining planning permission for a multi-million pound extension to include executive suites and increased restaurant capacity. The description of development (OCC ref: 99/00160/NF) was:

*“Demolition of existing stand. Erection of new stand incorporating 3 executive boxes, kitchen, terraced seating, bar and customer facilities. New public entrance, office, fitness centre & entrances to main stand. Reorganisation of existing car parking to provide 332 spaces, including 17 for disabled, 3 coach spaces, 13 spaces for motor bikes and 40 bicycle stands and new in/out entrances to Sandy Lane.”*

- 3.47 The development resulted in the demolition of the old supporters club. The new development was completed on 18 March 2000. Further investment included £130,000 spent on a new track surface and hare system. **Figs 13 and 14** show the Stadium from Sandy Lane before the redevelopment.



**Fig 13: The entrance to the Stadium from Sandy Lane in the 1960s**



**Fig 14: The Stadium from Sandy Lane before the main stand was redeveloped**

- 3.48 In 2005 GRA Ltd was bought by Risk Capital Partners (Oxford Mail, 14.12.2011).
- 3.49 Speedway racing ceased in 2008. The last greyhound race took place 29 December 2012.

#### 4.0 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

4.1 This section of the report considers the significance of the Oxford Stadium and its associated buildings. The stadium is also considered in relation to other existing greyhound stadia. The Oxford Stadium is not statutory listed and has not been considered for such designation. It is not located within a conservation area.

4.2 The NPPF defines a heritage asset as

*“A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance in meeting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).”*

4.3 Significance is defined in the NPPF as

*“The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.”*

#### Heritage Values

4.4 The determination of the significance of heritage assets is based on statutory designation and/or professional judgement against the four values set-out in *Conservation Principles* (English Heritage 2008):

- *Evidential value*: the potential of the physical remains to yield evidence of past human activity. This might take into account date; rarity; state of preservation; diversity/complexity; contribution to published priorities; supporting documentation; collective value and comparative potential.
- *Aesthetic value*: this derives from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from the heritage asset, taking into account what other people have said or written.
- *Historical value*: the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through heritage asset to the present, such a connection often being illustrative or associative.
- *Communal value*: this derives from the meanings of a heritage asset for the people who know about it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory; communal values are closely bound up with historical, particularly associative, and aesthetic values, along with educational, social or economic values.

4.5 Aspects of Oxford Stadium and its constituent buildings have been identified and their interest has been rated broadly, using the published criteria for statutory listing of buildings for their special architectural or historic interest, as set-out in *Conservation Principles* (English Heritage 2008) and applicable guidance published by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and English Heritage (EH) on selecting buildings for listing, in this case *Principles of Selection for Listing Buildings* (DCMS, March 2010) and *Sports and Recreation Buildings Selection Guide* (EH, December 2012).

4.6 Criteria for statutory listing include:

‘architectural interest’...

- of importance to the nation for... their architectural design, decoration and craftsmanship...
- important examples of particular building types and techniques...
- and significant plan forms.

‘historic interest’...

- illustrate important aspects of the nation’s social, economic, cultural or military history;
- close historical association with nationally important people or events;
- group value, especially where buildings comprise an important architectural or historic unity or a fine example of planning...

4.7 Evidential and aesthetic values correspond most closely to architectural interest, in terms of the published criteria for listing. Historical and communal values correspond to historic interest. These values emphasise national importance as being necessary for statutory listing, but are also useful in considering the particular architectural or historic interest of any building or structure.

