



OXFORD STADIUM
CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
Reasons for the report.....	3
Location and Context of the Study Area	4
HISTORICAL SUMMARY	5
A Brief History of Greyhound Racing.....	5
Building for Greyhound Racing.....	8
Greyhound Stadia.....	8
‘Respectable Design’.....	9
Construction and Architectural Servicing.....	10
OXFORD STADIUM.....	11
Industry and Leisure in the Cowley Community	11
A Brief History of Development.....	14
CHARACTER ASSESSMENT.....	18
Spatial Analysis.....	18
The Race Track and centre of the stadium.....	18
The Greyhound Paddock.....	18
The Speedways Pits.....	18
The Western Car Park.....	18
The Southern Car Park.....	18
Sandy Lane.....	19
Buildings and Structures	20
Site Survey Table.....	20
ASSESSMENT OF SUSTAINABILITY FOR DESIGNATION AS A CONSERVATION AREA.....	28
Special Historic or Architectural Interest.....	28
Character and Appearance.....	28
A Stadium for greyhound and speedways racing.....	28
Location and Context.....	29
Conclusion.....	30

INTRODUCTION

REASON FOR THE REPORT AND CRITERIA FOR CONSERVATION AREA DESIGNATION

This assessment of the suitability of Oxford Stadium, Sandy Lane for designation as a conservation area has been prepared by the Oxford City Council Planning Department. It follows the addition of the stadium to the City Council's Heritage Assets Register. The Heritage Assets Register provides a means of recording features of the historic environment that merit consideration in planning decisions as a result of their heritage interest and that are considered to make a special contribution to the character or identity of the city or particular neighbourhoods within it. The register provides a level of official recognition of the importance of the site as a part of the city's heritage, provides understanding of the significance of these assets and indicates where the City Council consider planning policies relating to heritage assets should apply.

Nevertheless, the register provides only a first step in managing our heritage assets and, where appropriate, the City Council will consider additional management measures to sustain and enhance the significance of heritage assets. As such, the City Council have assessed the significance of Oxford Stadium as a potential area of special historic or architectural interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, otherwise termed a conservation area.

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 identifies the statutory responsibilities of local planning authorities with regard to the designation and management of the historic environment. Section 69 of the Act states:

(1) Every local planning authority—

(a) shall from time to time determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and

(b) shall designate those areas as conservation areas.

(2) It shall be the duty of a local planning authority from time to time to review the past exercise of functions under this section and to determine whether any parts or any further parts of their area should be designated as conservation areas; and, if they so determine, they shall designate those parts accordingly.

The definition set out in the Act provides four tests that a potential conservation area must meet to require designation. It must be an area, it must have either or both historic or architectural interest, it must have a character and appearance that is the result of this interest, and this character and appearance must be considered desirable to preserve and enhance.

English Heritage (Understanding Place, 2010) explains that identification of areas suitable for designation can arise in a number of ways:

- Studies in response to development threats;
- For masterplanning and as a part of evidence gathering for the local development plan;
- Via local communities and neighbourhood planning.

It further explains (Understanding Place, 2010) that there are many different types of special architectural and historic interest that can lead to designation of an area such as:

- A part of a town;
- An area linked to a particular industry or philanthropist;
- Areas that have a particular local interest;
- An area reflecting a particular architectural style or traditional building material;
- Public realm, parks and gardens (though not the wider landscape);
- Open areas particularly where character and appearance relates to historic fabric.

As part of the process towards such designation there is a requirement to prepare a detailed analysis of the special interest of the area to inform and justify any council decision to formally designate a conservation area. This assessment report has been carried out following English Heritage's advice¹ and has been prepared in order to understand the heritage significance of the study area and how it is valued. It describes the history and role of greyhound stadia and the history of the development of Oxford Stadium, its architecture, character of buildings and spaces, its current condition and assesses its heritage significance.

It has been prepared with assistance from local community members, who have provided access to historical information and photographic archives. It has been informed by a Heritage Assessment prepared by Montagu Evans LLP on behalf of Galliard Homes in support of a planning application affecting the study area². A draft document was issued for consultation on the 6th March 2014, for a period of two weeks.

LOCATION AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY AREA

Oxford Stadium lies on the north side of Sandy Lane on the northern edge of the Blackbird Leys Estate. The estate was developed in the late 1950s in response to demand for housing in the city. It is characterised by a mixture of two and three storey houses and maisonettes set around a planned street grid, with the large green open spaces of Blackbird Leys and former school playing fields south of Pegasus Road. Distinctive features of the estate are the twin tower-blocks of Evenload Tower and Windrush Tower. The estate contains a local centre, including a parade of shops, church, library, pub and community centre, which, with the campus of Oxford and Cherwell Valley College forms a focus of commercial and social activity. The estate is distinctive for its green character, with green open space studded with trees running along street frontages and between developments.

To the north and east the study area adjoins the extensive area of commercial and industrial uses that have developed from the industrial suburb of Cowley, which has its origins in the development of industrial sites in the villages outside Oxford in the late 19th century, following enclosure of open fields and development of railway connections. This suburb expanded massively following the establishment of Morris Motors and, later, Pressed Steel in Cowley. Historically, the stadium lies on the southern edge of this area, preceding the development of Blackbird Leys by at least 20 years. Industry remains a key feature of the Cowley Suburb, notably including the BMW Mini and Unipart factories and the depot of the Oxford Bus Company (directly adjacent to the site). North of the southern by-pass the suburb is characterised by large and medium sized office developments of the Oxford Business Park, whilst between the stadium and by-pass the Oxford Retail Park occupies a large area with both large shed buildings and car park.

The northern west boundary of the study area is defined by a branch railway line that currently serves the larger industrial sites north east of Watlington Road. The east boundary of the study area is formed by the Oxford Bus Company Depot and a small residential development north of Sandy Lane. To the south, the study area is defined by the course of Sandy Lane.

¹ English Heritage Conservation Principles 2008

¹English Heritage – Understanding Place, an introduction 2010

¹English Heritage – Understanding Place: Historic Area Assessments in a Planning and Development Context , 2010

² Montagu Evans LLP, Oxford Stadium, Sandy Lane: Heritage Assessment 2013



Fig1: Photograph highlighting the newly built kennels at Oxford Stadium. This was the first inter-track race at Oxford against Wembley in 1940. Left to Right Mr CJ V Bellamy, Mayor of Oxford 1939-1940, F Wise, J. P Young, Mrs Bellamy Bill Davis, Miss Rice, Bill Higgins, Mr Blanch (veterinary surgeon), Miss Wakelin, Mrs Gomershall, Percy East, Miss Fright and Jim Tanner (Newbigging et al 1995: 91)



Fig2: The "The correct uniform for a Kennel Lad was tight black boots with riding breeches and yellow polo neck shirts for men, white shirt and tie with a riding cap for girls. Wages for a kennel Lad was £1 for a seven day week (ibid). The tote building (c 1939) is visible in the background)

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

LEISURE AND MODERN LIFE: A BRIEF HISTORY OF GREYHOUND RACING

- Greyhound racing has its antecedents in the more ancient sport of coursing, a popular pastime in the nineteenth century, which involved the pursuit of live hare. The earliest account of greyhounds following a mechanical lure was recorded on the 11th of September 1876 at a meeting at the Welsh Harp Hendon which involved dogs chasing a dummy hare set on a straight grass track (Genders 1975:60).
- By 1890, a patent had been taken out for a circular racing track however the idea was not put into immediate practice due to the inventor's lack of financial backing (Clarke 1934:15). It wasn't until 1912 in fact that racing in its modern form - involving six greyhounds chasing a mechanical hare set on an oval track – was first enacted by the American Owen Patrick Smith (Genders 1975:60). Smith, like the numerous other figures who were to become active in the promotion of 'modern' track racing, had been a well-known personality amongst coursing circles before going on to become instrumental to the 'new' sport's commercial success in the US.
- The sport was introduced to Britain in this modern format by another American business man, C.A. Munn, who having witnessed its growing popularity back home realised its commercial potentials in Europe. With the backing of Major Lyne-Dixon, a well-known figure in British coursing circles, and Brig.-General A. C. Crotchety, he set up the Greyhound Racing Association (GRA) which went on to construct the first purpose built greyhound stadium in the Gorton area of Manchester. The *Belle Vue* as the latter was called held its first meeting on the 24th of July 1926 to an opening audience of 1700 people. In the course of only a few weeks these figures were to rise to a substantial crowd of 11,000 spectators per meeting.
- This growth proved only the beginning of a much wider period of expansion for the new pursuit whose rising popularity throughout the 1920s and 30s was directly linked to the concomitant expansion of the British entertainment industry. The rise of the latter during the interwar years, arguably amongst the great cultural phenomena of the twentieth century, had depended on a number of key factors amongst them; the exploitation of new technologies; the growing consumerism; and perhaps most significantly on the increasing democratization of leisure. A new strain of philosophical thought had emerged during this period to argue that "pleasure was a deep seated and integral part of human experience" (Peter 2007: 32). To this end, social reformers had worked to

achieve a gradual whittling away of the number of working hours freeing a space for leisure to generate its own distinctive patterns of activity (ibid: 30).

