

# Culham Battery Storage Limited

Land to the north of the Culham  
Science Centre, Culham

APP/Q3115/W/24/3358132

**Summary Proof of Evidence on Heritage Matters**

**Ianto Wain BA MCIFA**

# **Culham Storage Limited**

## *Summary Proof of Evidence on Heritage Matters*

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Witness**

1.1.1 I am Ianto Wain. I am Head of Heritage Management Services at Oxford Archaeology.

1.1.2 I have an honours degree in History and English from the University of Surrey and a Post-Graduate Diploma in British Archaeology from Oxford University Department of Continuing Education. I am a Member of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (MCIfA).

1.1.3 I have 36 years of experience as a professional archaeologist and have been a Heritage Consultant since 1991. I have been Head of the Heritage Management Department, a specialist department within Oxford Archaeology dedicated to the production of Heritage reports and research projects for 25 years.

1.1.4 I understand my duties to the Inquiry, to give independent and objective evidence on matters within my expertise, based on my own independent opinion and uninfluenced by the instructing party. I confirm that I have stated the facts and matters on which my opinion is based, and that I have not omitted to mention facts or matters that could detract from my conclusions. I believe that the facts stated within this Proof are true and that the opinions expressed are correct. I will continue to comply with my duties to the Inquiry.

1.1.5 I have adhered to the standards and duties of the professional body the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) of which I am a member of and will continue to adhere to those standards and duties.

### **1.2 Involvement with the case**

1.2.1 I am involved with this case as an expert witness on behalf of Culham Storage Limited which is a wholly owned subsidiary of Statera Energy Limited. My evidence is confined to heritage issues. My role is to assess the impact that the proposed development will have on the significance of heritage assets. The question of whether such impacts are acceptable in the planning balance is dealt with by Mr. Hall in his Proof of Evidence.

1.2.2 I have been involved in the case since March 2023 when Oxford Archaeology produced an initial Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment (HEDBA) for the outline proposals. I oversaw and managed this element of the project and provided expert advice and input into the project. I have continued to oversee and advise upon further elements of Oxford Archaeology's work on the project including the production, in December 2024, of an updated HEDBA.

### **1.3 Scope of evidence**

1.3.1 This proof of evidence is concerned with Reason for Refusal 3 and pertains to the potential effects of the proposed development upon the heritage assets within the proposed scheme area and in its environs. In particular, it will address the potential impact of the proposed development upon the significance and survival of the Grade I Registered Park and Garden at Nuneham Courtenay, within the area of which the scheme is partially located. The evidence will address the potential effects of the revised Appeal Scheme.

## **2 CONCLUSIONS**

### **2.1 Appeal Scheme**

- 2.1.1 I acknowledge that the Appeal Scheme will extend into the Grade I listed Nuneham Courtenay Park and Garden and would therefore have a temporary but nevertheless long lasting effects upon the Registered Park and Garden for the duration of the development. The landscaping proposals will have a direct impact upon the southern edge of the park (that section within the site) although it is clear that the historic loss of woodland and tree planting and the existing presence of electrical infrastructure as well as the modern agricultural character of the southern part of the park has contributed, in part, to a general loss of the historic parkland character in the part of the Registered Park which would be affected by the scheme.
- 2.1.2 Relocation of the proposed connection tower has directly addressed one of the key SODC, Historic England and Gardens Trust objections to the Application scheme and has clearly reduced the potential effect of the scheme by a significant degree. The proposed connection tower would be shorter than the existing pylon and would not significantly alter the character of the views looking south from the site. These views already contain the Culham Science Centre and the existing pylon and power line.
- 2.1.3 The landscape proposals seek to change the land use in this part of the Registered Park and Garden to better reflect its original character.. The proposed tree planting along the southern boundary of the park will replicate a stretch of historic woodland that formerly marked the south-western boundary of the Registered Park and Garden. These changes present an opportunity to reinstate the parkland character of this part of the Registered Park and Garden which would positively impact on its significance. The proposed woodland would define the historic park boundary (and former Parish boundary) and would screen the park and Conservation Area (north of the site) from the more industrial elements of the scheme (south of the site). It would also reinstate a lost area of woodland from the 18th- and 19th-century park as far as is possible, given modern-day constraints.
- 2.1.4 I acknowledge that the Appeal Scheme would increase the industrialisation of the landscape to the south of the park through the construction of the battery storage facility and connection tower, which will be located next to the Culham Science Centre., However this would be alleviated by proposed woodland planting along the edge of the Registered Park and Garden will help to alleviate any perceived loss of separation by defining the edge of the Registered Park and Garden and physically separating it from the industrial landscapes to the south.
- 2.1.5 The proposed development will also introduce battery storage units into views looking south from the Registered Park and Garden and from the edge of the conservation area. However, the proposed tree planting along the southern boundary of the park would help to screen the proposed development in these views. Any remaining views would be experienced against the backdrop of an existing industrial complex, the Culham Science Centre, and as a result, the proposed development would not significantly alter the character of the existing views.
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- 2.1.6 Overall and given the limited extent to which setting contributes to the significance of the Registered Park and Garden in general and this part of the RPG in particular, the operational phase of the proposed development as set out in the Appeal Scheme would have a **minor adverse effect** upon the significance of the Registered Park and Garden. As set out in Mr Hall's evidence, in the language of the NPPF, harm to the significance of Registered Park and Garden and Conservation Area would therefore be at the **lower end of the Less than Substantial Harm category**.
- 2.1.7 These works will have a **direct beneficial effect** upon the park helping to restore the lost parkland character of an area of the park which was much modified as part of the wartime landscaping. These works will be carried out in line with the general recommendations within the parkland management plan and the Historic England recommendations.
- 2.1.8 In particular the proposed shelter belt will help to re-define the historic park boundary (and former parish boundary). This would have a key benefit in screening the park from the existing and proposed industrial electrical and housing developments adjacent to the site. As the planting and woodland boundary matures it will increasingly benefit the character and setting of the park over the 40 year operational life of the scheme. Following decommissioning the compound area will be returned to grass and trees and the scheme would leave a legacy in terms of the restored woodland boundary that will protect the setting of the park from the existing Culham Science Centre and the proposed Strat 8 & 9. developments.
- 2.1.9 Overall the effect of the landscaping proposals will have a **direct beneficial effect** upon the area of the park within their footprint. The overall effect upon the Registered Park and Garden, in helping to restore the former parkland landscape of the southern area of the park and to soften the visible effects of the war time and post-war modifications to the site would be an overall **Minor direct beneficial effect**.
- 2.1.10 Construction of the appeal scheme would no more than a minor impact upon the setting of the Thame Lane Bridge which is a designated listed building. In the language of the NPPF, this means that harm to the significance of the listed building would be at the lowest end of the Less than Substantial Harm category. It will have no effect upon any of the other listed assets within the environs of the scheme.

### **Cambridge office**

15 Trafalgar Way,  
Bar Hill,  
Cambridgeshire, CB23 8SQ  
T: +44(0)1223 850500  
E: [info@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto:info@oxfordarchaeology.com)

### **Lancaster office**

Mill 3,  
Moor Lane,  
Lancaster, LA11 1QD  
T: +44(0)1524 541000  
E: [info@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto:info@oxfordarchaeology.com)

### **Oxford office**

Janus House,  
Osney Mead,  
Oxford OX2 0ES  
T: +44(0)1865 980700  
E: [info@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto:info@oxfordarchaeology.com)  
W: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>



*Chief Executive Officer  
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