4.8 We should state here that our assessment is that the site is not significant in a national context.

#### **Sports and Recreation Buildings Selection Guide**

4.9 The EH Guide has a short section on greyhound racing which is reproduced below.

*Greyhound racing in its current form, with the dogs chasing a mechanical hare around an oval track, was invented in the United States during the early twentieth century. It was first tried in England at the Belle Vue Stadium, Manchester, in July 1926. By the end of that year thirty tracks were in operation, and by 1939 the total had topped one hundred. However, as of 2010, only 25 tracks remained licensed.*

*Because investment in the sport was largely seen as speculative, and there were many failures, little money was spent on the architecture. Indeed some were even more basic than football grounds in the lower divisions. (Speedway tracks, introduced from Australia in 1927, were similarly basic.) Nevertheless, some tracks had impressive Totalisator boards, for example, at Catford Stadium in the London Borough of Lewisham, closed in 2003, and Walthamstow Stadium, in the London Borough of Waltham Forest, closed in 2008. Walthamstow also featured an iconic neon sign, clearly visible to millions of motorists driving past on the North Circular Road.*

- 4.10 The Guide advises that normal architectural considerations are important in assessing this category but there may be specialist considerations as well which can endow a plain-seeming structure with extra significance. Historic considerations should only be taken on board if a building or structure has some architectural or engineering merit in itself, or is preserved in a form that directly illustrates and confirms its associations.

#### **Evidential Value**

- 4.11 The Oxford Stadium has some evidential value in that it contains buildings and structures that date from 1939. However, it is not the earliest example of a greyhound stadium and several of the buildings are no longer in their original use or extant. The structures comprising the Oxford Stadium are listed below

1. Totalisator – 1939, much altered, no equipment surviving, now used as part workshop/store and part office for go-karting business.
2. Western terrace – 1939, concrete stand of 6-8 steps with covered access through to car park.
3. Former Director's Bar – pre-1955, extended and altered by 1971, now used as storage for track machinery.
4. Northern terrace – possibly 1939
5. Grand stand and club house rebuilt in 2000.
6. Racing Kennels – rebuilt c. 1987/8.
7. Track – resurfaced and use changes, not original.
8. Car park to west – site of former paddock and kennels.
9. Turnstile entrance to stadium – not original part of later redevelopment.

#### **Aesthetic Value**

- 4.12 The modern buildings are of standard design and are of very limited or no real aesthetic value. Overall, the majority of the buildings comprising Oxford Stadium are of no aesthetic value. There is no mention of the stadium in the Pevsner Architectural Guide for Oxfordshire (2002).



*Totalisator*

- 4.13 The totalisator is a simple three-storey yellow brick building with internal steel columns under a mono-pitched roof. The metal framed windows to the north flank wall are probably original. The windows in the southern flank wall are also metal framed windows, probably original. The first floor is accessed via external concrete steps to the south elevation. The second floor is accessed via an internal open tread timber staircase which may be original.
- 4.14 The front of the structure has been clad with profiled metal sheeting. Timber casement windows were installed to the front when the totalisator went out of use. When in use as a totalisator the ground floor of the structure is likely to have been open, perhaps with seating for spectators. Latterly it appears to have been used as a 'pit' for the Speedway team during races. It is now enclosed with boarding to create a workshop area. The upper floors are used as offices for the go-karting business operating at the stadium. None of the original mechanical equipment survives. It has no aesthetic value.

*Western Terrace*

- 4.15 The western curving terrace either side of the entrance through to the former paddock, now a car park, is of simple concrete and block construction. The poor quality of concrete is showing its age and is crumbling and broken. The block constructed entrance to the former paddock has no aesthetic value. The terrace is typical of the period. The terrace has no aesthetic value.
- 4.16 The single storey buildings west of the terrace appear to have been used by the speedway teams in latter years. The single storey buildings have no aesthetic value and the paddock was converted to a car park many years ago.

*Former Director's Bar (Nissen Hut)*

- 4.17 The former Director's Bar resembles a small elongated Nissen hut. It was extended to the front, which doubled the size of the structure. The structure is glazed to the front to allow trackside views. The rear part is of concrete blocks with a corrugated iron roof. It has been much altered internally. The poor quality of construction and materials used are evidenced by its poor condition. It is of no aesthetic value.

*Northern Terrace*

- 4.18 Part of the north terrace is probably original, again it is of concrete construction is typical of terraces of this period. It has no aesthetic value.