- The new entertainments that took root during this period tended to reflect the general experiences of modern life characterised as it was, throughout the twentieth century, by a constant state of flux and movement and the rapid expansion of cities (c.f. David Harvey 1987). In these urban environments, “there was an unprecedented maelstrom of traffic and pedestrians, mingling with the nascent signs of consumerism” that helped create “a kind of *hyperstimulus* in the city dwellers as they attempted to...respond to their surroundings” (Peter 2007: 15). This ‘hyped up’ sensorial experience of modernity led many to search for corollary stimulus in their leisure hours that would match or outdo those of the everyday city. The public, it seemed, “wanted to extract the maximum possible sensation from every free moment” and although they knew that such instances “would pass quickly and that a return to the daily grind was inevitable” this fact only served to “redouble the desires of thrill-seekers to search out the latest and most stimulating diversions” (ibid: 16). Thus mass- spectator sports expanded rapidly, “taking their place alongside radio, the cinema, and the dance-hall as the main component of a more commercialized entertainment industry (Jones 1988: 44).
- Few spectator sports captured these ‘modern desires’ perhaps as completely as greyhound racing. Not only were the latter meetings quick, short-lived events that could be easily adapted to busy work schedules, but it was moreover a sport that provided a hitherto unprecedented access to the ‘main action.’ As Roy Genders (1946:8), a greyhound racing historian, has observed, the added attraction to the sport lay in the heightened sense of intimacy that it exuded. In contrast to other pursuits such as horseracing, greyhound events provided the paying public with a previously unknown access to the animals whose every movement could be easily observed from the moment they left the kennels to the point that they were returned. This fact owed much to the open nature of most terracing which, having being built quite closely to the tracks, enabled crowds to maximise their racing experience. Over time in fact, the sport came to be collectively remembered as being embodied in the image of a chap in a “raincoat and cloth cap standing near the rails in the pouring rain...down among the greyhounds” as it were (Genders 1981:8).
- The sport also came to be closely associated with the working classes with whom it achieved its greatest success. As Humphrey Jennings highlights in his 1939 documentary *Spare Time*, attendances at greyhound events were among the key ways in which the working classes “produced their own culture (Peter 2007: 34, Jennings 1939 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNXSPDk3n7k>)). Several factors made it especially appealing. The price of admission (as low as 1s in the 1930s) for instance, meant that the sport was “well within the range of many working-class spectators” (Jones 1988: 45). Moreover, in contrast to many pursuits, the relative affordability of greyhounds, made it possible for anyone wishing to do so to take an active part in racing. It is this affordability that arguably went a long way in sustaining the sport through periods of general economic decline. Despite the economic downturn of the early 1930s for instance (1929-1933), greyhound racing experienced its most significant period of growth witnessing a notable rise of stadia attendances from an already quite substantial 5,656 686 spectators in 1927 to 20,178 260 in 1932 (Genders 1946: 23). This growth was sustained throughout the war years (1939-1945). Where most leisure pursuits had been significantly affected by the war – with some activities such as county cricket and league football being all together halted - the popularity of greyhound racing seemed little curtailed and by end of the 1940s, a remarkable 50 million people paid to attend greyhound meetings each year (Genders 1981: 7-8).
- Growth continued into the post war period with greyhound racing coming second only to football as a national spectator sport. Many people now “flocked to the stadiums, happy to be out and enjoying themselves in the open air following the bleakness of blackouts and air raid shelters” (www.gbgb.org.uk/HistoryofGreyhoundRacing.aspx). This popularity continued to characterise the sport throughout the 1950s and 60s when the liberalisation of gambling laws in 1963 encouraging casinos, bingo halls, betting shops (etc.) eventually began to significantly impact on stadia

attendances. This often negative impact of legislative reforms was, however, not something new to the sport which appears to have a ready established economic safety net by way of its association with other activities. As *The Economist* had observed of the sport in late 1920s and early 30s, greyhound racing has always “attempted to secure its operations through contact with other sports” (cited in Jones 1988: 48). In particular, the Betting and Lotteries Act of 1934 which restricted greyhound racing to two nights a week led to the dependence of greyhound stadia on that other ‘modern pursuit’ of speedways imported from Australia in the late 1920s. The latter was first introduced as second sport to the earliest greyhound stadia (at Belle Vue, Wimbledon and Haringey) before shortly spreading to other provisional tracks across the country. It developed into a major attraction in its own right drawing crowds of up to 60,000 spectators at its peak. To this end, speedway riders “helped to maintain the crowds and advertise stadia” and owners continued to turn their attentions to the sport during periods of slow growth in greyhound racing (ibid: 48). It is for instance significant that the 1960s and 70s, years of relative decline for greyhound racing marked the glory days of speedways. Subsequent amendments to gambling laws have further necessitated this reliance on other activities. For example, whilst greyhound racing experienced a boom in the 1980s (and to a lesser extent 1990s) leading to an increased level of investment in the sport, the introduction of new laws as set out in the 2005 gambling act has resulted in declining numbers at the tracks thus ensuring that stadia continue to exploit the commercial potential of their assets through their use of facilities to host various other sports and social events.

- The greatest impact of the 2005 act has been its expansion of gambling opportunities. Where betting shop opening hours had for instance been previously restricted to evening periods in the months of May and August, the new legislation now enables them to be open until 10pm throughout the year. It is also further possible to place bets on greyhounds online and even via one’s digital television box or mobile phone. The resulting decline in track attendance that these opportunities have engendered has also led to a reduction in the number of stadia. Existing stadia have responded to their altered circumstances in a number of ways. Some venues such as those of Sutherland, Nottingham, Kinsely, Great Yarmouth and Wolverhampton, just to mention a few, “have recently completed six-figure refurbishment projects” (www.gbgb.org.uk/HistoryofGreyhoundRacing.aspx). These plans, as *The Economist* (2008) has reported, appear to be working with a notable crowd increase being observed in the 11 tracks where owners have invested in new facilities. Most tracks have generally fallen back on their historic reliance on a combination of leisure activities to draw an income. Expanding beyond speedways, many tracks have also become associated with other motor sports such as stock car, quad bike, and motorcycle racing amongst others. Stadia have also adapted their facilities to cater to the desires of new audiences ranging from work parties to hen and stag groups who are increasingly frequent visitors to racing tracks for evening entertainment. Indeed, in the context of marketing firms such as Mintel attributing the sport’s downturn to the fact that most people now increasingly perceive themselves as middle class (c.f. *The Economist* 2008), this adaptation of stadia has meant that the sport has to a certain extent began to cross the class divide with ever diversifying audiences visiting tracks today than at any other time in recent decades (www.gbgb.org.uk/HistoryofGreyhoundRacing.aspx). In fact “research conducted for the horse racing industry” highlights that “greyhound racing remains Britain’s third most attended spectator sport” and furthermore that, as a betting product it “has never been more popular with some £2.5bn being staked on the outcome of greyhound races each year” (ibid)
- Despite these positive indications however, the number of stadia has fallen further in the first decades of the 21st century with high profile closures such as Wembley (Greyhound Racing ceased in 1998) Walthamstow (closed 2008), Catford (closed 2003) and Portsmouth (closed 2010). There are now only 34 greyhound tracks currently in operation in the UK, 25 of which are licensed greyhound stadia (2013).

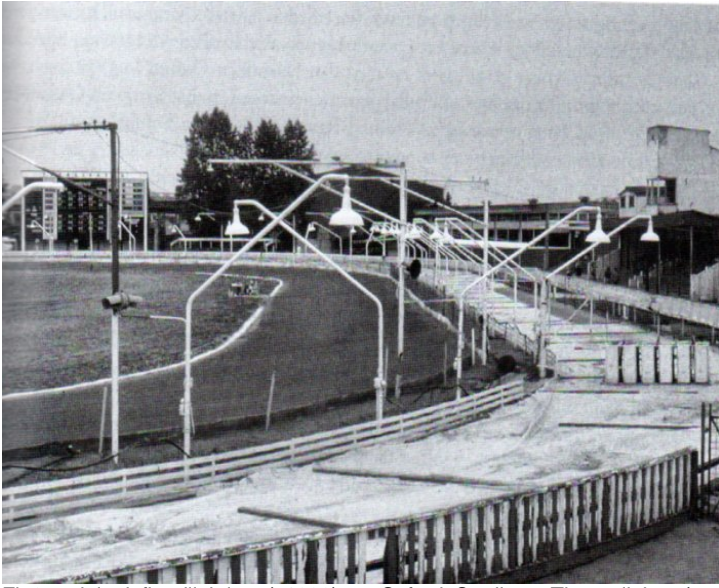


Fig3: original floodlighting (c1939) at Oxford Stadium. These lights (now replaced) were both a projection of the modernism of the stadium - a significant aspect of the servicing of 'pleasure buildings' more broadly- and a crucial aspect of the 'drama' of a racing event. The stadium was darkened before a race and a switch (still present) would swing the lights onto either the dog or speedways track depending on the event. An aspect of this is visible on the image with some lights focused on the dog track in the foreground and others on the speedways track adjacent to the central green. The southern grandstand (since rebuilt) is also visible on the right with the tote building across the central green on the far left corner.



Fig 4: The concrete western terraces (built c 1939) are in many ways exemplary of their time both in their design and materiality (i.e. form). Their location in quite close proximity to the dog tracks catered to the 'modern desires' of their audiences who increasingly sought more heightened sensorial stimulation through greater contact with the 'main action'. Their curving design following the general line of the track enable spectators to view the unfolding of a race from start to finish without the need for binoculars as was often the case with other sports such as horse racing. Their material construction - consisting primarily of large expanses of moulded concrete - embody the modernist movement's preoccupation with ephemeral as well as catering to the need for expedience that was generally necessitated in the construction of pleasure buildings.

MODERNISM AND THE ARCHITECTURE OF PLEASURE: BUILDING FOR GREYHOUND RACING

- Most greyhound stadia were built in the fifteen year period between the *Exposition Internationale de Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes* (the Parisian Exhibition of 1925) and 1940 when the imposition of rationing during the Second World War prevented further development. Their construction and design throughout this period largely coincided with the Modern Movement which was having a profound impact on twentieth century architecture particularly in its manifestation in the planning of recreational environments or what has been referred to as “the *architecture of pleasure*” (Peter 2007: 12). The latter phrase was coined by Shand and Leathart – key architectural writers during the interwar years – to refer to the built responses to the need for mass entertainment. They believed that as new forms of pleasure and entertainment, pursuits such as the cinema, rollercoaster and electric greyhound racing required new forms of architectural expression that was in keeping with the ‘Modern Spirit’ (ibid: 26).
- Architects of pleasure had to find appropriate modes of expression to convey the senses of modernity, excitement and anticipation that these pursuits embodied. The new building types were not only required to address often unprecedented needs “in terms of their reliance on technology and scale” but also to reflect and respond to the impermanence of their modern context (ibid: 15). To this extent, buildings for pleasure were often ephemeral and obsolete structures, subject to continual re-invention in accordance with the passing desires of their paying publics. For Leathart - a leading cinema architect in the early 1930s - this ephemerality was particularly advantageous as it allowed for experimentations with new built types whose outstanding characteristic he perceived to be represented by their “gradual process of simplification” (ibid: 27). Places “devoted to the pursuit of pleasure” he argued, had to differ markedly both in their “main forms” and in their “superficial or applied decorations” from neighbouring buildings whose functions were perhaps more serious and their intentions less capricious (ibid: 28). The public, it was in other words believed, would generally enjoy and respond more positively to non-historicist forms when they were being entertained.
- **Greyhound Stadia:** Unlike cinemas and other pleasure buildings such as zoos and pavilions, “only around a dozen large greyhound stadia that were developed during the 1935-39 period” actually “demonstrated the application of the new architecture”. “One reason for this can be found in the origin and subsequent regulation of greyhound

racings” (Peter 2007: 43). The pursuit’s early beginnings the coursing clubs of nineteenth century rural Lancashire, where the sport was established by local mill owners, merchants and other prominent locals, meant that facilities often evolved with little aesthetic coherence. The involvement of such local elites continued well into the 1920s by which time the sport had “become infused with bookmaker, licensees, trainers and other business entrepreneurs” whose central concern was the money that could be made from dog racing (ibid). Over time, the advent of regulatory bodies such as the National Greyhound Racing Society (founded in 1928 to regulate large urban stadia) began to have the overall effect of raising the standards of stadia facilities. National legislative reforms also had an effect on the evolution of stadia design. The 1934 Betting and Lotteries Act for instance introduced the totalisator (or Tote for short), which gathered all the money from bets, distributing it by percentage to the stadium owner, dog owners and winning punters .This meant that greyhound stadia, at the very least, “now required secure offices with ticket windows and sheltered spaces to queue to place bets.” Concomitantly, the increased revenues brought about as a result of the tote meant that stadia owners now also had a stable and lucrative source of income which they could draw upon to expand and improve their premises. Within a short period, a number of well-appointed and architecturally fashionable stadia had indeed developed in the London suburbs (ibid: 44)

