BICESTER

MOTION

Future Automotive Speed and Technology Hub (F.A.S.T.)

DESIGN + ACCESS STATEMENT

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FOREWORD

Bicester Heritage has been developing a masterplan for the creation of the UK's first automotive resort. Having successfully developed and combined the concept of a Centre for Excellence (for the historic automotive sector) with unique experiences and community involvement, Bicester Heritage will now become a component of the larger landmark development named Bicester Motion.

Bicester Motion will celebrate the PAST, the PRESENT and the FUTURE of automotive culture and technology. This opportunity will ensure that the historic airfield location it calls home fulfil its original and continued purpose as a focal point for cutting edge technology. The ambition is to become one of the country's top 20 tourist and leisure destinations.

The proposed 444-acre masterplan development will cater for a variety of sectors, including: leisure, experience and tourism, automotive engineering, aviation, technology businesses, education and employment. By bringing these sectors together, Bicester Motion aims to redefine business-to-consumer engagement through unrivalled customer experiences in a unique and holistic environment.

Bicester Motion's vision has been embraced by the UK's Department of International trade. It was presented by the governmental department and Bicester Motion at the world leading real estate, conference and networking event MIPIM in Cannes in March 2019.

A separate "Vision" document outlines the Masterplan aspirations in more detail.

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BICESTER MOTION

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INTRODUCTION

This document includes the Design and Planning Statements for the Future Automotive Speed & Technology Hub (F.A.S.T.) and accompanies the planning application submission.

F.A.S.T. is an integral part of the Bicester Motion vision. As Bicester Heritage established the concept of a Centre of Excellence for the historic automotive sector, the F.A.S.T. hub will provide the much sought-after facilities for the emerging and future automotive sector. It will be a key development within 'Motorsport Valley', showcasing advanced technologies and cutting-edge businesses including Formula-E motorsport, automotive technology and research. Collectively the hub falls under B1 (Business), B2 (General Industrial) and B8 (Storage) use classes with ancillary offices, storage, display and sales.

This document details the background and rationale to the proposals, as well as the quantum of development proposed with indicative siting, orientation, scale and mass. It explains how the historic and local context has influenced these indicative proposals and why they are considered appropriate to the context and compliant with planning policy.

Relevant planning policy is presented and interpreted in relation to the proposals along with a description of the site and surrounds. Several challenges and opportunities has been identified by the consultant team which has informed the concept and parameter plans. These are summarised within this document and will be used to validate design development going forward.

The proposed parameters and indicative massing designs have been informed by the following expert reports that form part of this submission:

- F.A.S.T. Application Planning Statement by Edgars - November 2019
- Bicester Heritage Masterplan – Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment by Oxford Archaeology, September 2018
- Bicester Heritage Centre Phase 1 Land Contamination and Ground Condition Report by Crestwood Environmental Ltd, July 2018
- Bicester Motion Masterplan – F.A.S.T. Application Transport Assessment by Mode Transport Planning, October 2019
- Bicester Motion Masterplan – F.A.S.T. Application Framework Travel Plan by Mode Transport Planning, October 2019
- Bicester Motion Masterplan Implications for Aviation Operations by ASA, April 2019
- F.A.S.T. Heritage Impact Assessment by Worlledge Associates, November 2019
- Future Automotive Speed & Technology Cluster (F.A.S.T.) – Ecological Assessment by Ecology Solutions, October 2019
- Landscape Character and Visual Impact Assessment for Bicester Motion by ASA Landscape Architects, November 2019
- Project Radial F.A.S.T. 2A – Arboricultural Implications Assessment, prepared on instruction by Brian Higginson, April 2019
- Bicester Motion F.A.S.T. – Flood Risk and Drainage Assessment by Ridge & Partners LLP, November 2019
- Bicester Motion F.A.S.T. Energy Statement by Ridge & Partners LLP, November 2019