*Kennels*

- 4.19 The racing kennels were rebuilt and extended in 1987/8. They are of a simple particle board and concrete block construction. They have no aesthetic value.

*Track*

- 4.20 The racing track itself has been altered and modified many times. The electronic hare track is a modern replacement. The aesthetic value of the track is significantly affected by the tarmac track laid within the centre of the track. It is of no aesthetic value.

***Historical Value***

- 4.21 The development of the Oxford Stadium is of limited historical value at the local level. The buildings comprising the Stadium chart its varied history. The oldest surviving buildings provide evidence of the inter-war entertainment of the local community. The stadium was not the first greyhound stadium in the country. There are no technical innovations associated with Oxford Stadium, greyhound or speedway racing, for example, it did not lead the sport in introducing new technology such as photo-finish or broadcasting of live races on television.
- 4.22 The buildings forming the Oxford Stadium are much altered. Individually none of the buildings is of historic value. As a group, the buildings are of no more than local interest. There is likely to be some association between the workers of Morris's factory and the later industrial works at Cowley, but the stadium was not built specifically for use by these workers. The association is rather the location of the stadium within Cowley which was also the home of the motor industry and its workforce.
- 4.23 In *Oxford – Beyond the University* a chapter is dedicated to the "Social life and welfare at the Car Works". The chapter summarises the different sports and leisure facilities and teams set up by the employees of W R Morris Ltd. These included the Morris Motors Athletic Club set up in 1919, football and cricket teams. In 1929 Morris bought land by Cowley Barracks and it was used to provide "two rugby pitches, two football pitches and three cricket pitches as well as providing facilities for bowls, tennis, rifle shooting and swimming" (p. 98). In 1929 a new clubhouse was provided by Morris in Crescent Road. There is no mention of greyhound or speedway racing.
- 4.24 In *The Factory & The City* (Eds Hayter & Harvey) Schofield & Noble refer to greyhound racing as part of the car plant workers activities but as a contrast to the other, Oxford

*"In this way, they created a culture based on their material conditions of life. It was not hard to guess which part of Oxford housed the football club, the dog track, and a whole range of 'cultural' interests that were either ignored or looked down upon by those listening in the Sheldonian, attending Pinter plays in the Oxford Playhouse, or reading 'north Oxford' novels by Iris Murdoch." (p. 258)*

- 4.25 Again there is no evidence of a specific link between the car works and the stadium. The stadium complex does however reflect the varied social and cultural profile of the

town. This social distinction – working class town and gown – is present in the early industrial suburb in the City Centre, Jericho, and associated industrial infrastructure.

- 4.26 The totalisator and Director's Bar have been significantly altered and their original use and equipment have been lost. The window openings at the front of the totalisator provide some evidence of its former use in that these openings were where the updated information relating to each race was displayed. It is not known if any of the original display board of painted wood survives beneath the metal cladding. The Director's Bar is now used for storing equipment. The location of the two buildings fronting the race track provides some very limited evidence of their historic use.
- 4.27 The original terraces although in a poor state of repair were until recently used for watching races. They do not have any other historic value.
- 4.28 The remaining buildings and structures are of no historic value apart from charting the development and changes to the Stadium.
- 4.29 The use of Oxford Stadium firstly for greyhound racing and then also for speedway racing is only of historic interest to the local community. Therefore the Stadium is of limited local historic value only.
- 4.30 ***Communal Value***
- 4.31 The Stadium over its lifetime has had to adapt and diversify in order to survive. This resulted in the introduction of speedway racing, Sunday markets, and motorcycle training alongside the expansion of its leisure facilities. There is no doubt that the Stadium, its facilities and uses have been at various times of value to the local community which utilises them.
- 4.32 However, the communal value of greyhound racing has lessened considerably since the Stadium opened in 1939. The number and frequency of races had reduced significantly by the time it closed in 2012.
- 4.33 Speedway racing ceased at the Stadium in 2008 and therefore the communal value associated with this sport is reduced.
- 4.34 Our research has not produced evidence to confirm specific associations between Oxford Stadium and the Cowley motor industry. The Stadium was not developed in association with Morris Motors unlike the Sports and Social Club supported and by Morris. The Stadium does have a role in the social history of Cowley which has a separate identity and development to the Oxford associated with the University.
- 4.35 We are advised that until the Stadium closed in December 2012 the local community continued to attend a decreasing number of greyhound meetings. Go-karting and motorcycle training are still taking place (March 2013).
- 4.36 Therefore, the communal value defined here is of local interest only. The Stadium is not a national or regional sporting venue. It is of value to its local community in Cowley rather than the whole of Oxford.