- **‘Respectable design’:** The stadia that did directly apply modernist architecture did so as a calculated attempt to address greyhound racing’s wider issue of respectability. A certain negative view of the sport that manifested itself the form of betting and gambling legislation had persisted throughout the twentieth century. While some entertainments such as the theatre ,could, even in their “most populist form,... assume a degree of respectability” by presenting themselves as art forms, greyhound racing “as a predominantly working class pursuit...faced a more intractable image problem.” Not only were its origins in the rural sports of hare and rabbit coursing the focus of quite intense criticism from the Humanitarian League and other similar reforming groups, but the subsequent involvement of gambling from the 1890s onwards provoked further distaste from critics in whose opinion the sport was merely a ploy to draw money from the pockets of the poor. The latter, often described as a ‘lumpen, spendthrift and unhappy’ proletariat were themselves not seen any more positive a light, being perceived as truly ‘going to the dogs’ in both the literal and metaphoric sense. As the greyhound historian Robert Rowe has argued, “the adoption of modern architecture was therefore an attempt to glamorise the industry as well as to attract a wider clientele” (Peter 2007: 44). In addition to its predominantly working class clientele, stadia also began to attract business entrepreneurs and self-made men, “for whom architectural modernity presumably symbolised wealth, glamour and socio economic advancement” (ibid: 44-45).The advent of salubrious purpose built stadia in the 1930s were exerted attempts by entertainment providers to further expand these demographics by demonstrating that their venues were in fact wholesome places fit for the entire family and community.
- Where they may have generally lacked an aesthetic coherence as exemplars of Modernist architecture, greyhound stadia did however succinctly capture the ‘spirit of modernism’ both in their spatialization and material construction. Structures were especially designed in order to maximise the senses of excitement and anticipation that symbolized the sport. Seen particularly in the “context of industrialisation and...regulation of work and leisure time” greyhound stadia, provided a kind of “social ‘safety valve’ through which the public could perhaps ‘let off steam’ by behaving in ways considered not quite decorous of bourgeois society” such as smoking, drinking and gambling etc. while within the confines of an entertainment venue (ibid: 31). To this end, the planning of spectator stands, built in quite close proximity to the dog tracks, was of special consideration. Stands tended to combine a mixture of enclosed and open terracing in order to not only provide the heightened sensorial stimulation audiences desired but also to create a sense of intimacy that enable patrons to fully immerse themselves in the activity. The enclosed facilities consisted largely of terraced bars and restaurants “attracting couples for a mixture of romance, spectacle, dining, drinking and the odd flutter”(ibid: 44).Their hermetic character helped to both contain these activities as well as ensuring that they took place away from the disapproving gaze of mainstream society. Those

“terraces adjacent to the home straight were of more perfunctory design” and comprised primarily of unseated outdoor space. These largely attracted more “serious punters” whose primary concern was betting and who therefore did not wish to be “distracted by the chattering of diners and drinkers” (ibid 45).

- **Construction and architectural servicing:** It was in their material construction however that greyhound stadia most fully reflected the tenets of the modernist movement. In particular, stadia embodied the preoccupation with the transient deemed to be of such central significance to the innovative capacity of modernist architecture. To this extent greyhound stadia tended to be relatively simple structures requiring little investment to establish and with quite rudimentary often pre-fabricated buildings. As commercial venues, time was perhaps the most significant element in their construction. Indeed “the sooner a project was completed, the sooner the developers could begin to recoup their investment.” To cater to these unprecedented demands for expedience, a new architectural language was simultaneously emerging in Britain. The most progressive buildings of the 1930s began using “newly designed off the shelf components for speed and ease of construction.” By the close of the decade in fact, “a whole lexicon of new building materials” whose suppliers liked to promote for “their speed and efficiency” had been developed. Some of these new materials such as reinforced concrete - which was robust and malleable- proved particularly popular in the construction of stadia as did asbestos cement sheeting. The appeal of the latter in particular lay in the fact that it was a lightweight, fireproof and malleable material which when “pressed into corrugated sheets and bolted into light steel framework...enabled large span structures to be rendered waterproof inexpensively and quickly.” These materials however were also “primitive”, “imprecise in detail,” “prone to weathering badly – particularly in dirty urban air” – and in the case of asbestos sheeting, subsequently proven to be quite dangerous to health (ibid: 152-156).
- That the quest for speed and efficiency nevertheless remained central to the construction of stadia is evident in the example of the redesign and extension of Hendon Stadium by Messrs Harringtons in 1939. The whole work, including demolition, “was carried out during the short closed season from the beginning of November until the start of February.” In order to facilitate a “speedy construction, steel framing with concrete slabs infill was used and the project was completed on time and within budget- a considerable achievement” (ibid: 158). A close inspection of the Stadium’s tower however shows the concrete construction to be of “slightly crude detailing and badly spaced construction” illustrating the haste in which the project was carried out. However despite this haste, special consideration was given to architectural servicing. For instance, since many spectators were expected to be smokers much attention was paid to ventilation. The floors were also covered in large slabs of vulcanised rubber which was impervious to spilled drinks and cigarette burns (ibid: 157-158).
- Lighting was however perhaps the most significant aspect of stadia architectural servicing. “As works of the German expressionist architects have shown, lighting in entertainment venues was of crucial importance to their projection of modernism and modernity.” Brilliant night illumination was moreover “the most obvious and effective means of signalling to potential customers that an event was anything but dismal” (ibid: 160). Indeed it was for this very reason– as Charles Munn (who introduced greyhound racing to Britain) explained- that floodlighting began to be used in stadia. One of the first tracks in the US laid out in Miami had been performing quite poorly and was in fact on the verge of closure when the owner decided to install powerful arc lamps around the track as a last desperate bid to attract crowds. After what proved to be the great success of the Miami stadium, there followed a comprehensive introduction of lighting to greyhound stadia across the board. This extensive use of floodlighting transformed racing events into truly magnificent nightly spectacles (Cardew 1928: 8). For stadia audiences, these illuminations added a certain sense of drama. Not only did the darkening of stadia before the start of a race coupled with the positioning of lights along the perimeter of track help focus one’s attention to the central stadium space, but it also strongly highlighted the track thus showing up the greyhounds up in bold relief (ibid: 8-9)



Fig5: Speedways riders (c1970s) emerging from the tunnel into the main stadium space to be paraded in front of the general public. The car was supplied by Hertford Motors and had a trailer attached to the back on which the riders were stood.



Fig 6: The leisure pursuits at the stadium were quite intrinsically connected. The above image for instance shows speedways riders on and watching the go-karting. The team used the latter activity as part of their pre-season bonding session which also included watching the dog racing.

OXFORD STADIUM

AN OVERVIEW OF INDUSTRY AND LEISURE IN THE COWLEY COMMUNITY

- As with most stadia, the Oxford Greyhound Stadium is located within an urban context, fitting into an irregular space situated between the wider Cowley works and the residential Blackbird Leys estate.
- At the outset of the 19th century the area surrounding and including the Stadium site consisted of open fields associated with the hamlet of Littlemore in the Parish of St. Mary's, Oxford. The medieval villages of Cowley and Temple Cowley lay a short distance to the North West. The open fields of Littlemore were enclosed by Act of Parliament in 1817. Sandy Lane has the characteristic straight alignment of a road established within the enclosure of open fields and is recorded on the inclosure award map as the Littlemore and Garsington Road. The inclosure map records that it met the more sinuous course of the Oxford and Watlington Road just to the east of the site. This is likely to be of more ancient origin and forms part of the historic route from Oxford to London via Henley, which was diverted to run further to the west (through Iffley) in 1771. The G.W.R. Thame Branch Railway was constructed in 1864 as an extension to the Princes Risborough to Thame line and runs along the northern boundary of the stadium site.
- Development of the area as an industrial suburb began in the 1860s with the establishment of the Eddison and Nodding Company (later renamed the Oxford Steam Plough Company) manufacturing agricultural machinery on land between Cowley and Temple Cowley. The Morris Motors Ltd. motorcar works was moved into a former Military College at Temple Cowley by William Morris (later Lord Nuffield) in 1912. This expanded into a larger building in 1914 and further southward over the following decades. By 1925 Morris Motors had emerged as the leading car maker in Britain, a position it maintained until the Second World War. Soon after, and on Morris's initiative, the Pressed Steel Company of Great Britain was constructed in 1926 thereby extending the Cowley works and industrial area southward as far as the railway line. A small iron foundry also stood on the west side of Watlington Road on the south side of the railway line.
- The continued growth of the works during the interwar years had a significant impact on both the local economy and that of the broader city. Not only did the existence of these industries help contribute to the development of Cowley's identity as distinct from that of historic Oxford but it also signalled the wider expansion of the city. On the one hand, the industries were a powerful force in "shaping social cohesion (and) reinforcing the links of family, neighbourhood and locality" as well as in playing a central role in "the creation of Oxford's labour movement" which added "a

working-class authenticity to the university radicalism” (Hayter & Harvey ed. 1993: 7). On the other hand, their shifting of the labour force from the city and surrounding provinces had the attendant effect of expanding the city scape. Oxford became “one of the fastest growing cities in the interwar years with a massive 42 per cent population increase from 67,290 in 1921 to an estimated 95, 600 by 1939 (ibid).