Figure 1. Site Location

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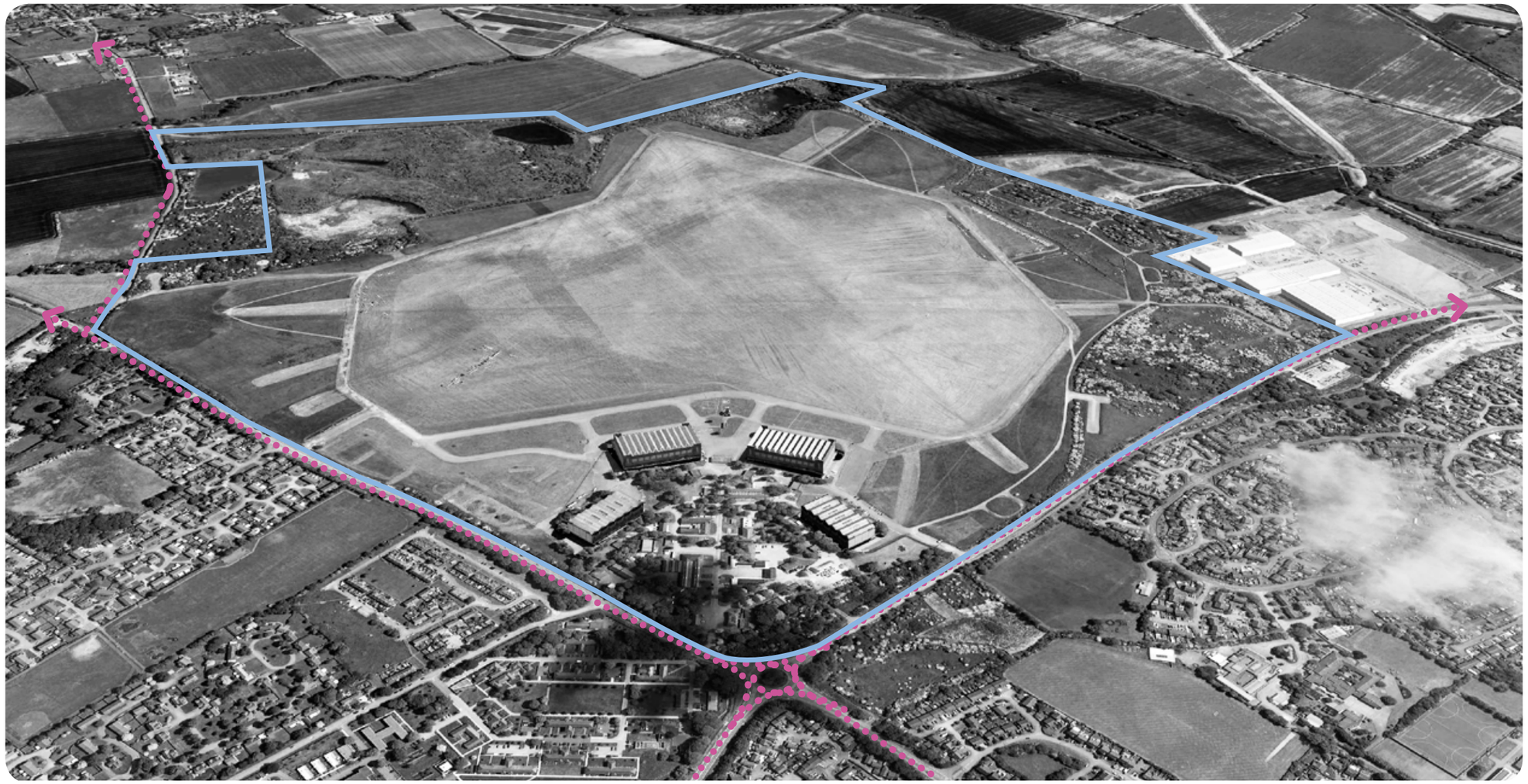

Figure 2. Bird's Eye of the Bicester Motion Site (diagrammatic)

KEY :

Ownership Boundary

Surrounding Roads

1

PROJECT OVERVIEW

1. PROJECT OVERVIEW

1.1 CLIENT BRIEF

1.1.1 Client Vision

F.A.S.T. - FUTURE AUTOMOTIVE AND SPEED TECHNOLOGY CLUSTER WITHIN A UNIQUE AND DYNAMIC RESORT FOR AUTOMOTIVE LEISURE AND TOURISM

F.A.S.T. is part of a broad and exciting masterplan vision by Bicester Motion to secure a sustainable future for the former RAF Bicester. The vision is to reinstate the former airfield's historic standing of a place for training, research and innovation, reinterpreted to focus on specific and appropriate new uses.

Both individually and combined, these will provide opportunities to showcase areas of the site which are currently inaccessible.

The long-term vision includes increasing access for the public to the site and allowing the heritage aspects to be understood and interpreted for future generations within an appropriate context of new uses associated with the past, present and future of automotive culture and technology. In addition, there will be extensive opportunities for new technologies to be developed and showcased.

Ridge and Partners have been working with Bicester Motion and Bicester Heritage over a period of four years to help develop the masterplan for the former MOD site. Over the past two years focus has been on the specific opportunities around the larger site and how to showcase these taking into account the various heritage, landscape and ecological factors.

1.1.2 Design brief

F.A.S.T. is one of the exciting new opportunities that has been identified as an innovative appropriate new use. The proposed works surrounding the F.A.S.T. development can be summarised as follows:

Provide a new innovation and technology centre dedicated to automotive engineering and technological excellence. F.A.S.T. will provide a unique offering where businesses can showcase their research, technology and demonstrate their products to the public.

The design brief was for a new development providing 21,180 sqm GIA lettable area suitable for mixed use development to include:

- Engineering and technology workshops and labs
- Commercial offices
- Showroom / retail
- Educational facilities

The new development should be appropriate for its new use and sensitive to the larger site and its history, whilst focusing on new architectural interpretation that appropriately showcases the progression of innovative building technologies in the same way the existing heritage buildings did in their prime.

A Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) is located within the curtilage of the new development and will form part of the application. The brief includes clearing encroaching scrubland surrounding the, currently hidden, heritage asset.