- 4.37 We are advised that consultation was carried out prior to finalisation of the current application, and that cultural significance was not raised as an issue, although some residents objected to the potential loss of ancillary uses by local clubs.

***Setting of Oxford Stadium***

- 4.38 When defining the significance of a heritage asset it is also necessary to define its setting and the contribution this makes to its significance. English Heritage has published guidance for assessing setting - *Setting of Heritage Assets* (English Heritage (2012).

- 4.39 Setting is defined in the guidance as:

*“The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.”*

- 4.40 At section 2.2 the guidance states that “*setting does not have a fixed boundary and cannot be definitively and permanently described as a spatially bounded area or as lying within a set distance of a heritage asset.*” The guidance then defines the terms curtilage, character and context, whereby **character** of a historic place is defined as:

*“the sum of all its attributes. This may include its relationships with people, now and through time; its visual aspects; and the features, materials, and spaces associated with its history, including its original configuration and subsequent losses and changes.”*

- 4.41 **Context** is defined as any relationship between a heritage asset and other heritage assets, which are relevant to its significance. Context applies irrespective of distance.

- 4.42 The setting of the Oxford Stadium therefore comprises the relationship of the buildings and structures forming the stadium as well as its setting within the wider townscape/landscape.

- 4.43 The layout of the stadium, i.e., the track, terraces and stands, is similar to when the stadium was first opened. The western terrace, the totalisator, racing kennels and former Director’s Bar are original buildings/structures with alterations, or in the case of the kennels are in the same location as the original building. The grandstand occupying the southern part of the stadium has been rebuilt several times and has little resemblance to the original stand. The totalisator building also no longer displays any original equipment, which made a notable contribution to its interest.

- 4.44 The access and entrance to the stadium from Sandy Lane have been altered substantially. The paddock and kennels to the west of the stadium were cleared to make way for car parking. The setting of the stadium has changed significantly.
- 4.45 When first constructed the stadium was set in fields and there was relatively little built development. The railway to the north was in existence but the buildings of industrial Cowley did not form its immediate setting. The setting of the stadium has changed since it was opened. The setting is now very urban and it is surrounded by built development. Hard landscaping has replaced the grassed areas and car parking areas have been introduced to the west, east and south.
- 4.46 When accessing the site from Sandy Lane there is no dramatic sense of arrival. It is rather understated. What one sees is the new buildings rather than the racetrack. It could be any other facility, there is nothing to distinguish it as a greyhound stadium. This is in stark contrast to Walthamstow Greyhound Stadium which advertised its presence and was very visible to travellers using the North Circular Road around London. Even before the redevelopment of the main stand at Oxford the entrance to the stadium was understated as can be seen in figs 13 and 14 of this report.
- 4.47 We conclude, therefore, that the setting of the Stadium both internally and externally has a very limited contribution to its significance.

**Oxford City Council (OCC) Heritage Criteria (December 2012)**

- 4.48 OCC adopted its Heritage Criteria for assessing assets to be of local interest in December 2012. We consider the Oxford Stadium against these local heritage criteria below. We also consider the report prepared by the Blackbird Leys History Group and OCC as part of the Oxford Heritage Assets Register Project (OHAP).