- To account for this population boom, a large area of suburban housing developed between the hamlet of Littlemore and the village of Cowley. This was further supported by Oxford City Council's plans in the 1950s to develop the Blackbird Leys area as a large housing estate to replace cramped and unhygienic residential areas in the city centre and to house the growing population of car plant workers. The estate's first houses were built on Sandy Lane in 1958, just to the south of the stadium, with the first and second phases of development being completed by the early 1970s. Families moved from across Oxford and surrounding regions with the area proving particularly popular with workers in the Cowley Factories. It was particularly prosperous in the 1960s and 1970s but began to suffer somewhat from the decline in car manufacturing in the late 1980s and early 1990s culminating in the demolition of the Morris Motors buildings (owned by British Leyland in 1992). The works have since been largely redeveloped as a “new economy of research services, science parks and rustic superstores” in which the many of displaced workers from the car and steel plants have found employment (ibid: 3)
- The position of the stadium near the Cowley works and its relative proximity to the dwellings of the factory workers meant that it has historically attracted great patronage from these latter groups. To a certain extent in fact, the greyhound stadium can be considered as part of the wider milieu of leisure facilities catering to the local working class communities. Companies such as the Pressed Steel had made significant changes to the working week reducing it from 47.5 hours over five and a half days between 1926 and 1934 to 47 hours over five days (with extended lunch breaks of 75 minutes) between 1947 and 1960 (Allmond 2012: 30-31). These changes in work patterns ran concurrent with factories' investment in leisure facilities for their workers. It had become general practice for 20th century industrial employers to provide facilities for their work force and both the Pressed Steel and Morris Motors Company sponsored a wide range of leisure and sporting activities for their workers from football, to cricket and bowls amongst other activities. The 1937-39 Ordnance Survey map for instance records that land south of the railway line and east of Watlington Road was used as recreation grounds, presumably associated with the factories as an amenity for workers
- A small greyhound racing track is also recorded on this 1937-39 map as existing near the works. Although not directly initiated by the factories, Oxford Stadium, as the track later became, had special links with these local industries. Not only was the owner, L. V. Calcutt, a former employee of Morris Motor, but various local companies were also significantly involved in the sponsorship of particular events held at the stadium. Promoters included Hartford Motors - whose managing director (Pete Cundy) was also in fact the chairman of the speedways supporters club – and the family run Humphries Garages (at one point Oxford's largest independent motor retailers) who were sponsors of the Speedways team. While some these arrangements with industry were done as favours – for example it is believed that Ronald Amey of the Amey Roadstone Company (involved in such constructions as motorways and airports) and who rode at Oxford, was responsible for laying out the speedways and dog tracks on a largely voluntary capacity – most arrangements were however often of mutual benefit. For instance the international lager company Skol, in conjunction with the Oxford based Hall's Brewery, were not only one of the biggest sponsors of speedways but also had arrangements to be the exclusive supplier of beer at the stadium. Similarly, the sponsorship of the dog racing by companies such as Blanchford Builders and Build Base involved a corporate aspect where the sponsors would also often invite their staff and clients to race meetings. More direct links with the wider Cowley works are evidenced by the fact that events at the stadium were also often organised around factory work schedules. Speedways fixtures for instance were organised to fit around the working week and races were themselves advertised along the road from the Cowley works to maximise their impact on the workers.

- Apart from their draw to the local factory employees, these sports also developed strong identities that went beyond those of the local Cowley area. Speedways which held its first meeting in 1938 and continued (with some intermittent breaks) until its final meeting in 2007, proved especially popular with people from the wider Oxford region. The name of the speedways team – *The Oxford Cheetahs* – had in fact come from the Oxford public themselves following a competition in the local paper. A later name change to *The Rebels* and attempt to franchise them failed due to a lack of connection with the local community. The ‘Oxford Brand’ proved quite central and the name was subsequently changed to *The Oxford Rebels* (between 1972-5) and again to *The Oxford Silver Machine* (between 2003-2005). The stadium has also been a site linked to other local sporting identities. It was here for instance that American football was first introduced to Oxford in 1992. This Oxford Team (the Oxford Eagles, later the Oxford Bulldogs) was amongst the first such teams to be incorporated into the professional American football league in England and is one of the oldest teams in the UK. The sport continued to be held in front of the paying public for the next four years until the merger with a local team led to its relocation to Abingdon in 1997.

- Throughout its history Oxford Stadium has also been associated with other significant national and international sport events. It has for instance been the stage for the speedways world championship qualifications rounds; the British Finals and the International Championships. It has also been the site of pre-season training camps for Danish and Australian International speedways teams. In the 1990s, three riders from Oxford (Mike Coombes, Manual Hughes and Andrew Cooper) further extended the sport beyond its professional boundaries to include the first armature speedways event in the sport’s 90 year history. First held at the stadium, armature speedways became a significant route through which riders could hone their skills before turning professional. The stadium has also hosted other motor sports such as quad bike, dirt track and side car racing. The vintage Motorcycle club has used the stadium on several occasions to host vintage speedways championships and to give demonstrations of vintage bikes often driven by celebrity riders. Many fans for instance fondly recall Simon Wigg and Hans Nielsen’s match race on two rare dirt track Douglas bikes. However biggest regular motor sport attendances were perhaps those of stock car racing which proved particularly popular in the 1960s and 70s attracting up to 6000 spectators at its peak. Many famous drivers raced at Oxford including Formula 1 aces Derek Warwick and Martin Brundle. Local hero Fred Mitchell also won the World Championship twice. The sport was eventually suspended in 1977 owing to Oxford’s lack of the high safety fences necessary to guard against increasing racing speeds. In more recent years the stadium has become associated with go-kart racing which had taken up the central green previously occupied by American football. Although the latter has been primarily run as a commercial enterprise providing entry level karting for the general public, it has produced a number of distinguished drivers, the most notable being Ross Gunn who went on to become a double National Championship winner before becoming a professional racing car driver.

- In recent decades, the stadium has also been used as a venue for a variety of events such as circuses, travelling stunt shows, sheep dog trails, dart tournaments, car auctions, markets and car boot sales. As with other stadia, it has also witnessed a change in its demographics. Increasing numbers attending the stadium in the latter twentieth and early twenty first century have done so as part of ‘a night’s-out’ entertainment. To this end, the stadium has responded by adapting its facilities to host various private functions, discos night clubs dance studio amongst others. As with early greyhound racing and speedways these recent leisure pursuits (particularly that of the dance studios) have remained intrinsically linked both to the stadium and wider community.

- Prior to the stadium's development, the current site at Sandy Lane was, in 1938, "generally regarded as a 'flapping' track where owners...could turn up and run their greyhounds around an oval on the days selected for racing" (Baiden 2009: 3). The grounds, track and buildings of this older unregulated course are recorded on the Revised 3rd Edition Ordnance Survey Map published in 1937-39, which shows an oval track aligned north – south in the triangle of land between Sandy Lane and the G.W.R. Thames Branch Railway. Facilities at this time were quite basic consisting primarily of a small café. The lure itself was mounted on the rear wheel of a jacked up motor which was used to drive it around this track.
- The land was owned by a Mr Johnson who in 1938 leased it to Leslie Victor Calcutt for 99 year period. It was Calcutt, who at the time also owned building firm in Kidlington, along with his business partner a Mr Harold Brown, who began work on a new stadium in late 1938 completing it a year later in 1939. The new track was officially opened by Lord Denham (from the National Greyhound Racing Club) on 31st March 1939 at an inaugural race night which "was hailed as a milestone for Oxford and was covered heavily in the local news papers" (Baiden 2009: 3).
- Although it continued to grow in popularity with the local community, the Second World War was to have a notable effect on racing at the stadium. For instance whilst new kennels had been constructed at this time, greyhound training suffered as a result of staff shortages. Only two trainers (Bill Davis and Bill Higgins) were available in 1940 and many dog owners had themselves been called up to fight in the war (ibid: 4). By 1941, the racing manager and most of the older kennel lads had also been called to serve in the war further reducing the staff levels at the stadium. Matters were little improved little the following year when the stadium also lost Bill Davis to a local factory in March of 1942. The war also affected other aspects of the stadium's management. Black out restrictions for instance resulted in changes to meeting times. Previously held on Friday evenings, racing events were switched to Saturday afternoons in the autumn and winter months to account for nights' drawing in and the restrictions on the use of floodlights
- However despite the bleakness of war, the Stadium, as has been observed of the history of greyhound racing more broadly (c.f. Genders 1946; 1981), was quite active in its support of the war effort. Baiden (2009) has noted that fundraising events in aid of charity frequently took place throughout the war years. In 1940 for instance, a successful auction was held in aid of the Red Cross. Other events included Mr Calcutt's raising of funds in aid of the 'Salute the Soldiers' week – efforts in which he was acknowledged by the then editor of the Oxford Mail (Mr G r Hardacre). Races were also held in aid of the Airborne Forces. Moreover, furthering their support of the war effort, remaining stadium staff formed the Local Defence Volunteers – a unit that was equipped with a rifle, bullets and a pair of binoculars – and whose duties included watching over the nearby Cowley airfield from the lofty position of the stewards box (ibid:4).
- This was also the time when the first 'superstar' arrived at Oxford. "The 'Gunner', a £400 acquisition by Leslie Calcutt", became an instant success helping to ensure large crowd levels despite the wider depressed economic outlook (ibid: 5). In fact, some controversies that arose over the stadium's compliance with wartime rationing are further revealing of the continued popularity of the greyhound racing at Oxford during these war years. A key issue for instance arose over the use of free buses to transport spectators to and from the Swan Hotel, with claims being made that they were using too much rationed petrol. Calcutt's response to the criticism, perhaps the clearest testament of the sport's continued growth in the period was that the buses in question were essential due to the large crowds that were attending the stadium. This popularity continued to characterise greyhound racing in early to mid 1940s with 1944 in particular proving an especially busy year witnessing the arrival of American service men who attended the stadium to watch 'Yankee Doodle' a favourite greyhound at the time (ibid: 8).. Having begun in the

United States, it was perhaps unsurprising that greyhound racing proved popular with these latter service personnel many of whom were in fact undergoing rehabilitation at the Churchill hospital.