The scope of works include a set of parameters that will guide a Reserved Matters application to deliver the requirements set out in the above brief.

1.2 PLANNING DESIGN POLICY

1.2.1 Relevant Planning Policy

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.

The relevant documents of the Development Plan are identified as follows:

- Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031: Part 1
- Saved Policies of the Cherwell Local Plan 1996

The relevant documents identified as material considerations are as follows:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- National Design Guide (October 2019)

1.2.1.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The National Planning Policy Framework (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 outlined below.

Chapter 12 (Achieving Well-Designed Places) encourages development proposals to be of high-quality design.

Paragraph 124 states that the creation of high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to what planning should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development which creates better place in which to live and work.

Paragraph 127 requires that planning decisions should ensure that developments will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, are visually attractive and sympathetic to the local character and history while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change. Proposals should optimise the potential of the site to accommodate an appropriate amount and mix of development.

Paragraph 128 encourages early discussion between applicants and the local planning authority about the design and style of emerging schemes. This is stated as being important for clarifying expectations and reconciling local and commercial interests.

Paragraph 131 states that, when determining applications, great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which promote highs levels of sustainability or help raise the standard of design more generally in the area.

Chapter 15 (Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment) states, in Paragraph 170, that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

Paragraph 175 comprises a number of ecology principles which Local Authorities should apply, including encouraging opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments; provision for refusal of planning applications if significant harm cannot be avoided, mitigated or compensated for; applying the protection given to European sites to potential SPAs, possible SACs, listed or proposed Ramsar sites and sites identified (or required) as compensatory measures for adverse effects on European sites; and the provision for the refusal for developments resulting in the loss or deterioration of 'irreplaceable' habitats unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss.

Chapter 16 (Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment) sets out objectives for the planning system to protect the historic environment.

Paragraph 185 states that in determining planning 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.

Paragraph 189 requires applicants to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand potential impact on their significance. An archaeological desk-based assessment will also be required.

Paragraph 193 states that 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.

Paragraph 196 states that where a development proposal 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 securing its optimum viable use.

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. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required.

Paragraph 200 states that local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably.

1.2.1.2 Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031: Part 1

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.

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, increase the intensity of use on the site and meet high design standards, use sustainable construction and are of an appropriate scale and respect the character of its surroundings.

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.

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.

Policy ESD 1 (Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change) states that growth will be directed to the most sustainable locations as defined in this Local Plan. The supporting text explains that Bicester is considered to be one of the most sustainable locations.

Policy ESD 2 (Energy Hierarchy and Allowable Solutions) seeks to promote an energy hierarchy that reduces energy use through sustainable design and construction and makes use of renewable energy.

Policy ESD3 (Sustainable Construction) states that all new development should incorporate sustainable design.

Policy ESD7 (Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) states all development will be required to use sustainable drainage systems for the management of surface water run-off.

Policy ESD8 (Water Resources) states that the Council will seek to maintain water quality by avoiding adverse effects of development on the water environment.

Policy ESD10 (Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment) outlines an approach to protect and enhance biodiversity and the natural environment. These include; seeking proposals that provide a net gain in biodiversity, proposals that do not provide appropriate mitigation or compensate for any significant harm from development will not be permitted, seek proposals that incorporate features to encourage biodiversity, and retain and where possible enhance features of nature conservation value within the site.

Policy ESD 13 (Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement) seeks to secure the enhancement of the character and appearance of the landscape particularly in urban fringe locations. Proposals would not be permitted if they would: be inconsistent with local character, harm the setting of settlements, buildings, structures or other landmark features or harm the historic value of the landscape.

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.

Policy ESD17 (Green Infrastructure) highlights the importance of maintaining and improving the green infrastructure network, with reference made to its contribution to biodiversity and nature conservation.

1.2.1.3 Saved Policies of the Cherwell Local Plan 1996

The relevant saved policies that remain part of the Development Plan for the District are outlined below.

Policy C7 (Landscape Conservation) states that development will not normally be permitted if it would cause demonstrable harm to the topography and character of the landscape.

Policy C23 (Retention of Features Contributing to the Character or Appearance of a Conservation Area) states that there will be a presumption in favour of retaining buildings, walls, trees or other features which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a Conservation Area.

Policy C25 (Development Affecting the Site or Setting of a Scheduled Ancient Monument) states that in considering proposals for development which would affect the site or setting of a Scheduled Ancient Monument, other nationally important archaeological sites and monuments of special local importance, the Council will have regard to the desirability of maintaining its overall historic character, including its protection, enhancement and preservation where appropriate.

Policy C28 (Layout, Design and External Appearance of New Development) states that control will be exercised over all new development, including conversions and extensions, to ensure that the standards of layout, design and external appearance, including the choice of external-finish materials, are sympathetic to the character of the urban or rural context of that development in sensitive areas such as Conservation Areas.

1.2.1.4 National Design Guide (October 2019)

The Nation Design Guide was published in October 2019 with a focus on good design in the planning system. The document supports paragraph 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework which states that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.