***Criterion 1 – They must be capable of meeting the government’s definition of a heritage asset***

- 4.49 The OCC nomination form does not provide the full definition of a heritage asset as presented in the NPPF. The NPPF defines a heritage asset as

*“A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance in meeting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).”*

- 4.50 The OCC nomination form asks the applicant to demonstrate that the candidate falls within the government’s definition of a heritage assets “i.e. a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape.” It is necessary therefore to assess the candidate site prior to answering this criterion.
- 4.51 The Oxford Stadium is not a designated heritage asset and it is not a locally designated heritage asset although it is under consideration for the latter by OCC.

Our assessment of the Stadium's significance is that it is only of limited local interest due to its communal value. It is not of aesthetic or architectural value and is of limited historical value.

- 4.52 The report prepared for the OHAP considers Oxford Stadium qualifies as both a place and as a group of buildings. It does not define the significance of the Stadium, it merely states it is a place and a group of buildings. The requirements of Criterion 1 have not therefore been met.

***Criterion 2 – They must possess heritage interest that can be conserved and enjoyed***

- 4.53 Criterion 2 asks for the properties of the candidate asset to be identified which need to be cared for as heritage. OCC defines this as 'heritage interest'. Such properties are identified as appearance and materials, and associations with past people or events. The nomination form lists historic interest, archaeological interest, architectural interest and artistic interest.

- 4.54 We have considered the Oxford Stadium's historic, architectural and artistic interest above. The CgMs report also considers the archaeological interest of the site and concludes it is not of significant archaeological interest.

- 4.55 The OHAP report considers Oxford Stadium is of historic interest as it "*illustrates aspects of the development of Oxford as an industrial town in the early and mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, including development of working class culture and sports and recreation associated with the development of the industrial suburb of Cowley*". The report states the Stadium illustrates the associations between pursuits such as dog racing and speedway with the motor industry. As discussed above, no specific associations have been found between the development of the motor industry and the Stadium. The association is incidental due to the co-location of the Stadium and motor industry in Cowley.

- 4.56 We have discussed the development of the Stadium above.

- 4.57 The requirements of Criterion 2 have not therefore been met.

***Criterion 3 - They must have a value as heritage for the character and identity of the city, neighbourhood or community because of their heritage interest beyond personal or family connections, or the interest of individual property owners.***

- 4.58 The nomination form lists the following values which need to be identified: association, illustration, evidence, aesthetics and communal. We have discussed these values above.

- 4.59 The OHAP report cites the history of the stadium as contributing to its communal identity. This appears confused as the communal identity or value should contribute to its historic value. The report states:

*“The stadium and part of BMW’s Mini Plant are surviving elements of the earlier industrial landscape that developed in the 1930s. This is valued for its illustration of the early development of the Cowley Industrial Suburb, as well as the Blackbird Leys Estate. It illustrates the type of landscape and uses that developed in response to the growth of car manufacturing as a major local employer, providing evidence of the opportunities for leisure and recreation of the suburb’s factory workers.”*

- 4.60 It is questionable if the stadium can be defined as part of the industrial landscape. When first developed the stadium was set in open fields. In later years, particularly post WWII residential development encroached and surrounded the site, whereas the industrial development is mainly located to the north of the railway line. The stadium was opened in 1939, 27 years after Morris opened his factory in Cowley. The stadium has provided facilities for the local community since it opened but this was incidental to the motor industry.
- 4.61 The OHAP report considers that the stadium does not have any special designed aesthetic value and that the simple utilitarian nature of the buildings reflect the status of greyhound racing as a working class pursuit. The report also considers in this case it is similar to other greyhound stadia. Neither of these statements are strictly true. The Walthamstow Stadium displays significant architectural design and merit and as such is statutory listed. The fine architectural detailing of the Walthamstow buildings and their prominence within the landscape/townscape are in stark contrast to the buildings forming Oxford Stadium. As such the latter are of no aesthetic value. The OHAP at this point confuses evidential and aesthetic value. These are not the same. Evidential value is more usually considered to cover the archaeological potential of a site to reveal its historic associations. The stadium is of limited evidential value, and accordingly the requirements of Criterion 3 are not met.

