



Planning Statement

Erection of Sub Station Building

New Technical Site, Bicester Heritage, Oxfordshire, OX27 8AL

Prepared for: Bicester Heritage Ltd.

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Edgars on behalf of Bicester Heritage Limited for the erection of a new Sub Station Building to provide essential infrastructure and support the delivery of the New Technical Site development at Bicester Heritage, Bicester, Oxfordshire, OX27 8AL.
- 1.2 The planning application is comprised of the following documents
- Location plan; and
 - Block Plan.
- 1.3 The following sections of this planning statement will consider:
- The site and surrounding area;
 - Relevant planning policy including the Development Plan, NPPF and other key documents;
 - Key planning considerations including the principle of development and heritage.
- 1.4 Within that context, the statement concludes that the proposed development is acceptable in planning terms and is in accordance with the Development Plan and wider presumption in favour of sustainable development.



2 Site and Surrounding Area

2.1 The application site is located immediately to the west of proposed B139 within the New Technical Site at Bicester Heritage (Former RAF Bicester). Bicester Heritage is 2.4km (1 ½ miles) north / north east of the centre of the market town of Bicester.

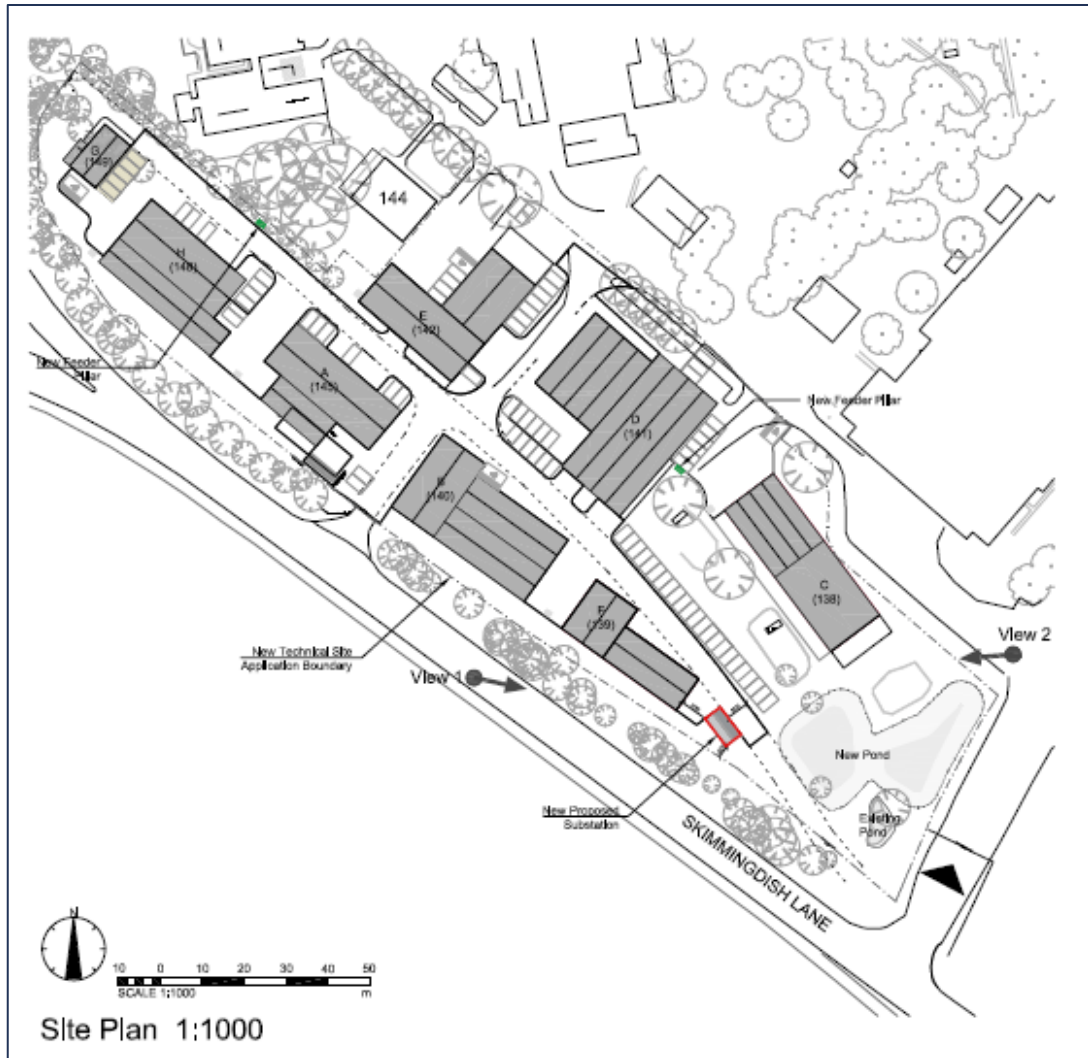


Figure 1: Site Location Plan

Bicester

- 2.2 Bicester is identified in the 2011 Census as having a population of 32,642 having grown rapidly during the previous 50 years. The town is identified as being less sensitive in landscape terms than other towns in the district and is a focus for economic growth.
- 2.3 Bicester's economy is focused on storage and distribution, food processing, and motorsport engineering. Most of the employment in Bicester is in the distribution and manufacturing sectors. Previously, before closure, MOD activities at Former RAF Bicester also contributed to the economy of the town.
- 2.4 The town is well-connected by road and rail. It has good infrastructure and significant investment is either being delivered or planned. Bicester is approximately 14 miles from Oxford. The good connectivity, close-proximity and relationship with Oxford helps Bicester by creating opportunities for economic development. Bicester is also well-connected to and influenced by the Chilterns, M25 corridor and London markets.



- 2.5 The Economic Development Strategy for Cherwell identifies opportunities for Bicester to develop a knowledge economy around existing and new employers, sectors and clusters to create a centre of expertise and competitive advantage. Bicester Heritage has made a significant contribution to the economy of the town and wider district since its inception in 2013.