The Design Guide introduces ten characteristics which work together to create the physical character of a well-designed place. The ten characteristics and their brief description are listed below:

- Context – enhances the surrounding;
- Identity – attractive and distinctive;
- Built form – a coherent pattern of development;
- Movement – accessible and easy to move around;
- Nature – enhanced and optimized;
- Public spaces – safe, social and inclusive;
- Uses – mixed and integrated;
- Homes and buildings – functional, healthy and sustainable;
- Resources – efficient and resilient; and
- Lifespan – made to last.

A National Model Design Code, which will set a baseline standard of quality and practice across England, will be published subject to consultation and the findings of the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission who are due to publish their final report in December 2019.

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SITE APPRAISAL

2. SITE APPRAISAL

2.1 SITE LOCATION

The site is 2.4km (1½ miles) north/ north east of the centre of the market town of Bicester at Bicester Heritage (former RAF Bicester).

2.1.1 Bicester

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.

Bicester's economy is focused on storage and distribution, retail, food processing, technology 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.

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 of 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.

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.

Cherwell District Council have been in consultation and are developing their Industrial Strategy, Cherwell District Council have identified Bicester Motion as a key delivery site for leisure, tourism and employment that support economic growth and prosperity in the region as well as social, health and well-being benefits.

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.

Figure 3. Site Location Diagram (not to scale)

Approximately 15 centres of motor manufacturing excellence are also located within 40 miles.

Bicester Heritage has made a significant contribution to the economy of the town and wider district since its inception in 2013. As part of Bicester Motion, the substantial economic benefits that the current proposal will bring to Bicester are discussed later in this document.

2.1.2 Bicester Motion

Bicester Motion is centrally located in the heart of the 'Motorsport Valley' as well as the Oxfordshire Tourism Cluster. The former, is a triangular concentration of automotive technology and research enterprises that roughly stretches between Cambridge, Oxford and Silverstone whilst the latter include attractions like Blenheim Palace, Waddesdon Manor and the Cotswolds. It is situated on the outskirts of the market town of Bicester in the Cherwell district of North Oxfordshire, about halfway between London and Birmingham.

Well within a 2-mile radius is the town centre, the well-known international retail draw of Bicester Village Designer Outlet and two train stations which provide direct connections to Oxford and London, as well as Birmingham.

2.1.3 F.A.S.T.

The proposed development site is located adjacent to the A4421 (Skimmingdish Lane) at the south-east corner of the wider site- which occupies part of the former RAF Bicester.

To the west of the site is the existing former RAF Technical Site which has been renovated by Bicester Heritage. To the east of the site is a large warehouse development 4-5 storeys in height.

To the south of the site is the A4421 (Skimmingdish Lane). Further to the south of the site is the existing built up area of Bicester, which comprises residential development set back away from the main road.

Figure 4. Diagram showing site in context of surrounding development

KEY :
Ownership Boundary
Application Boundary

2.2 DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

1880

Agricultural Land

1918

Opened on 1 October 1918 as a Training Depot Station, the aerodrome had a landing area of 1,150 x 1,000 yards and covered an area of 180 acres, including 30 acres occupied by the station buildings. By March 1920 the complete camp was demolished after closure of the base.

1926

Proposed layout for six Type A Hangars. Eventually only two were built at this stage as the number of aircrafts in a squadron was limited from eighteen to twelve. Further land was acquired to the north and south. Guardhouse and Station Offices were built on either side of the road by the main entrance and the road was then branched into three; the Trident.

1939

During the expansion period between 1934 and 1939, many buildings were constructed, with most notable being the two Type C hangars and the Watch Office with Tower in the Technical Site and the Bomb Stores to the south east boundary of the aerodrome.

1945

During 1940-1945, the war created the need to protect the aircrafts by dispersing them around the site instead of concentrating them all in the hangars. Land was acquired for the construction of tracks and panhandle standings for the aircrafts. These "peripheral" areas were connected by the perimeter track. During this period the flying field was considerably expanded.