***Criterion 4 - They must have a level of significance that is greater than the general positive identified character of the local area.***

- 4.62 The supporting text to this criterion states

*“Many features of the historic environment are a valued part of local character that should be managed through policies relating to townscape character in the local plan. Registered heritage assets should stand out as of greater significance than these features for their heritage value.”*

- 4.63 The nomination form lists the features that contribute to an asset’s significance: age, rarity, integrity, group value, Oxford’s identity and other. We have discussed these aspects of significance above.
- 4.64 The OHAP report cites the communal value of the stadium as important and its contribution to the identity and cohesion within the community. It is the only venue in

Oxford for both greyhound and speedway racing (although we note neither now takes place so this historic use has been lost).

- 4.65 The OHAP report considers that as the stadium represents an earlier phase of development than surrounding land uses it has a greater level of significance by illustrating the area's development. We consider the contribution of the age of the stadium to its significance is limited.
- 4.66 The OHAP report considers that Oxford Stadium has a historic pedigree to which few other sporting venues in Oxford are comparable. The University and College facilities are dismissed as they do not have the associative, illustrative and communal value of the greyhound stadium. However, it should be noted the Iffley Road/Roger Bannister Running Track clearly has historic value as the venue of the first 'four minute mile' in 1954. The report further considers as greyhound stadia are becoming scarce nationally this adds value to the status of the Oxford Stadium as it retains its greyhound racing circuit and speedway track. As set out in Section 3.0 above, there are currently 25 greyhound tracks operating according to the website of the Greyhound Board of Great Britain. We have discussed the development of the stadium previously and note that speedway racing ceased in 2008, and that greyhound racing has also stopped. The greyhound track and circuit are not original and the stadium as a whole has experienced significant change. They do not therefore have a strong historic pedigree.
- 4.67 The OHAP report also considers that although the buildings of the stadium have been altered and this affects their individual value, as a group they provide integrity that illustrates the development of the site and associated sporting activities. We do not consider that the buildings and structures forming the Oxford Stadium have such surviving integrity to fulfil this aspect of the criterion. Only the western terrace survives in its original form, other buildings and structures including the track have been significantly altered. The original buildings that provide evidence of its use for greyhound racing, for example, kennels, totalisator, have either been lost, replaced or substantially altered. Those that remain would be found in any stadium but generally of a higher quality design. Little evidence survives today to indicate that speedway racing took place at the Stadium.
- 4.68 The requirements of Criterion 4 have not therefore been met.
- 4.69 We conclude therefore that the Oxford Stadium is of local communal value but this provides only a limited contribution to significance and it does not display sufficient significance to meet the OCC's criteria as a local heritage asset.



## **5.0 APPLICATION PROPOSALS**

- 5.1 The application proposals involve the residential-led redevelopment of the application site, including the demolition of all existing buildings and structures.
- 5.2 Full details of the proposed development are provided in the Design and Access Statement and other reports and drawings enclosed with the application submission. However, in summary the development provides 220 residential units, comprising 140 houses and flats arranged around new open spaces.
- 5.3 The development also provides car parking for 271 cars and 55 bicycles. It has been designed to allow for a possible future pedestrian and cycle link across the railway line to the north.

## 6.0 PLANNING POLICY

6.1 The currently adopted Statutory Development Plan for the application site is formed from the following documents:

- The Oxford City Council Core Strategy (March 2011); and
- The saved policies of the Oxford Local Plan (November 2005); and

6.2 Relevant development plan policies are referred to below. We however first discuss relevant national planning guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

### 2012 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

6.3 The NPPF includes a number of ‘Core planning principles’ that should underpin decision-taking. These include to:

*‘proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes ... that the country needs...’*

*‘conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations’.*

6.4 Detailed Government policy on Planning and the Historic Environment is provided in Paragraphs 126 – 141 of the NPPF. Under this guidance, Oxford Stadium has been identified by Oxford City Council as a potential ‘non-designated’ heritage asset.

