

**To: City Executive Board**

**Date: 10 July 2013**

**Report of: Head of City Development**

**Title of Report: OXFORD GREYHOUND STADIUM, NOMINATION FOR  
INCLUSION ON OXFORD HERITAGE ASSETS REGISTER**

## **Summary and Recommendations**

### **Purpose of Report:**

To provide information on public consultation on the nomination of the Greyhound Stadium for inclusion on Oxford Heritage Assets Register and the findings of the Blackbird Leys Heritage Assets Register Review Panel and to request the board register the stadium as a heritage asset and building of local historic interest on the Oxford Heritage Assets Register

**Key Decision: No**

**Report approved by: Michael Crofton-Briggs**

**Finance: Nigel Kennedy**

**Legal: Michael Morgan**

**Policy Framework:** (NPPF) National Planning Policy Framework  
Oxford Core Strategy 2006 – 2026  
Adopted Oxford Local Plan 2001 – 2016  
English Heritage Good Practice Guide for Local  
Heritage Listing

### **Recommendation(s):**

**To register Oxford Stadium, Sandy Lane as a heritage asset and building of local interest on the Oxford Heritage Assets Register**

## **1 Summary**

- 1.1 Oxford Stadium has been nominated for inclusion on the Oxford Heritage Assets Register. A report including an assessment of the stadium's significance has been the subject of a public consultation for which the results are now available. The Blackbird Leys Review Panel have considered whether it meets the Council's criteria taking into account the responses to the public consultation. They have agreed with the Council's officer's assessment that the stadium does meet the Council's adopted criteria. With the Executive Member for City Development they now

recommend that the City Executive Board Register the Stadium on the Oxford Heritage Assets Register as a heritage asset and building of local historic interest.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 The Stadium has been nominated for registration as a heritage asset by a community group with whose help the officers prepared an initial factual report and assessment of significance (see attached).
- 2.2 The report has been subject to public consultation including consultation with the owners (The Greyhound Racing Association) and prospective developers of the stadium (Galliard Homes). The results of the consultation have informed the officer's review of the factual report to provide the assessment below and a recommendation based on it. The Blackbird Leys Heritage Assets Review Panel, made up of the local ward councillors and the Member for City Development, have considered the officer's assessment and the results of the public consultation. They have endorsed the Conservation officer's assessment that the stadium meets the City Council's adopted criteria and recommend

## **3 Consultation**

- 3.1 Consultation on the report was open for 30 days, between 8<sup>th</sup> April and 7<sup>th</sup> May 2013 using the Council's online consultation facility. A total of 76 responses were received, of which 49 were either from registered consultees, or provided information to identify individual consultees. There is no evidence to suggest that anonymous consultees include any multiple responses.
- 3.2 The consultation asked:
- 1) Whether consultees agreed that the report was an accurate statement of the stadium's history and assessment of its heritage significance;
  - 2) What other information consultees felt should be taken into account by the review panel; and
  - 3) Whether they felt the stadium has a level of heritage significance that merited consideration in planning.
- 3.3 Of the consultees who answered question 1, 68 (86.6%) agreed (including 53 who strongly agreed) that the report was an accurate statement of the stadium's history and assessment of its significance. Consultees were asked to add any comments they wished to explain their answer, a

transcript of their responses is attached (details identifying the names and addresses of private individuals have been removed to protect their privacy).

- 3.4** Fifty responses to question 2 were received. A transcript of these responses is attached. In general these point out the historic interest and communal value of the stadium and provide additional details of its history that should be taken into account. A longer Heritage Assessment was submitted Montagu Evans LP on behalf of Galliard Homes, as prospective developers of the site, which is attached to this report as an Appendix along with their covering letter. In summary it concedes that the stadium has limited local historic interest which is of communal value, but states that the stadium does not have architectural or aesthetic interest. It points out that various parts of the stadium have been rebuilt over the past 70 years and that parts of the stadium, developed in the 1930s and 1940s, have not survived or have been unsympathetically altered. It includes an assessment of the stadium against the City Council's criteria and concludes that, in the consultant's opinion, the stadium does not meet these criteria.
- 3.5** Seventy-six responses were received to Question 3, of which 70 (92%) stated that respondents believed the stadium's heritage interest is of a significance that merits consideration in planning. Four responses were received that stated that it didn't (5%), whilst 2 respondents stated that they were unsure.

## **4 Assessment**

- 4.1** The assessment of the stadium's significance has been made taking account of the information provided in the initial nomination report, the results of the public consultation, including the Heritage Assessment prepared by Montagu Evans LLP and English Heritage's guidance set out in their publication Conservation Principles<sup>1</sup>.
- 4.2** **Criterion 1. They must be capable of meeting the government's definition of a heritage asset "A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest".**

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<sup>1</sup> English Heritage, 2008, Conservation Principles: Policies And Guidance For The Sustainable Management Of The Historic Environment: <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/conservation-principles-sustainable-management-historic-environment/conservationprinciplespoliciesguidanceapr08web.pdf>