- The end of the war marked a return to evening meetings and races were once more held on Tuesday and Friday nights. However, although Calcutt had hoped that the end of blackouts would attract in even larger crowds, this potential was curtailed by the fuel shortages which continued well into late 1940s eventually resulting in a temporary government banning of greyhound racing in the February of 1947. Although the ban was lifted a short while later in March of the same year, matters were further exacerbated by the fact that Oxford was facing its worst winter. Nevertheless despite these being years of some relative financial difficulty for the stadium, the funds resulting from the first meeting of the year (1947) were given in aid of the Mayor's Oxford Food Relief with another charity meeting being held at the end of the year in aid of the Printers Pension Corporation Day thus continuing in the pattern of fundraising that stadium staff, owners and patrons had participated in during the war years (ibid 11).
- 1947 was also the year that Calcutt was appointed director of the Bristol Greyhound Racing Association Ltd resulting in Bristol taking over the Oxford stadium. Although "the exact relationship between Calcutt and the Bristol company at this time was not known" he is thought to have "sold some of his interests in greyhound racing" at Oxford to them. This followed a period of some investment in the modernisation of greyhound racing equipment at the stadium and the subsequent year a new photo finish system was also installed resulting in new racing distances. This investment in greyhound racing was to however be promptly curtailed by the introduction of new tax legislation in the autumn of 1948. Whilst racing continued, its running costs were clearly having a notable effect on Calcutt who steadily turned his attentions to speedways. To this end, Calcutt was exemplifying a wider approach employed by stadia owners in their bid to secure their facilities during periods of slow growth in greyhound racing. As it turned out, this was a particularly productive period for Oxford speedways which despite its position at the bottom of the league was experiencing a huge boom in both attendance and general popularity within the community. In fact such was the rise of speedways during this period that greyhound racing was moved to Tuesday and Friday nights in order to accommodate speedways on the popular Saturday night slot (ibid: 13).
- The tax situation continued to have a negative effect on greyhound racing which was further reduced to single meeting on Friday evenings. By 1951, matters had worsened to the point where Calcutt began to contemplate the closure of the stadium. Criticizing what in his view was the discriminatory nature of the new tax laws -enabling the public to gamble freely in betting shops yet confronting them with considerable taxation if they attended the tracks - Calcutt continued in endeavours to find new ways to boost crowd levels. He attempted to raise attendances by increasing racing days and by introducing races where owners could train their own greyhounds in graded races. However despite these attempt and the fact that the budget of April the following year brought welcomed news in the form of reduced taxes for greyhound racing, Oxford Stadium as Baiden has noted, continued to be "truly in a time of depression" (ibid:16). Tote figures dropped by £100, 000 compared to the previous two years a situation that was further affected by the death Calcutt in August of 1952.
- Following his death, the management of the stadium was assumed by the Bristol Greyhound Racing Association, later to become Bristol Stadium Ltd. Their ownership precipitated a period of some investment in the stadium which included the introduction of ray timing systems installed later that year and the introduction of automatic starting a short while later. Attempts were also made to re-introduce open racing between 1953 and 54, however the National Greyhound Racing Club's annual report for 1954 concluded that "greyhound racing continued to suffer from the 10% tax imposed on totalisator at greyhound race courses" (ibid: 20). Despite this general economic downturn in greyhound racing, the stadium continued to trade into the late 50s .New events were introduced in a bid to boost attendance levels and profits. Oxford first major competition - the 'Two Year Produce Stakes' - was introduced to the

racing schedule in 1957 and went to prove to be quite popular provincially. Other changes also occurred to stadium facilities. The tracks in particular, which had until this point remained of grass, were also re-turfed that year (ibid: 21).

- By 1959, the “local Blackbird Leys estate was experiencing a population boom and many other changes which were to have a beneficial effect on the stadium were taking place to the wider area. The construction of the petrol garage in Sandy Lane, for instance was considered a much welcomed addition by greyhound racing patrons” (ibid :23). Indeed the 1960s, in contrast to the economic downturn that had generally characterised the stadium in the previous decade, were to inaugurate a new era of prosperity for Oxford Stadium. This began with the broadcasting of greyhound racing by the BBC on national television in 1960 followed by local coverage of the stadium by ATV Today a few years later (ibid: 23). In 1964 the Oxfordshire Stakes, an event carrying a £1000 prize, was introduced. It went on to overshadow the produce stakes attracting participation by some of the fastest greyhound in the country. The ‘good times’ continued throughout the 1960s which proved to be particularly productive years for the stadium. This success was reflected in development of stadium facilities. 1968 for instance marked the opening of the new supporter’s club by the Lord Mayor. Built at a cost of £20,000, Baiden has noted that “the building was state of the art at the time and was to hold a great place for the punters to frequent” (ibid: 33)
- The 1970s proved to be years of relatively slow growth. 1971 in particular was a lean year with the announcement by the company that no BAGS (Bookmakers Afternoon Greyhound Service) contract was to be awarded to the stadium. The latter in fact did not return until 1987 without which the stadium had to rely on large crowds. By 1975, it was announced that the stadium would be closing for good with Bristol Stadium Ltd selling it to the Oxford City Council housing committee. This resulted in the formation of the Save our Stadium campaign, a large group of Oxford Stadium supporters who objected to its re-development for housing. With a 27, 000 strong petition to keep the stadium, SOS were given the opportunity by the city council to find an alternative buyer. In the interim, and under new management, the stadium was re-named Cowley Stadium and both speedways and greyhound racing events continued well into 1976. A buyer– Northern Sports Ltd – was eventually found for the stadium in 1977. The same year also brought a boost to stadium in the form of TV coverage by ATN Today. Northern Sport officially took over management in 1978 with the proviso that the stadium would be used solely for recreation activities until 1983.
- Once again renamed Oxford Stadium, the ensuing years commencing with 1980, marked another boom period for the stadium a fact which was reflected in the extensive re-development of the some of its facilities. In 1980 for instance the general manager authorised the demolition of the long standing stadium stone kennels, later to be re-built as a modern complex. Two years later in 1982, Northern Sport Ltd, announced further plans to build a new £ 1.5 million complex to be constructed over the course of the ensuing five years. This followed a similar phase of investment into Oxford’s sister track at Ramsgate. Exerted efforts were also made to improve the Oxford Stadium’s national reputation. A new competition for instance – the Oxfordshire Gold Cup – with a prize of £2000 was introduced in 1985. Other improvements to the stadium also included the replacement of the Bell punch totalisator (a system used since its inception in 1939) with new computerised tote switches (Baiden 2009:46).
- Northern Sport finally unveiled their investment plans in 1986 and it was remarked at the time that “everyone in the greyhound industry was highly impressed with the brand new 150 seat Grandstand restaurant which took Oxford Stadium into the realm of a major professional track.” This new stand consisted of “four squash courts, six snooker tables, a gymnasium, sun beds and a sauna” (ibid: 51). Top jockey John Francombe was the guest of honour on opening night and a new video company – P.R Productions – was also brought in to record all races at the track.“The upward trend continued” into 1987 with “more great news for the stadium” in the form of a new BAGS contract which brought further financial security to the business (ibid: 52). Yet another coup for the stadium came in the form of its selection as the venue of choice for the 1987 BBC Television Trophy. The following year Pall Mall was held at Oxford for the first time, going on to become Oxford’s premier event.“The feel good factor” continued into

1989 when “Oxford was chosen to host the prestigious National Trainers Championship” (ibid: 57). This was also the year that the “most famous greyhound in history, Ballyregan Bob, made his final appearance in Britain at Oxford on the 3rd of October 1989 before leaving for the United States” (ibid: 58). To a great extent in fact, the stadium was generally characterised by a strong betting market and a “considerable amount of money was seen around the track during the late eighties” (ibid 55).

- By 1991, five years after the construction of the new grandstand restaurant, attendances were good and crowd levels continued to rise in the early 90s precipitated perhaps by the victory of an Oxford greyhound at Pall Mall for the first time in the event’s history. This was followed by the fact that Oxford also had a winner at the English Derby in 1993. However, despite the stadium’s success during these years, it became increasingly obvious that its parent company-the builder’s Hawkins Of Harrow- had begun to experience financial difficulties owing largely to the decline in the construction industry – a sector in which the latter had invested heavily (ibid: 64). The mid 90s saw a huge decline in the building trade, signalling disaster for Northern Sport (ibid: 65). “Further problems with their portfolio of garden centres resulted in Hawkins of Harrow going into receivership” (ibid). The sister track at Ramsgate was closed down for good.
- Oxford Stadium continued running with relative success and in 1995 the BBC Television Trophy was held here for a second time. It was eventually sold by the receiver to new owners Oxford Stadium Ltd in 1996. This new period of ownership marked some changes to the stadium. The chromatography labs were discontinued and the process replaced by random sampling. A new computerised photo-finish that could transmit results throughout the stadium was also installed. Moreover, by the late 1990s a new offer called ‘five good things’ had taken root helping to draw huge numbers of newcomers through the gates (ibid:69). Further developments included the construction of the go-karting track on the central green in 1998.
- In 1999, the stadium was once again sold to the Greyhound Racing Association Ltd. The latter was at the time the largest greyhound racing association in Britain and already owned five other stadia including the famous Belle Vue track. Their purchase of the Oxford Stadium led to a further investment in the improvement of its facilities. In 1999, the GRA began work on a new extension completed in March of 2000 which included executive suites and increased restaurant capacity. It also included a huge investment in the form of £130,000 spent on new track surfaces and a hare system. Further developments to greyhound racing included the introduction of another prestigious event to Oxford in 2001 – the Cesarewitch – an event which had started in 1928 and since held at famous tracks such Belle Vue and Catford. In 2002, GRA allowed Sky to televise the Pall Mall stakes which was regarded as Oxford’s biggest competition. This led to some reduction in attendances as punters stayed home to watch the event on television rather than attend the stadium. However, despite this, 2003 generally proved a great year for the stadium with attendance levels remaining reasonably high.
- By mid 2000 however, this mini-boom was generally slowing down with the GRA group experiencing some financial difficulties eventually resulting in their sale of some assets including Wembley stadium. At Oxford BAGS racing continued every week including some Sunday fixtures. This increased racing schedule saw a change in the demographic of stadium goers. The ‘regular race punter’ could no longer keep up with the form of greyhound and this type of race-goer was steadily replaced by a more diverse clientele who frequented the stadium as an evening/ weekend’s ‘night out’ venue. Saturday nights in particular became quite popular with this new crowd.
- In 2006, GRA Ltd and its remaining assets including Oxford Stadium were eventually bought by Risk Capital Partners, a venture capitalist business. Although the following few years proved bad ones for the industry as a whole, with the closure of stadia such as Walthamstow precipitated no doubt by the economic crisis that ensued, attendances at Oxford continued to be satisfactory (ibid: 82).

CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

SPATIAL ANALYSIS

The Study Area is made up of a number of distinct spaces each of which makes a different contribution to the historic interest of the area and have a different relationship with the buildings of the stadium and surroundings.

[The racetracks and centre of the stadium](#)

The race tracks preserve the space and alignments of the tracks that were created in 1939. The tracks have been continually renewed throughout the use of the stadium, whilst the fences between tracks and the infrastructure of the mechanical hare, fencing and lights have been updated over time to maintain the functionality of the venue. Nevertheless the continued focus of the stadium on this space reflects its past use as a circuit for racing, flanked by stands and terraces for spectators. The openness of the space illustrates the historic function of the stadium as a venue for spectator sports and is important to this continued function. The centre of the area included a floral display in the past, making an important contribution to the aesthetic value of the stadium. Subsequently it has had a number of functions, including an American Football pitch. It is now occupied by a go-cart racing circuit adding to the historic uses of the stadium as a motorsports racing circuit and sustaining the significance of the central space as the focus of sporting activity.

[The greyhound paddock](#)

The paddock is a triangular space, enclosed on two sides by the kennels, which are set behind a covered walkway, and partly on the third, south western side by another covered walkway framing views across the open space of the racing circuits to and from the stands to the west and south. The preparation, parading and entrance of greyhounds from the paddock have formed an important element of the excitement of races in the past. The enclosure of the paddock provides some separation from the wider space of the racetracks, which is an important element of the experience of greyhounds arriving from the enclosed space within the central space of the stadium.