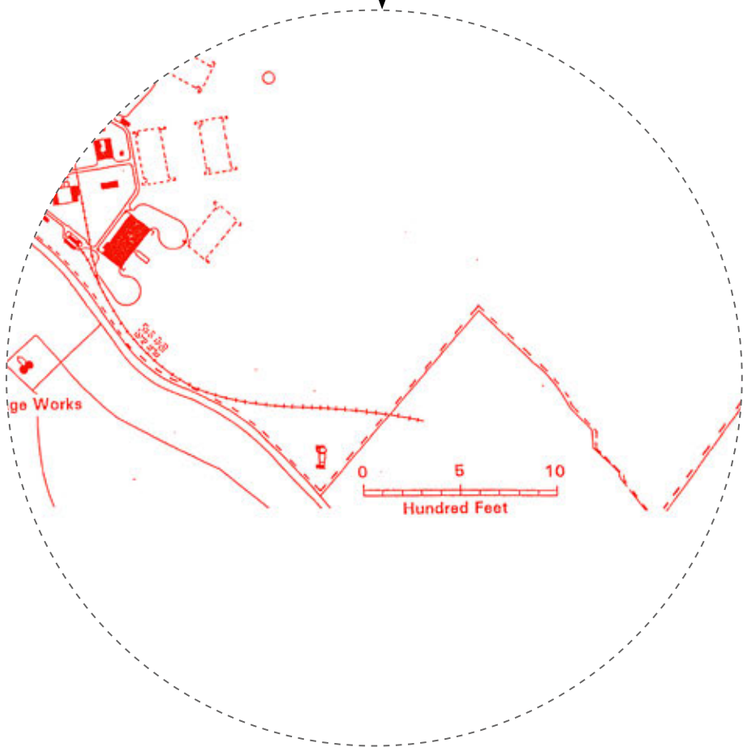


Figure 5. *Proposed Layout August 1926, P. Francis*
Source: Conservation Area Appraisal 2008

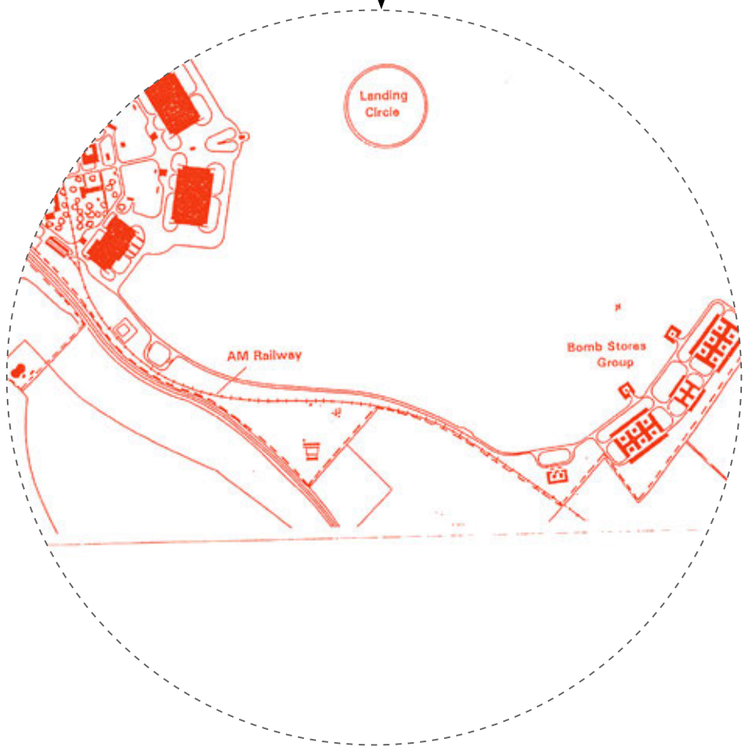


Figure 6. *Site Plan 1939, P. Francis*
Source: Conservation Area Appraisal 2008

Figure 7. *Site Plan 1945, P. Francis*
Source: Conservation Area Appraisal 2008

1980

1990

2019

The extended panhandle areas are replaced by residential development encroaching into the former site and much of what once was part of the aerodrome was eroded.

Further residential development.

Light industrial developments are developed South of the site including a large development directly east of the site. The remaining portion of the Skimmingdish Lane realignment was completed, forming the current southern boundary to the site.