- 4.2.1 The stadium is a group of buildings and a landscape or place.
- 4.2.2 *As such, the stadium is eligible for consideration subject to its having heritage interest with significance that merits consideration in planning. The heritage interest of the stadium is defined in consideration of its meeting criteria 2, 3 and 4, which identify whether it has a degree of significance that merits consideration in planning.*
- 4.3 Criterion 2: They must possess heritage interest that can be conserved and enjoyed.**
- 4.3.1 Historic interest: The Stadium has historic interest through readily identifiable connections with local sports (Greyhound Racing and Speedway) and associated teams, events, competitions and promoters that have been noted locally and nationally. It provides physical evidence of the development of these sports and facilities.
- 4.3.2 It has historic interest through connections with the local communities of Oxford and of Cowley and Blackbird Leys in particular, through their attendance at events and support of the stadium for over seventy years.
- 4.3.3 Architectural interest: The stadium's architecture is vernacular which has architectural interest as a group of buildings and associated landscaping associated with two particular historic pastimes, which are sufficiently well preserved to be understood.
- 4.3.4 *The stadium fulfils the requirement of Criterion 2.*
- 4.4 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.**
- 4.4.1 Historical Associative and Illustrative Value: The stadium contributes to the character of the Blackbird Leys area by providing associations with a considerable sporting heritage. The historic interest is valued for the associations with the sports and the great sportsmen, competitors and events that the stadium brings to the area.
- 4.4.2 The histories of the sports' associations with the area (including their development and long history) are illustrated by the buildings and layout of the stadium. The association with the local community is provided by the stadium's location and use and the buildings, structures and spaces they have used.

- 4.4.3 The stadium illustrates the use of the area in the early 20th century as part of a landscape of sports and recreation on the fringe of the industrial suburb of Cowley. Other parts of this landscape, including sports fields and allotment gardens, have now been redeveloped. As such, it contributes to the character and identity of the area by providing evidence of its early origins and subsequent development including the addition of further sporting uses and other activities.
- 4.4.4 The simple aesthetic of the buildings provides illustrates the historic status and role of the sports.
- 4.4.5 Evidential Value: The buildings retain some evidential value for revealing more about the history and development of the site's sporting and related activities. There is some limited potential for more evidence to be revealed by further examination of the Tote building in particular.
- 4.4.6 Communal Value: A considerable community of supporters of both Speedway and Greyhound Racing derive their identity as groups from the stadium's presence as the venue for their enjoyment of the sport and support for their 'home teams' over the past seventy years. Whilst these sports are not being held in the stadium at this time, they have been in the very recent past (both Speedway and Greyhound Racing were held in 2012). These communities still exist and the stadium continues to have meaning for them as a focus of their identity.
- 4.4.7 As a venue for their social activities and pastimes for over seventy years the stadium has become valued as a symbol of the community of Cowley and Blackbird Leys, It is noted as having a particular association with the people of East Oxford and is recognised as contributing to their identity as a community with artisan and working class origins who have enjoyed a particular range of pastimes and recreational and social activities. Its use contributes to the interaction and cohesiveness of the community.

4.4.8 *The stadium fulfils the requirement of Criterion 3.*

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

- 4.5.1 The stadium is an early feature of the landscape that is contemporary with the area's industrial development, which preceded the building of housing in the immediately surrounding area. Other remains of the landscape from this period are now becoming scarce. As such, its age is a characteristic that raises its significance above that of the surrounding later 20th century residential and commercial landscape.

- 4.5.2 The stadium is a rare feature in Oxford's historic landscape, other early stadia associated with the 'town' rather than the university having been lost. It is unique within the county for representing the two historic sports and, nationally, is one of a rapidly dwindling number of such sites. Its status as a rare feature raises its significance above the general positive features of the local area.
- 4.5.3 Elements of the pre-World War II stadium are preserved in a recognisable (if not pristine) state, whilst later additions help to document the development and continuity of the site's use. As such, the stadium is considered to have integrity.
- 4.5.4 The stadium facilitated the staging of Greyhound and Speedway Racing events of local, regional and national importance that have brought people to Oxford for over seventy years. As such it has contributed to the prestige and identity of the city both locally and nationally beyond the contribution of the general positive characteristics of the surrounding area.
- 4.5.5 *The stadium fulfils the requirement of Criterion 4 and, by fulfilling Criteria 2, 3 and 4, can also be considered to fulfil Criterion 1.*

## **4.6 Conclusion**

- 4.6.1 Oxford Stadium meets all four of the City Council's criteria for inclusion on the Heritage Assets Register and should, therefore, be considered as a good candidate for inclusion on the register.

## **5 Legal Implications**

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications.

## **6 Financial Implications**

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications.

## **7 Implications for Equality**

- 7.1 The requirements of The Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equalities Act 2010, to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations has been taken into account and it is considered that the design, delivery and evaluation of this project and the associated consultation did not have any effect on equality for any of the protected characteristics.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

1. To register Oxford Stadium, Sandy Lane as a heritage asset and building of local interest on the Oxford Heritage Assets Register.

**Name and contact details of author:**

**Robert Lloyd-Sweet/Nick Worlledge 01865 252308/252147**

[rlloyd-sweet@Oxford.gov.uk](mailto:rlloyd-sweet@Oxford.gov.uk)

[nworlledge@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:nworlledge@oxford.gov.uk)

**List of background papers: None**

**Appendixes:**

Oxford City Council, 2013, Oxford Stadium – Factual Report and Assessment of Significance for Oxford Heritage Assets Register Review Panel

Oxford City Council, 2013, Report of Consultation on Heritage Significance Assessment for Oxford Stadium, Sandy Lane

Correspondence received from Montagu Evans LLP, dated 18 April 2013, 'Oxford Heritage Assets Register – Oxford Stadium Heritage Asset Nomination'

Montagu Evans LLP, 2013, Oxford Stadium, Sandy Lane, Cowley: Heritage Assessment

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