- 2.6 Bicester is located at the focal point of a corridor of motorsport engineering expertise with 7 Formula 1 teams, and 7 tier 1 motorsport teams and suppliers located within 30 miles. Approximately 15 centres of motor manufacturing excellence are also located within 40 miles.

Bicester Heritage

- 2.7 Bicester Heritage is a business park dedicated to historic motoring excellence (UK's 1st) comprising a hub of successful highly specialist businesses. Bicester Heritage Ltd. purchased the technical site and flying field in 2013 and since then have embarked on a meticulous, detailed and carefully considered redevelopment of the site. This is reflected in the planning history for the site that demonstrates the high quality of development.
- 2.8 A combination of careful management and development of the historic site and an 8-figure investment has led to the success of the site to date that has attracted national and local media interest.
- 2.9 Development has been delivered through a collaborative planning approach with Cherwell District Council, Oxfordshire County Council and Historic England. This relationship advanced and the parties worked together to create the second only Heritage Partnership Agreement in the UK. Development delivered through the HPA at Bicester Heritage has been consistently of high quality and the site was removed from the Heritage at Risk Register in 2015.

Application Site

- 2.10 The proposed Sub Station is to be located immediately to the east of B139 and to the north of the boundary with Skimmingdish Lane.
- 2.11 The proposed building measures 8.19 metres x 4.46 metres and is to be constructed of brick under a shallow profile sheet roof. The proposed building has simple regular form and includes two pairs of side hung steel doors to the front elevation. The colour of the side hung doors will respect the palette of material within the technical site and the guidance contained within the HPA. To the west elevation the building comprises a small level high level louvre outlet. No other openings are proposed. Internally a single partition is proposed to house the proposed electrical equipment.
- 2.12 The site comprises Previously Developed Land. The site is in Flood Zone 1 with a low probability of flooding. The site is adjacent to a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) to the east. A Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is approximately 875m to the north east. The site is not in Green Belt. The site is not in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

3 Relevant Planning History



- 3.1 Having reviewed the online records held by Cherwell District Council, whilst there is an extensive planning history for wider site since the disposal from military use, the most relevant planning history to the development is outlined in the table below.