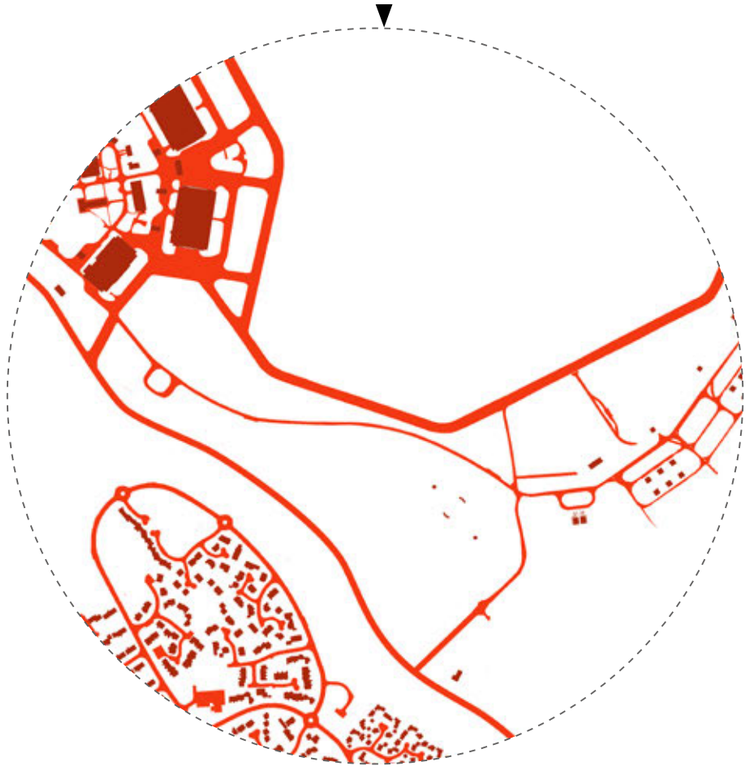


Figure 8. *Site Plan 1980*
source: OS map adapted to suit

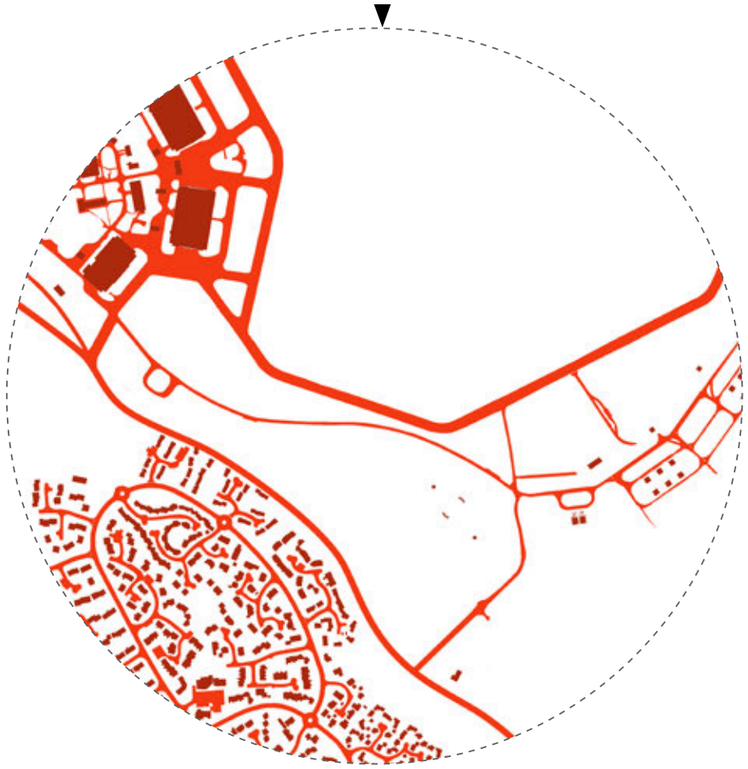


Figure 9. *Site Plan 1990*
source: OS map adapted to suit

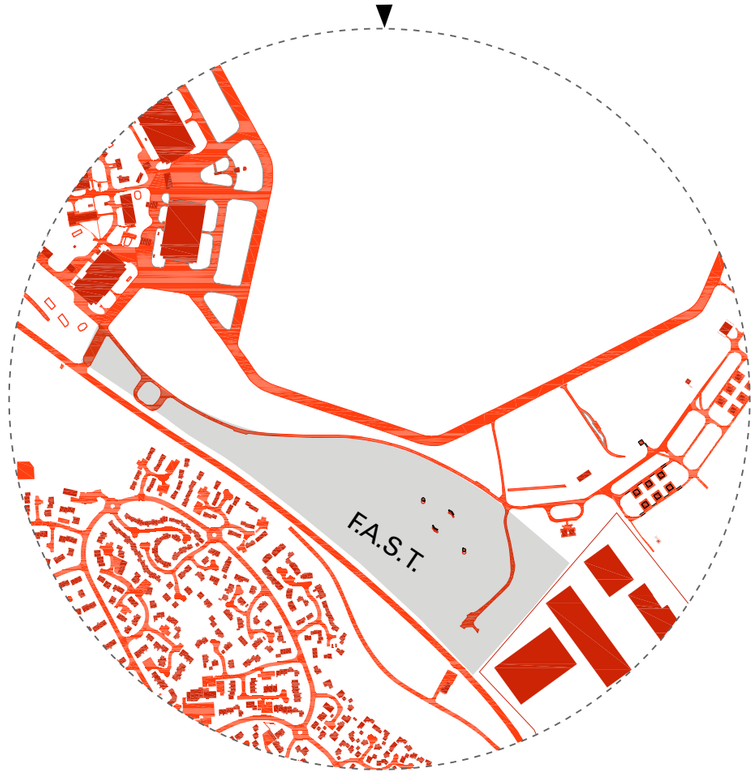


Figure 10. *Current site plan*
source: OS map adapted to suit

2.3 SITE DESCRIPTION

Please also refer to the submitted Heritage and Landscape compendia and the Ecology report prepared by Worlledge Associates, ASA Landscape Architects and Ecology Solutions respectively.

F.A.S.T. site is bounded by Bicester Motion land to the north and west, a large light industrial development to the east and Skimmingdish Lane (A4095) to the south.

The site context is mainly characterised by residential and light industrial to the south and south-east and by residential to the west. North of the aerodrome lies the Stratton Audley Quarry site with a rural landscape beyond.

Aerial images indicate there is overgrown scrubland on site. The land is flat and low-lying. The site comprises Previously Developed Land. The site is in flood zone 1 with a low probability of fluvial flooding.

