

For more details, please contact:

Lottie Crossley, PR Manager

Tel: 07818 033 122

Email: lcrossley@hayfieldhomes.co.uk

Andy Morris speech for the RAF memorial unveiling at Stanton Harcourt

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, my name is Andy Morris, and as the Managing Director of Hayfield, I am delighted to welcome you to our Hayfield Green development. We really appreciate you all turning out for this special occasion, and we are both pleased and relieved to have the space to be able to gather outdoors in a safe way.

It was over 81 years ago when George Wimpey & Co and British Runways Ltd commence construction here to create RAF Stanton Harcourt. In only four months – with a fatal enemy attack part-way through – the brave team of construction workers had completed three tarmac runways, a range of associated buildings and structures, together with vital anti-aircraft defences. I expect there is much we could learn from the incredible pace of construction deployed back then! However, rather than getting people together to get a job done, the construction industry has become very skilled at keeping people apart, while the NHS continues to battle against the Coronavirus pandemic.

The 66 houses, bungalows and maisonettes we are now in the final stages of delivering here have proven very popular, with the majority of the private homes selling well ahead of our build programme. It is so pleasing to see how this new community is developing, with a fusion of locals and those who have relocated from near and far to live in this special place. There are paramedics, research scientists, an ultra-marathon runner, an Officer from RAF Brize Norton, and a number of families with school-aged children already enjoying living at Hayfield Green.

We are immensely proud that there are nine buildings and structures – together with sections of the airfield runway – which date back to 1940 that you can see here today in all their former glory. It was very important to Hayfield when we first considered this development opportunity to find sensitive ways to retain and restore as much of the originality of RAF Stanton Harcourt as possible. The restoration of the air raid and blast shelters, Guard House, Water Tower and Bomber Training Building are all now complete, immortalising the unique history for generations to come.

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We also wanted to do justice to this 21-acre site by incorporating a rich landscape of swale networks, native species planting and gateway tree retention. Working with our talented landscapers, we have also taken pride in the design and creation of inviting formal garden areas where residents and visitors can relax and enjoy the beauty of this historic West Oxfordshire village.

The bronze memorial we will shortly be unveiling took a year to research and produce. We are very thankful to Stanton Harcourt Parish Council and the RAF's Air Historical Branch for all their work looking back into the archives to ensure the 135 heroic men and women who served at RAF Stanton Harcourt are never forgotten. I would also like to acknowledge the work of Leander Architectural in the skilled production of the memorial, and for storing it safely through many months of Covid lockdowns and restrictions until we could bring you all together safely today.

While we have been waiting for the appropriate time to unveil this memorial, Hayfield has celebrated five years since we first started trading. Hayfield Green was our sixth development, and in the past two years we have launched a further six schemes across Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Wiltshire and Buckinghamshire. We will be delivering around 300 luxury family homes this year, and work will start on our third Bedfordshire development in the coming weeks.

Before we hear from Group Captain Flynn, I would like to hand over to Cllr Matthew Judson who has recently taken over as Chair of Stanton Harcourt Parish Council... Councillor Judson.