6.5 No ‘designated’ heritage assets are present on or adjacent to the application site.

6.6 NPPF Paragraph 128 advises that in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. An assessment of the significance of Oxford Stadium is set out in Section 4.0 above.

6.7 Under NPPF Paragraph 129 local planning authorities are advised to identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

6.8 NPPF Paragraph 131 states that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

6.9 'Conservation' is defined in the NPPF Annex 2: Glossary as *"The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance."*

6.10 NPPF Paragraph 135 advises that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

6.11 NPPF Paragraph 141 sets out that local planning authorities should require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible.

#### Implementation of the NPPF

6.12 NPPF Paragraph 214 advises that for 12 months from the day of the publication of the NPPF (27 March 2012), decision-takers may continue to give full weight to relevant policies adopted since 2004 even if there is a limited degree of conflict with this Framework. However, as set out in NPPF Paragraph 215, following this 12-month period, due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan are to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).

#### **2011 Oxford City Council Core Strategy**

6.13 Policy CS18 (Urban design, townscape character and the historic environment) states in part:

*"Development proposals should respect and draw inspiration from Oxford's unique historic environment (above and below ground), responding positively to the character and distinctiveness of the locality. Development must not result in loss or damage to important historic features, or their settings, particularly those of national importance and, where appropriate, should include proposals for enhancement of the historic environment, particularly where these address local issues identified in, for example, conservation area character appraisal or management plans. Views of the skyline of the historic centre will be protected."*

- 6.14 The relevant section of Policy CS18 is that development must not result in loss or damage to important historic features, or their settings. It is noted that the policy is particularly applied to historic features of national importance.

**2005 Oxford Local Plan**

- 6.15 Policy HE6 (Buildings of Local Interest) states the following:

*“Planning permission will only be granted for development that involves the demolition of a Building of Local Interest, or that would have an adverse impact on the building or its setting, if:*

- a. the applicant can justify why the existing building cannot be retained or altered to form part of the redevelopment; and*
- b. the development will make a more positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area.”*

- 6.16 This policy sets out criteria that applications proposing the demolition of a building of local interest should meet. It is considered that these requirements conflict with NPPF Paragraph 135 which is more general in nature, advising that proposals that directly affect non-designated heritage assets should be subject to a balanced judgement having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

- 6.17 Therefore, only limited weight should be given to the local plan policy after 27 March 2013, i.e. 12 months from the day of the publication of the NPPF.

## 7.0 ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 Oxford Stadium is of limited local interest mainly due to its communal value in the local area.
- 7.2 The current buildings are undistinguished architecturally and are certainly not candidates for statutory listing. The older structures, including the Tote building and the western terraces are of an expedient design and of very limited aesthetic value.
- 7.3 The Tote building has clearly been altered internally and externally which erodes substantially its historical value and significance.
- 7.4 Core Strategy Policy CS18 requires that development must not result in loss or damage to important historic features, or their settings. This is particularly the case when considering historic features of national importance.
- 7.5 Although we acknowledge a degree of local communal value of the Oxford Stadium, given the level of alteration and redevelopment that has taken place the site cannot be considered to contain important historic features. It is certainly not of national importance.
- 7.6 Turning to Local Plan Policy HE6, we have set out in Section 6.0 above that we consider this policy conflicts with the NPPF. Consequently only limited weight should be given to the policy.
- 7.7 The policy considers development that includes the demolition of buildings of local interest. It requires the applicant to justify why the existing building cannot be retained or altered to form part of the redevelopment.
- 7.8 Clearly the retention of some or the entire site would significantly affect its redevelopment. We have been advised that the quantum of development would be reduced greatly, which would affect scheme viability. The consequence would be a reduced ability to make contributions towards affordable housing and other local initiatives.
- 7.9 Local Plan Policy HE6 also requires that the new development will make a more positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area. In this case the proposed redevelopment provides a residential development which reflects its residential context to the south.
- 7.10 NPPF Paragraph 135 advises that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset. The NPPF in general terms is of weight and material to the assessment of development proposals by local authorities. As it provides more recent planning policy the NPPF is arguably of more weight than Local Plan Policy HE6.