[The Speedway pits](#)

The Speedway pits space is enclosed by the surrounding maintenance sheds and changing room facilities used by competitors and the rear of the western terrace. The space is accessed from the stadium by the tunnel under the western terrace, which provides an important sense of drama for spectators as competitors enter from the hidden space (drawing on the historical imagery of gladiators arriving in the amphitheatre). Within the space the enclosed character creates an intimate character that has been greatly appreciated by supporters visiting the area in the past to meet teams and competitors and witness the activity of maintaining motorcycles and preparing for races. As such the character of the space is strongly representative of the stadium's historic interest, which reflects both its communal and historical value.

[The western car park](#)

This large open area is important for the function of the stadium and has some subsidiary value through supporting other activities that contribute to the vitality of the area, including motorcycle training. The car park is fringed by tall trees to the North West.

[The south car park](#)

The south car park fills the space between the entrance from Sandy Lane and the grandstand building. It is well maintained but otherwise a functional space that supports the wider function of the site as a sporting venue. Views across the space provide the first approach to the stadium for many.

Sandy Lane

The stadium is largely hidden from Sandy Lane behind a high concrete post and plank fence in the east and by a high mixed hedgerow in the west. In places the hard line of the fence is softened by shrub planting within a grass verge. Sandy Lane is a surprisingly straight road within a suburb of generally curvaceous roads reflecting its earlier origins as a product of the inclosure of open fields during the early 19th century. On its south side housing is set back at varying distances with green verges between houses and the road creating separation between the later 20th century housing and the older features of the road and stadium complex.

BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES: SITE SURVEY TABLE

Name & No.	Date	Materials	General description / Survival	Use	Contribution to Asset as a whole	Value of contribution
1 Grandstand	C 1987/8 with an extension in 2000	<p>Faced with red brick</p> <p>With a grey synthetic roof</p> <p>The main elevation (facing the track) consists largely of glazed glass panels interrupted by courses of red brick work.</p>	<p>This is a three storey building located on southern end of site and is the first structure visible from Sandy Lane.</p> <p>Its back elevation (facing Sandy Lane) provides access to all three levels whilst that at front (facing the tracks) only offers access to the first two storeys.</p> <p>Although this front elevation is primarily characterised by its large glazed windows, an interesting feature (on the building's west side) is a row of small windows, behind which individual bookmakers would have originally been located.</p> <p>The rest of the building houses a restaurant with seating capacity for 300 people; 3 bars and executive suites.</p> <p>The building has been replaced and enhanced on a number of occasions maintaining its essential function as the primary viewing location for spectators but providing other uses and activity that support the overall function of the stadium as a centre for leisure and recreation that is fit for purpose.</p> <p>The building is in very good condition, being of relatively recent construction</p>	<p>At present, the building houses a number of leisure facilities. It is the venue of a dance and a taekwondo/karate school.</p> <p>Other uses also include its function as a meeting space for local church group. Some of its spaces are used to house office facilities for a security firm.</p>	<p>The original grandstand was destroyed in a fire c1944 and the current building (being a modern structure) is the fourth such structure built in this location, providing the latest in a continuing tradition of the use of this part of the area.</p> <p>The building lies between the main entrance from Sandy Lane and the racetrack, screening views of the activity of racing from passing pedestrians and motorists, but also using the architecture of the building to advertise the stadium's presence. Its position provides framing of the central space of the tracks illustrating their function as the central focus of activity within the stadium.</p> <p>The building has considerable communal and other associative (historical) value, contributing to the historic interest of the stadium.</p> <p>The presence of bookmakers within the main grandstand is a significant aspect of the history and development of gambling at the stadium. These 'bookies' were part of the tote system and stood in stark contrast – both from a legal and spatial perspective – from the local bookies. Not only were the latter's activities 'unregulated', but they were also spatially segregated and directly contrasted to the activities of the former by way of their positioning immediately opposite the windows of the 'official' bookies. With the distinction between the two groups being of importance, it was crucial that local bookies were not only set apart by some degree of distance but that they were also clearly identified. This was achieved through their positioning along the outer ring of the racing track. Their individual positions were marked by posts - suitably adapted for the purposes of 'bookkeeping' in three significant ways; firstly the planks (which were situated at equal distances) were individually spot lit; secondly, a wooden rest (about the size of an A4 notepad) was attached to each post at a suitable height for the purpose of placing bets; and finally a flag was mounted on each post to signal the individual bookie. (These posts are still present).</p> <p>The presence of large spans of glass also contributes to the building's significance. Apart from the great trackside views offered by the building, past users have commented that the idea of "putting people behind glass" was quite a significant</p>	Medium

					<p>aspect of their attraction to it. Whereas other spectator stands on the site are characterised by their open nature, the use of glass in the grandstand building added to its hermetic feeling. In setting some distance between the occupants and the main activity on the tracks, the glass served as a sort of 'diversion' from the latter activities, directing them instead to those taking place within the stand, including social activity.</p> <p>These activities were best suited to enclosed space. The building is associated by many as space of 'social consumption' (of food, drink and gambling) as well as a site of 'romance'. There are many who met there for the first time and who associate the building with various personal memories.</p> <p>The building has continued to facilitate interpersonal connections for its current users. In particular it has fostered the communities that have grown out of the dance studio and Karate school.</p> <p>From a commercial perspective, the secondary sale activities associated with the grandstand, particularly food and drink, were crucial to the stadium's success. Admittance into the stadium was free for some events with these secondary activities generating income.</p>	
2	1939	<p>Steel frame structure with walls flanked by yellow stock bricks.</p> <p>The front elevation is clad with profiled metal and incorporates signage.</p> <p>A metal staircase leads to the second floor.</p>	<p>It is a narrow three story structure with a mono pitched roof, located on the east side of the tracks.</p> <p>Modern windows – offering panoramic views of the go-kart and other tracks – have been added to the front elevation in the space that would have been previously designated for the totalisator display.</p> <p>Windows on the side elevations are original to the building while those to the back (date unknown) have been blocked up.</p> <p>The building was originally introduced as a consequence of wider government plans to regulate greyhound racing and housed the totalisator.</p> <p>Like others of its kind, it is cheaply built and designed. This uniformity in design reflected their general use. As the machinery that went in them was mass produced, so too were the buildings that housed them.</p> <p>This equipment would have been housed mainly</p>	<p>Aside from its original use to house the totalisator mechanism, the building has served various purposes over the proceeding decades.</p> <p>The second and third floors were used as administrative space for the stadium but were later adapted for office accommodation (c 1980).</p> <p>The ground floor level was originally partitioned horizontally. The back section (previously boarded up) housed the electrics for the stadium before its re-wiring in the 1970s at which point the copper wiring was sold and replaced by a sodium lighting system. The front section was open standing room for spectators who often used this space as a point for arrange meetings (during non-greyhound racing events).</p> <p>In the 1990s the building began to be used for the go-kart business, a purpose that continues to the present day. The second floor currently serves as a reception area for go-karting customers whilst the third floor is used as staff and office space. The lower ground floor has also been adapted for go-</p>	<p>Despite the change in use and subsequent removal of machinery, the building remains of great significance as it contributes to the evidential value of the racing track and associated structures. It informs our understanding of the activities that took place at the stadium as well as charting wider developments in the history of gambling in the UK. Moreover, as one of a few such buildings left in the UK it has rarity value – it is estimated that of the remaining racing tracks in the country, only 9 have Tote buildings.</p> <p>It is cited by members of the community as being of great communal significance to them. As a space in which people would congregate, the building (in particular its ground floor space) has communal significance.</p> <p>Throughout their regular attendance of events at the stadium, people developed certain patterns. Regulars would for instance often stand on the same spot and as a consequence would get opportunities to form connections with other spectators. Over time, these connections developed into lasting bonds.</p> <p>Standing underneath the Tote building is cited as having been a "very communal thing to do" and the building forms a significant part in people's collective memories of the stadium.</p>	High

			<p>on the second floor with some other aspects of the mechanism being situated on the third floor.</p> <p>This equipment has since been sold and some alterations made to the internal structure. Apart from these changes the building survives in good condition and is currently used for other functions that support the continued use of the stadium for racing and motorsports in particular.</p>	<p>karting purposes – it has since been opened up and is used as storage space for go-karts and other related equipment.</p>		
<p>3</p> <p>East Terrace</p>	C1950	<p>Concrete framed by wooden fencing</p>	<p>Concrete structure adjacent to the Tote building. It is designed as a series of steps, rising to offer good views of the tracks to the front and kennels to the back.</p> <p>It survives in relatively good condition</p>	<p>Given its location next to the kennels, the stand is likely to have been used by dog owners - rather than members of the public - during greyhound meetings. The fact that the front elevation of the tote building (on which would have been displayed the scores) is not visible from this point would also have devalued the space as a viewing post for greyhound spectators.</p> <p>Indirectly, this fact would also have served as preventative measure guarding against possible interference with the dogs.</p> <p>The stand was however quite popular with speedways spectators. For speedways, standing here would have been important because it is the first turn of the circuit.</p> <p>A second terrace – a wooden structure constructed on a metal frame – now demolished c1990, would have previously stood some distance from this stand to the right. It is visible in photographs c1970 illustrated in Baiden's (2009) book.</p> <p>The stand is no longer in use as a greyhound or speedways viewing post owing to the fact that these activities have since discontinued. It does however offer good views of the go-kart track which is still active.</p>	<p>It holds some social value for certain 'groups' connected to the stadium. In particular, its location (next to the kennels) and its positioning across the first turn of the speedways track makes it a structure of some significance for dog trainers and speedways supporters.</p> <p>As a feature in the wider 'landscape' it illustrates the development and past uses of the site.</p> <p>As with other terraces for spectators it directs attention on the central space of the tracks as the focus of activity in the stadium.</p>	High
<p>4</p> <p>Ancillary kennel building</p> <p>(Grading room)</p>	c. 1987/88	<p>Walls constructed of red brick</p> <p>Has a flat 'tin' roof</p> <p>Glass window in the front elevation.</p>	<p>This is a small flat roofed rectangular building, prominently situated in the middle of the triangular 'kennel complex' on the far east side of the tracks.</p> <p>It is framed by the row of kennels constructed along the perimeter of the 'complex' and is accessed through a long, narrow and sheltered walkway that leads on to the tracks.</p>	<p>Dogs had to be graded before each race and the building would have housed the scales used to weigh them. It is also the place where the dogs would have been individually brought out from the kennels to be fitted with their jackets.</p> <p>The walkway that connects it to the tracks served as an assembly point where the dogs would be lined up before a race meeting.</p>	<p>The building contributes to the overall historic value of the site as a physical reminder of the development of greyhound racing at the stadium.</p> <p>The walkway is of particular significance as a space collectively remembered as one of 'great anticipation.' The dogs' positioning on the painted slabs marked the beginning of a racing event. Announcements were often made about individual dogs before they were led onto the tracks and briefly paraded in front of spectators in the stands. In this regard, the communal significance of the walkway is comparable to that of</p>	High