Reference	Description	Decision
18/01333/F	Extension of existing Technical Site to provide new employment units comprising flexible B1(c) light industrial, B2 (general industrial), B8 (storage or distribution) uses with ancillary offices, storage, display and sales, together with associated access, parking and landscaping	Planning permission granted 03/09/2019

- 3.2 Bicester Heritage is in frequent dialogue with officers from Cherwell District Council (CDC) regarding development at the site and this has established a positive relationship with the Council.
- 3.3 Officers have been supportive of the vision at Bicester Heritage and have overall been supportive of change of use proposals on the site.



4 Relevant Planning Policy

- 4.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.2 The relevant document of the Development Plan comprises the Cherwell Local Plan 2011 – 2031: Part 1. The Bicester Heritage – Heritage Partnership agreement, RAF Bicester Conservation Area Appraisal and Former RAF Bicester Planning brief are identified as material considerations. These documents are considered in turn below.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) February 2019

- 4.3 The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England. The chapters and paragraphs of the NPPF identified as of particular relevance to this proposal are identified in this section below.
- 4.4 **Paragraph 7** states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without comprising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- 4.5 **Paragraph 8** states that achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives:
- Economic: building a strong, responsive and competitive economy by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation.
 - Social: supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities by meeting the needs of present and future generations.
 - Environmental: contributing to the protection and enhancement of natural, built and historic environments.
- 4.6 **Paragraph 11** states that plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay.
- 4.7 **Paragraph 47** states that planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Decisions on applications should be made as quickly as possible, and within statutory timescales unless a longer period has been agreed by the applicant in writing.
- 4.8 **Chapter 6** (Building a strong, competitive economy) outlines how policies and decisions should support economic growth.
- 4.9 **Paragraph 80** states that planning policies and decisions should help create conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.
- 4.10 **Paragraph 82** states that planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors.
- 4.11 **Paragraph 87** states that when considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites which are well connect to the town centre.
- 4.12 **Chapter 11** (Making effective use of land) requires proposals to make effective use of land.



- 4.13 **Paragraph 117** states that planning decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment.
- 4.14 **Paragraph 118** states that planning decisions should encourage multiple benefits from both urban and rural land, give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land, support appropriate opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded or derelict land, and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings.
- 4.15 **Chapter 16** (conserving and enhancing the historic environment) outlines how heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance. These assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.
- 4.16 **Paragraph 189** states that when determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting.
- 4.17 **Paragraph 190** states that local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage assets that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset), taking into account the available evidence and any necessary expertise.
- 4.18 **Paragraph 192** states that in determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:
- The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
 - The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
 - The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
- 4.19 **Paragraph 193** states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.
- 4.20 **Paragraph 194** states that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage should require clear and convincing justification.
- 4.21 **Paragraph 196** states that where development will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
- 4.22 **Paragraph 197** states that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application.

Cherwell Local Plan 2011 – 2031: Part 1

- 4.23 The Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031: Part 1 aims to link three themes together; the economy, communities, and sustainable development and seeks provide a proactive, positive set of policies to help places thrive, to deliver essential and longer-term infrastructure and achieve development that will improve the quality of life in the District.
- 4.24 The plan states the Council is seeking to achieve sustainable economic growth and aim to create jobs; to significantly boost housing supply in targeted, sustainable locations. The most relevant policies to this application are identified and summarised below.