- 7.11 As demonstrated in Section 4.0, beyond its local communal value the significance of Oxford Stadium is very limited. This needs to be balanced against the benefits of the development proposal. The provision of housing including affordable housing is clearly supported by the NPPF and here the proposed development would provide 220 residential units, including 77 affordable housing units. This is a significant planning benefit in the public interest. The reader should, however, consult the planning statement accompanying the application where the planning merits of the proposed use are considered.
- 7.12 In our view, the most appropriate response to the proposed redevelopment of the site would be for a record of the buildings and track to be recorded ahead of any works of demolition. This could be secured by a planning condition and would conform to NPPF Paragraph 141.
- 7.13 The recording could include work by a professional photographer. We have advocated this approach on other sites and have found that it is very successful in capturing the character of site. We would be happy to discuss this approach with officers.

#### **Summary and conclusion**

- 7.14 Oxford Stadium currently is being considered by Oxford City Council for inclusion on its 'Heritage Asset Register', which is the equivalent of a 'local list' or a 'non-designated' heritage asset.
- 7.15 We have visited the site and undertaken research including at the local archive.
- 7.16 The buildings on the site are not suitable for statutory protection through listing. Although we acknowledge that the site has some limited local communal value, it has been subject to much alteration and modernisation, which has eroded this. We have assessed the site in relation to the OCC Heritage Criteria set out for assessing local heritage assets. The Oxford Stadium does not meet those criteria.
- 7.17 It is not for us to strike the planning balance. However, the NPPF makes it clear that land-use planning benefits are material, offsetting factors when weighing-up harm to heritage assets. This weighing-up must recognise the level of protection that undesignated heritage assets enjoy.
- 7.18 Therefore, we consider that the most appropriate response to the proposals would be to record the site prior to redevelopment. We consider that this approach would conform to up-to-date national planning policy guidance on non-designated heritage assets.

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**APPENDIX 1**  
**NUMBERED SITE PHOTOGRAPHS**





**Photograph 1 – rear of main stand from Sandy Lane**



Photograph 2 –rear of main stand from Sandy Lane



**Photograph 3 – front of main stand**



**Photograph 4 – turnstiles**



Photograph 5 – turnstiles



**Photograph 6- greyhound racing tract with go-kart track to centre**



Photograph 7 – Tote building



**Photograph 8 – Tote building**





Photograph 9 – window to Tote building



**Photograph 10 – kennels**



**Photograph 11 - kennels**



**Photograph 12 - kennels**



Photograph 13 – kennels



Photograph 14 – kennels



**Photograph 15 – north side of stadium**



**Photograph 16 – terrace to north side of stadium**





Photograph 17 – terraces to west side of stadium



Photograph 18 – terraces to west side of stadium



**Photograph 19 – terraces to west side of stadium**



Photograph 20 – terraces to west side of stadium



Photograph 21 – terraces to west side of stadium



Photograph 22 – entrance to yard area to west side of stadium



**Photograph 23 – entrance to yard area to west side of stadium**



Photograph 24 - yard area to west side of stadium





**Photograph 25 – car park and yard area to west side of stadium**



Photograph 26 – Nissen Hut (former Director's Bar)



Photograph 27 – Nissen Hut (former Director's Bar)



**Photograph 28 – Nissen Hut (former Director's Bar)**



**Photograph 29 – kiosk next to Nissen Hut (former Director's Bar)**