2.3.1 Structures

The development site is adjacent to a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) which includes a cluster of four defence structures. The SAM incorporates two mushroom pillboxes and two seagull trenches in a diamond formation. These are discussed in the Heritage Report which identifies their significance as a group but recognises that their legibility and intervisibility have been lost due to overgrowth. Please refer to the heritage compendium for more detail on the SAM structures and their significance.

2.3.2 Site Levels

The site can be described as flat which is characteristic of its historic flying and MOD use. Differences in site levels range from 4m along the length of the site (600m) to 1m across the width of the site (80-200m). Average falls therefore range between 1:100 and 1:150.

The Scheduled Ancient Monument cluster of subterranean defence structures is situated on a raised mound, roughly 1m above surrounding levels.

2.3.3 Screening

For the most part, the site is covered in inaccessible self-seeded scrub. The internal edge of the scrub forms the perceived extremities of the 'airfield' and screens the application site from the surrounding areas. The SAM is also hidden within the overgrowth. This part of the site was historically open and fully integrated with the airfield site.

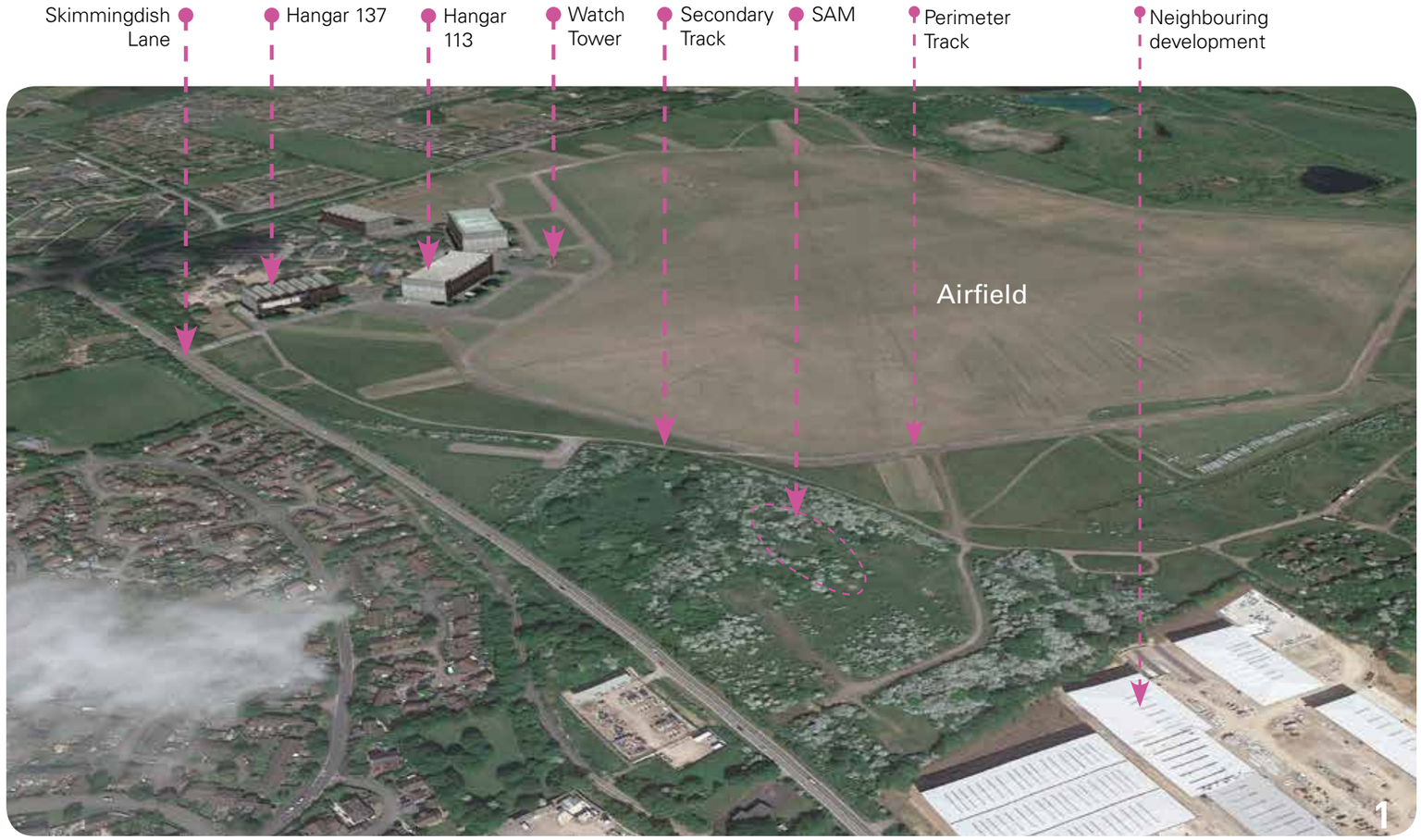
The neighbouring industrial buildings to the east of the site can be viewed from across the Airfield and the Technical Site and dominates that portion of the views from the Watchtower. Trees along this edge provide insufficient screening from the neighbouring industrial buildings.