			Although its walkway is in need of maintenance, the building survives in good condition being of fairly modern construction.	The floor surface – comprised of concrete slabs – is characterised by a series of numbers that are painted on it. These would have served as markers, correlating to a dog's individual position on the starting traps.	the speedways tunnel which is situated directly opposite on the west side of the tracks. It is also here – at one end of the walkway – that a camera man would have stood, capturing each individual dog as it took its position on its marker. These first images of the dogs as they left the kennels (beamed across the stadium) were of significance for those wishing to gamble on the dogs as they often based their bets on such ephemeral signs as 'how a dog looked' as it stood before the race.	
5 Kennels	c.1987/8	Made of block work Asbestos roof Timber doors	A row of single height flat roofed structures forming a triangular shape that follows the line marking the outer perimeter of the stadium. They are air-conditioned and were quite modern at the time of their construction. They survive in generally good condition.	They were originally used as kennels for greyhound racing and would have housed around 80-90 dogs for a big meeting.	The complex contributes to the overall historic and communal value of the site as a reminder of past activities performed at the stadium. It stands in direct relation to the speedways pits situated west of the tracks. The fact that both spaces convey a 'sense of enclosure' and distinction from other parts of the site illustrates their significance as 'preparation areas' for both sports. They were both zones where members of the public were excluded being limited to 'performers' (human and animal) and other staff.	Medium
6 Vet office and quarantined kennels		Painted brickwork Wooden doors	This is a double height flat roofed structure adjacent to the tote building. It is built at a right angle on the far east corner of the 'kennel complex.' The outer aspect of the building remains intact; however there is much damage to it internally. Certain facilities – such as the washing area (for the dogs bedding) – have been removed as have some the internal doors.	The building (comprising of four enclosed rooms accessed via an open central area) was originally used to house a small veterinary office along with quarantine kennel spaces and a washing area.	Although the building is not considered to have any special historic, communal or other associative value in its own right, it is however of utilitarian significance particularly in view of its relation to the wider functioning of the 'kennel complex'.	Low
7 Registration office	c1987/8	Timber-framed, clad in wooden panels Wooden door Window on the side elevation	This is a small flat roofed cubic building, situated at the entrance of the 'kennel complex.' It is of rudimentary construction and expedient design. Nevertheless it survives in relatively good condition.	It was originally used as a registration office for the dogs before the latter went on to be housed in the kennels.	Whilst in isolation the building appears to be of little value – given that it is of very basic construction – it does, in actual fact, hold some associative significance for greyhound racing supporters as a general spatial signifier of the performative aspects of greyhound racing. To this extent, the process of registering can be viewed as one in a series of 'preparatory acts' (that included weighing, jacket fitting, parading amongst others) that together formed the whole experience of a greyhound racing event.	Medium
8 & 9 Starting traps	c1948	Concrete base Framed by low timber fencing	These rectangular shaped starting boxes, located north of the tracks, survive today merely as empty recessed spaces signifying areas that would have originally housed the steel framed mechanisms that constituted the dog traps. These would have supported a strong steel post about two metres high which would have been bolted onto a concrete slab adjacent to the	The space was originally used as the resting position for the starting trap.	Though much altered, the starting boxes make some contribution to the historic value of the stadium as whole. They form a significant aspect of the wider narrative of greyhound racing at the site and help inform our understanding of the evolution of a greyhound racing event. Each box position marks a specific distance and the latter would have varied over the years. Gary Baiden (2009) for instance has noted how the installation of the photo finish	High

			<p>starting box. A large beam would have extended from it, under which, the starting traps would have been suspended for the greyhounds.</p> <p>This mechanism was operated by compressed air and electricity and would swing across onto the track at the start of a race and swing back into the recessed space when the traps were released.</p> <p>The latter were released when the mechanical hare, travelling past along a steel rail that ran along the edge of the track, triggered the electrics – opening the doors as result.</p> <p>These mechanisms and part of the steel rail have since been removed and the electrics disabled. In fact, to a lay person, the present condition of the boxes gives little indication of their original purpose.</p>		<p>system in 1948 resulted in the institution of new racing distances.</p> <p>It is possible that the boxes date to this late 1940s period.</p>	
<p>10</p> <p>North Terrace</p>	1939	Concrete	<p>This is a concrete structure positioned on 'a straight' at north end of the tracks. It is designed as a series of concrete steps which rise to give good views of the dog racing starting traps along with the speedways track. Its back elevation is faced with wooded cladding onto which advertising materials would have been affixed in the recent past.</p> <p>The structure is as much defined by the empty spaces that surround it on either end of its side elevations as it is by its material elements. It exudes an air of isolation being sharply cut off from other structures at both ends. These empty spaces are, to a great extent, visual echoes the forms that would have stood there in the past.</p> <p>What is now an empty space separating this northern terrace from others situated on the west for instance, previously marked the position of a timber and metal framed terrace that existed well into the 1970s. The latter is thought to have been removed at this time in order to provide access to the railway company for the purposes of maintenance. The railway most likely had the right of way since this is the only accessible point on the track in the sense that it is the only place that the ground is level –as one goes east from here, the railway drops off into a cutting, while to the west the height of the embankment increases.</p> <p>The stand is currently in bad condition. The</p>	Originally used as a viewing position as it offers good views of the greyhound and Speedway tracks. However it is currently is a state of maintenance.	<p>As an original structure, it provides connection with the early history of the stadium. As a space where supporters of the sports have congregated and socialised it has communal value.</p> <p>By continuing the lines of the terraced stands from the western terraces it also helps to emphasise the shape of the race track in the centre of the stadium with simple lines in an unpretentious structure that reflects the modernist principles of the stadium's functional 'pleasure architecture'.</p> <p>Its position draws attention to and encloses the central space of the race tracks illustrating their importance as the focus of activity in the stadium</p>	High

			concrete steps have weathered badly and parts of it are eroding. Weeds have also began to encroach onto the structure			
11 Shed		Painted brickwork Wooden door	This is a small flat roofed cubic structure situated on the north end of the track between the northern and western terraces. Access to it is partly blocked by the extensive overgrowth of weeds that surround it. The structure is also generally in a bad state of repair.	It was originally used as a toilet block servicing spectators on nearby terraces. In recent years however, it has been used as a shed primarily for storing the salt used on the tracks.	As an isolated structure, the building appears to add little to the overall significance of the site. It is however arguable that it may be of some very limited historic value due to its position and association with neighbouring terraces.	Low
12 Western terraces	1939	Concrete and timber with metal fencing	These are two stands following the general curve of the track separated by a concrete 'tunnel structure' that runs between them. Both terraces are in need of maintenance.	The stands were particularly associated with Speedway supporters given their location on a crucial racing bend. The first terrace (to the north west) was an important Speedway viewing area. It is partially divided by a medium sized picket fence. Like the eastern terrace at the opposite end of the stadium, this space would have been restricted from members of the public and specially designated for Speedway riders and their managers. The unenclosed area was popular with children who gained an opportunity both to meet their heroes and get autographs, as well as to observe some of the preparatory activities taking place in the speedway sheds at the back (by peering through the metal fencing).	Being original structures, the stands (despite their present condition) contribute to the connection with the early history of the stadium. They are, furthermore, of great communal value for the Speedways community who reflect upon them as spaces associated with valued personal and local memories. The materiality (i.e. form) of the north western stand in particular, coupled with its positioning on a crucial bend and the important views it offers to the front and back, are factors that feature prominently in the collective memories of speedways supporters. The curving lines of the stands echo the curves of the track and contribute simple, unpretentious structures that enclose the central space of the stadium, illustrating its function as the focus of racing activity and contribute to the overall aesthetic value of the stadium.	High
13 Speedways Tunnel Structure	c. 1949	Steel beams Painted block work	Situated on the western end of the site, the structure is flanked by concrete terraces on either end with a small, sloped roofed, cubic building constructed on top. The passage that emerges at the centre is primarily characterised by its painted block work and exposed steel beams. It survives in relatively good condition	The tunnel connects the secluded speedways sheds to the back with the central stadium space at the front. It also housed a telephone which facilitated communication between speedways competitors and the referee who was located in the main grandstand building. Since riders were only paid according to their performance and would often dispute a referee's ruling, distance between the two parties was considered a vital technique of avoiding conflict. The cubed structure above the tunnel originally housed a ticket office from which Speedway programmes were sold. It is open	As a structure that has been used throughout the history of Speedway at Oxford, the tunnel makes a significant contribution to the overall historic value of the site, helping to convey the general development of the sport at the stadium. To this extent, it serves as an important illustration of physical and metaphoric connections between speedways and other stadium structures as well as with the wider community. Moreover, as a space of great anticipation and excitement (analogous to the kennel walkway), the tunnel structure occupies a prized position in the collective memories of generations of stadium goers. As such, it makes an important contribution to the historic interest of the stadium through its association with the drama of past races whilst it adds to the architectural interest of the terraces to either side as a structure that illustrates the activity of the stadium in the past.	High