- 4.25 **Policy PSD1** (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development) is a continuation of the NPPF and outlines a presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 4.26 **Policy Bicester 8** (Former RAF Bicester) allocates the former RAF Bicester (including the Technical Site, Flying Field and Domestic Site) for heritage tourism, leisure, recreation, employment and community uses.
- 4.27 Bicester 8 also states that proposals must maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area, protect listed, scheduled and other important buildings, their setting, and protect the sensitive historic fabric of the buildings and preserve the openness of the airfield.
- 4.28 Bicester 8 aims to establish uses that will be complementary to, and help enhance, the character and appearance of the conservation area and the nationally important heritage value of the site. It seeks to encourage a mix of uses that will best preserve the sensitive historic fabric and layout of the buildings and the openness of the grass airfield. However, the need to allow some flexibility in the interests of securing an economically viable future for the site is recognised.
- 4.29 Bicester 8 supporting text indicates that the Planning Brief indicates that employment uses on the technical site could be appropriate and identifies a range of other uses including aviation, museum, cultural, sport and community uses.
- 4.30 **Policy SLE1** (Employment Development) focuses employment development on sites at Banbury, Bicester, Kidlington. It also outlines a set of criteria to support employment proposals. Support shall be given to proposals that make efficient use of previously developed land wherever possible, make efficient use of existing and underused sites and premises increasing the intensity of use on site and meets high design standards, using sustainable construction and of an appropriate scale and respects the character of its surroundings.
- 4.31 **Policy SLE2** (Securing Dynamic Town Centres) states retail and other 'Main Town Centre Uses' will be directed to the town centres of Banbury and Bicester and the village centre of Kidlington. When considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference will be given to accessible sites that are well connected to the town centres.
- 4.32 **Policy SLE3** (Supporting Tourism Growth) states that the Council will support proposals for new or improved tourist facilities in sustainable locations, where they accord with other policies in the plan, to increase overnight stays and visitor numbers within the District.
- 4.33 **Policy ESD15** (The Character of the Built and Historic Environment) states that, within the vicinity of any of the district's distinctive natural or historic assets, delivering high quality design that complements the asset will be essential. It goes on to outline criteria for proposals to meet.

Bicester Heritage – Heritage Partnership Agreement (October 2014)

- 4.34 The document aims to provide a blanket vision for the site acquired by Bicester Heritage. The document identifies that Bicester Heritage is the most appropriate user possible and the combination of a historic site and historic vehicles is a natural fit.
- 4.35 It is also identified that change will need to take place to make the new use for the site sustainable. The HPA considers the history of the site, site constraints and opportunities, the Bicester Heritage business plan, and economic considerations. Given the historic and protected nature of the site the agreement provides an agreed baseline amongst all stakeholders as to the nature of the repair works and interventions that are possible.
- 4.36 The HPA sets out a conservation framework, which is largely based on the character identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal, and identifies the following capacity for change (many of which have taken place under the custodianship of Bicester Heritage):



- Changes of use, as many of the important buildings are domestic in scale and architectural style, and appear to lend themselves to a variety of new tenants;
- In those parts of the layout and setting which have been altered since 1939, including barriers and boundary treatments;
- In those buildings whose form and detailing have been altered since 1939;
- To those existing areas of unimproved grasslands, where there is an opportunity to ensure both ecological and historic conservation;
- To those services or buildings which do not meet current health and safety requirements, building and/or fire regulations, or where upgrading cannot be avoided by law; and
- To all existing buildings and landscaping, provided any new works pass the tests set out in PPG15 and preserve or enhance the character of the CA.

4.37 The HPA sets out Specifically Agreed Refurbishment Works, Specifically Agreed External Works, and more detailed requirements such as paint colours, materials and construction methods.

RAF Bicester Conservation Area Appraisal

4.38 The RAF Bicester Conservation Area was designated in 2002 and reviewed in 2008. The 2008 review led to the boundary being extended. The appraisal identifies that an English Heritage study published in 2000 concluded that “*RAF Bicester retains, better than any other military airbase in Britain, the layout and fabric relating to pre- 1930s military aviation*”.

Former RAF Bicester Planning brief

4.39 Notwithstanding that the brief is not a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), the document is identified as a material planning consideration. The brief contains informal development principles drafted prior to the disposal of the site by the MOD.



5 Planning Considerations

- 5.1 The proposed development comprises the erection of a building to house a sub-station to serve the implantation and delivery of the New Technical Site. The proposed development does not impact upon the approved access and parking arrangements
- 5.2 Having regard to planning policy, planning history and continuing discussions with Cherwell District Council, the key planning considerations in respect of this application are considered to be:
- Principle of development;
 - Siting, design and form; and
 - Access and Car Parking.

Principle of development

- 5.3 Policy Bicester 8 allocates the site for development and seeks to secure a long-lasting, economically viable future for the Former RAF Bicester site.
- 5.4 The policy recognises the need to allow some flexibility in the interests of securing that economically viable future and therefore encourages a mix of uses that will best preserve the sensitive historic fabric and layout. It is supportive of heritage tourism uses, leisure, recreation, employment and community use.
- 5.5 The proposed development will support the implementation and delivery of planning permission 18/01333/F which allows for an extension to the existing Technical Site to provide new employment units comprising flexible B1(c) light industrial, B2 (general industrial), B8 (storage or distribution) uses. The extension to the Technical Site will deliver significant economic benefits and make efficient use of Previously Developed Land in accordance with Policy SLE1 (Employment Development).
- 5.6 Given the proposed building will facilitate the delivery of the extension to the existing Technical Site, the principle of development is considered to be acceptable.

Siting, Design and Form

- 5.7 The proposed building measures 8.19 metres x 4.46 metres and is to be constructed of brick under a shallow profile sheet roof.
- 5.8 The proposed building has simple regular form and includes two pairs of side hung steel doors to the front elevation. The colour of the side hung doors will respect the palette of material within the technical site and the guidance contained within the HPA. To the west elevation the building comprises a small level high level louvre outlet. No other openings are proposed.
- 5.9 Internally a single partition is proposed to house the proposed electrical equipment.
- 5.10 The siting, design, form and palette of proposed materials reflects the character and appearance of the historic Technical Site, together with the form of development granted planning permission under application reference 18/01333/F.
- 5.11 The palette of materials also reflects guidance contained in the HPA which sets out Specifically Agreed Refurbishment Works, Specifically Agreed External Works, and more detailed requirements such as paint colours, materials and construction methods.
- 5.12 Having regard to the above, the proposed development is considered to be in accordance with Policy ESD15 (The Character of the Built and Historic Environment)

**Access and Car Parking**

- 5.13 The site is within 1.5 miles of Bicester Town Centre, with access being provided by the main gate (A4421). Existing access and car parking at the site will be utilised to provide in respect of any future maintenance.
- 5.14 The site provides excellent links to sustainable transport including buses and the railway stations in Bicester. There are good connections for pedestrians to Bicester town centre and other nearby attractions.
- 5.15 Policy SLE 2 states that, when considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference will be given to accessible sites that are well connected to the town centre.



6 Conclusion

- 6.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Edgars on behalf of Bicester Heritage Limited to support the erection of a building to house a sub-station to serve the implementation and delivery of the New Technical Site at Bicester Heritage, Bicester.
- 6.2 As supported by Policy Bicester 8 (Former RAF Bicester), the proposed development will have an employment use and will maintain the character and appearance of the conservation area. The proposed development will have economic benefits by allowing an office use, in support of other uses at the site, to take place in a sustainable location while promoting the Bicester Heritage destination.
- 6.3 The siting, design, form and palette of proposed materials reflects the character and appearance of the historic Technical Site, together with the form of development granted planning permission under application reference 18/01333/F.
- 6.4 Existing access and car parking at the site will be utilised for this proposal. The site provides excellent links to sustainable transport including buses and the railway stations in Bicester. There are good connections for pedestrians to Bicester town centre and other nearby attractions.
- 6.5 Having regard to the key planning considerations the proposal is considered to be in accordance with the Development Plan for the district of Cherwell and national planning policy. Therefore, in accordance with Policy PSD1 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development) and having regard to paragraph 11 of the NPPF the proposed development should be approved without delay.