				at both its side elevations, providing public access from the uppermost steps of the western terraces. In 2005 a hole was opened through its front elevation enabling the space to also serve as a commentary box.	The small building at the top arguably holds some special significance in its own right both as a space associated with the valued ephemera of speedways (i.e. the programmes) and as signifier communicating the symbolic links between speedways fans to their 'heroes'.	
14 Speedways sheds	c.1949	Painted blockwork Painted render Corrugated iron roof	The Speedway sheds are a series of structures situated on the west side of the tracks. They comprise a mixture of sloped roofed open sheds; a pitched roofed rectangular building; and small mono pitched shed. The structures are designed as two parallel rows facing each other creating a sense of seclusion comparable to that of the 'kennel complex' at the opposite end of the site. They have suffered a degree of vandalism and survive in a state of some disrepair.	The structures were used as preparation and maintenance areas for Speedway motorbikes for competing teams. The open bays, which are designed opposite each other, would have housed opposing teams. Each rider was allocated a particular position within the bay. The rectangular building originally housed changing rooms; shower and toilet facilities and a medical room.	The sheds are of great communal value both to the people associated with Speedway and the wider community who attended the stadium. They are also of historical significance as they help illustrate the development and past uses of the site.	High
15 Kiosk		Painted brick and block work Steel Wooden shutters	This is a rectangular, flat concrete roof structure with hatches on the front elevation located next to the 'Director's Bar' at the south western end of the site. It is strategically situated to be both near the original main stadium entrance to the south and the western terrace stands which were popular with Speedway spectators. It has some cosmetic damage to the blockwork on its front elevation and a hatch is missing.	Designed next to the original main entrance, the building was originally intended to serve crowds as they entered and exited the stadium and was to this end used to sell food and other refreshments to spectators. When this entrance ceased to be used, the kiosk's position across from the western terraces led to its change of use to a shop selling Speedway merchandise.	The structure contributes to the overall significance of the site as one of a collection of buildings that communicate its history of development. As a space associated with various consumptive practices (of food etc.) it has positive associations as a formerly communal space. Apart from holding special significance for Speedway fans, it also likely to feature in the memories of the wider community given its original prominence as the first and last structure spectators would have encountered as they passed through the stadium.	Medium
16 Nissen Hut	Before 1955 with extension by 1971	Concrete Glazed glass panels Corrugated iron	This is a long concrete structure with a curved corrugated iron roof and a glazed lean-to extension to the front. It is typical of other Nissen huts dating to the inter-war years in its simple design and economic use of materials which would have been scarce during this period. Though the external fabric of the building survives in relatively good condition, its internal layout has been altered and is presently in a state of disrepair.	Nissen huts were originally associated with army barracks and were designed as cheap, easily portable prefabricated buildings that readily lent themselves to a variety of uses. The existence of the hut at the stadium and its lean-to extension reflects the wider history of these huts, highlighting their subsequent popularity as public buildings. The Oxford Stadium hut, referred to as the 'Director's Bar', was originally used as bar/restaurant space during the post-war period and continued to serve this purpose until the construction of the modern grandstand building.	As a structure associated with various social activities and an important viewing post for the start of the race, the building contributes to the communal significance of the wider site. It is also of historic and architectural significance as an illustrative marker of the development of 'pleasure architecture' in Britain more broadly. The latter were often characterised by their cheap and simple a-historic/modernist designs, intended to distinguish 'pleasure' spaces from those associated with 'more cerebral' activities. To this extent the nature of the bar as a mass produced building type exemplifies the great preoccupation in stadia architecture with simplicity, utility and expedience of design.	High

				<p>The wide expanses of glass characterising its front elevation coupled with its position along southern end of the stadium made it a prime viewing position for the start of greyhound racing events.</p> <p>At present the building is used as storage facility for various machinery related to the maintenance of the tracks.</p>	<p>The orientation of the bar to provide overlooking of the track space helps to illustrate the focus of activity within the stadium towards the tracks and contributes to the enclosure of this focal space.</p>	
<p>17</p> <p>Toilet block</p>	C 1987/8	<p>Red brick</p> <p>Wooden doors</p> <p>Corrugated iron roofs</p>	<p>This is a rectangular shaped building of red brick construction with a flat corrugated iron roof.</p> <p>It survives in a generally good state, being a structure of relatively modern construction.</p>	<p>It was used as a toilet block serving spectators on the western terraces and nissen hut.</p>	<p>Apart from its utilitarian purpose, it is not considered to make any other significant contributions to the overall value of the site</p>	Low

ASSESSMENT OF SUITABILITY FOR DESIGNATION AS A CONSERVATION AREA

SPECIAL HISTORIC OR ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST

The following features contribute to the area's special historic and architectural interest:

- The site has been used by the community for greyhound-racing and Speedway with a history of use since 1939 (opened by Lord Denham) and evidence of an earlier unregulated flapping track in the same location.
- The location and character of the stadium illustrate the socio-economic character of Oxford's eastern suburbs during the 20th century and, therefore, have historical interest through their associations with its community. The area is representative of inter-war sport and entertainment within the city as part of Oxford's early 20th century growth in response to development as a manufacturing centre, representing an important stage in the development of the city as a whole. The area is unique in the city as an early 20th century stadium used by the public and with strong associations with the local residential community (two other stadia White Hart Lane and the Manor Ground have been lost).
- The area provides association with Speedway teams (Oxford Cheetahs among others) and competitors that were/are nationally renowned and with their supporters contributing to local identity and providing historical interest.
- The area provides association with national level Speedway competitions and is seen as an internationally prestigious venue within the sport providing historical interest. Association with supporters of Greyhound Racing and with nationally and regionally significant competitions and competitors (Greyhounds and their trainers). Association with particular neighbourhoods and communities of Oxford (East Oxford, Cowley and Blackbird Leys). The types of building in the area as a group illustrate the use, but also the development and evolution of the site and activities. The number of stadia for both greyhound racing and Speedway has fallen dramatically in the late 20th century and early 21st century. The Oxford Stadium is now a rare example and is unique in the City and County, in terms of the historic sports it represents. As such, the historic and architectural interest of the stadium would be considered as special in the local and national context. Use for other sport: The area also has associations with other sports including flat track racing, stock car racing, American Football and go-cart racing which add to its historical interest.

CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE: A STADIUM FOR GREYHOUND AND SPEEDWAYS RACING

- The survival of original structures of the stadium (or representative replacements) provides evidence of the greyhound and speedway activities that have taken place since, at least, 1939 and help in understanding the site and how it was used.
- The surviving Tote building is one of only 9 such structures remaining in the country and preserves its historic form as constructed in the 1930s and its relationship with the track, albeit with alterations to enable its use as office space. As such it contributes considerable architectural interest to the area. The use of the Totalisator or Tote was unique to Greyhound Stadia and represents a feature that contributed to the early success of the sport. As such, its survival adds to the historic interest of the area as an historic venue for Greyhound Racing.
- The Stadium Grandstand building frames the racetrack space and is built on the site of the two former grandstands, illustrating both the continuity of the site's use and the evolution of facilities to serve the changing needs of the sport and the spectators.
- Terraces survive. These provide an immediate connection with the early days of both main sports and are essentially unchanged since the late 1930s preserving the closeness of spectators to the action of races and shared experience with spectators past, providing considerable historic interest. Their long sweeping curves and use of concrete reflect the utilitarian and unadorned modernist ideals of the inter-war period contributing to the area's architectural interest. The covered tunnel to the speedway pits is a distinctive feature of the stadium creating a point of drama as competitors enter from the pits beyond and shares the materials and simple forms of the terraces and therefore also contributes to the area's architectural and historic interest.
- Ancillary buildings survive. Ancillary buildings including turnstiles, the sheds of the greyhound paddocks and the Directors' Bar are evocative of the development of the site and its long history of use as a sporting venue, including both surviving early structures and appropriate later replacements that have preserved the character of the stadium as a sporting venue. These contribute to the historical interest of the stadium, whilst the former Directors' Bar contributes architectural interest by illustrating the historic materials and building forms that characterised the early days of the stadium and its 'ephemeral' architecture.

- Speedway sheds survive. The sheds of the Speedway pits are both an element of the functional infrastructure of the stadium and have been a focus for both the team members and supporters who commonly interacted in this area providing historical interest.
- Open central area framed by buildings and ancillary activities and preserving the alignments of racetracks that have been used since the 1930s. This feature provides a connection with the past sporting events that have taken place which is evocative for past competitors and supporters, as well as providing present users with a connection to this past and therefore contributes to the historic interest of the stadium
- The ephemeral nature of the buildings, often using prefabricated, low cost elements is representative of buildings associated with the sport historically and their adaptability to changing circumstances, which also heightens the rarity value if any of the earlier structures survive.
- The location and character are closely comparable to those of other similar stadia elsewhere, which are (or were) generally located near to or within working class residential areas or manufacturing districts, providing workers access to sports that were affordable for both spectators and participants and requiring relatively small spaces for venues (compared to horse racing), as well as the attraction of potential prize-money.
- The stadium's architectural character, made up of simple structures reflects the general ephemeral nature of sporting buildings throughout the 20th century with a general absence of architectural pretension.
- The character of the space of the track and surrounding stands reflects the close setting of spectators to racing that, historically, was a key attraction of the stadia. This is well preserved in the surviving 1930s stands and the space of the tracks, albeit with renewed surfaces.

CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE: LOCATION AND CONTEXT

- The historic context provides understanding of medieval routes out of the city and Enclosure Act changes, development of railway connections and the process of development of the industrial suburb of Cowley over the countryside beyond the edge of the city.
- Watlington Road; this is an historic route from Oxford to Henley and London, reduced in importance in the late 18th century by reorganisation of the regional road network, which made this area a backwater until industrialisation in the late 19th and early 20th century.
- Sandy Lane; a straight route forming the frontage to the stadium complex with an alignment that was established as a consequence of enclosure of open fields in 1817 and providing a remnant of the rural landscape that the industrial uses and later suburbs expanded across.
- Branch railway line; the railway line and embankment to the north were established in 1864 attracting industrial development and associated activity to the villages just outside the city.
- Industrial development from 1860s; The site lies on the edge of a district of former and current heavy manufacturing associated with car manufacturing including both Morris Motors and Pressed Steel and now Unipart and BMW Mini. The site of the Oxford Bus Company Depot, to the east of the stadium was previously a small iron works. The site is one of a number of sites with sports and recreation uses that formed a fringe to this manufacturing area, either supported by the factories or exploiting the potential market of workers.
- Blackbird Leys; – The first houses of the Blackbird Leys suburb faced onto the stadium site and were built in 1958. As an existing social venue the stadium has provided a focus for the social interaction of the estate and contributes to the local sense of identity and the character of the wider suburb. This has been supported by the variety of community uses that the stadium has served.

CONCLUSION

The site is an area suitable for area protection, containing buildings, structures and spaces enclosed by those buildings. The analysis of the history of the site and the contextual analysis provide sufficient evidence to determine the heritage significance the site holds. This shows that character and appearance of the area derives from this interest and provides physical evidence that represents the collective memory of those working communities and their leisure pursuits. The area does hold sufficient historic and architectural interest to be considered for designation as a conservation area. The following factors are considered to make the preservation and enhancement of the area's character and appearance desirable:

- Sustaining community value: The stadium is valued by both the local community of Oxford and a wider, national and international community of supporters of both greyhound racing and Speedway as a source of their community cohesion and identity.
- Local distinctiveness and identity: As an important historic site of sporting competitions with strong associations for the local community, but also providing connections with teams who have represented Oxford and as a focus for visitors to the city the area, including its use, its historical and architectural interest and the character and appearance that flow from them makes an important contribution to the distinctiveness and identity of Blackbird Leys and Oxford as a whole. It is representative of the development of Oxford and its communities in early and later 20th century.
- Rarity: The area is an example of a nationally rare form of development and retains an example of a totalisator or tote building that is one of only nine original examples in the UK which preserves its historical association with the track and surrounding stands.
- Importance of spatial character to understanding of significance: The ability to understand the area as a heritage asset is dependent on preserving its spatial character including not only the individual buildings but also the spaces between them such as the tracks, pits and greyhounds paddocks that illustrate the purpose of the buildings and contribute to the special historic interest and character and appearance of the area.