Other lost historic features within the application boundary include:

- A section of the southern dispersal track and two panhandles, one at the very southern edge of the site and the other south of the SAM. The panhandles are barely discernible, but part of the track remain, and still in use.
- A machine gun range: A former machine gun range, which contained a small brick structure and target area, was situated west of the SAM. Neither is surviving.
- Section of the Air Ministry Railway: The track that once connected the Bomb Stores with the Technical site featured a parallel routed railway line which is no longer surviving.

2.4 SITE AERIAL VIEWS

KEY



2.5 SITE VIEWS

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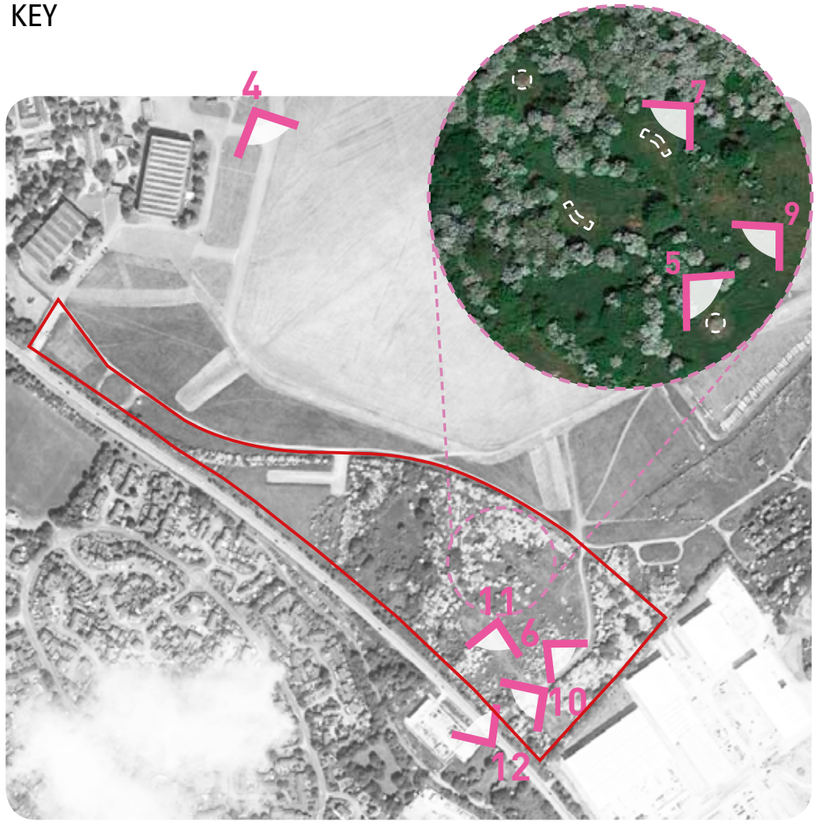

4. View from the Watch Tower across the F.A.S.T. site & the Bomb Stores
5. Eastern Mushroom Pillbox with the backdrop of the new industrial development on the adjacent land
6. New industrial building by the south Bicester Heritage boundary
7. Seagull Trench
8. Interior of Seagull Trench
9. Mushroom Pillbox within scrub area
10. Spoil at the southern boundary by the Panhandles
11. Views of degraded landscape with overgrown shrubs
12. Views of Skimmingdish Lane


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2.6 SITE CONTEXT

2.6.1 Introduction

Bicester airfield, a planned Royal Flying Corps training station, was first brought into use in the summer of 1918, but closed down in March 1920 due to post-war cut backs.

A change in the country's defensive structure was introduced in January 1925, known as the Air Defence of Great Britain (ADGB). Under this scheme, two new permanent three squadron bomber airfields were planned for Bicester and Upper Hayford and almost immediately a start was made on the reconstruction of the abandoned sites.

The planned layout was on modern lines and included six (two for each squadron) hangars of the interwar period. Only two hangars (A-types) were actually built at this time, but room was allowed for four more, should they have been needed. A range of single and two-storey permanent buildings was also designed and built during this mini-expansion period. Combined this part of the larger airfield site is called the Technical Site and has been successfully repurposed by Bicester Heritage. Buildings were separated from each other by large grassed areas. The reasons were two-fold, first, it allowed for future expansion if necessary, and second, it would minimise the effect of attack by hostile aircraft. A further two hangars (C-Types) were built were around 1936, totalling the four large hangars that currently defines the Eastern edge of the Technical Site.

The "Battle Instruction School" was set up in 1940 and larger than average numbers of Pillboxes and Defended Air-Raid Shelters were built. Each of the four hangars had two and at least one standard airfield defence system, comprising a cluster of four defensive structures , were laid out in a special way. This consisted of a slightly raised embankment with two Seagull Trenches built back-to-back and two Mushroom type Pillboxes, positioned at right angles to the trenches. This cluster is located within the application boundary and addressed within the Heritage Report.

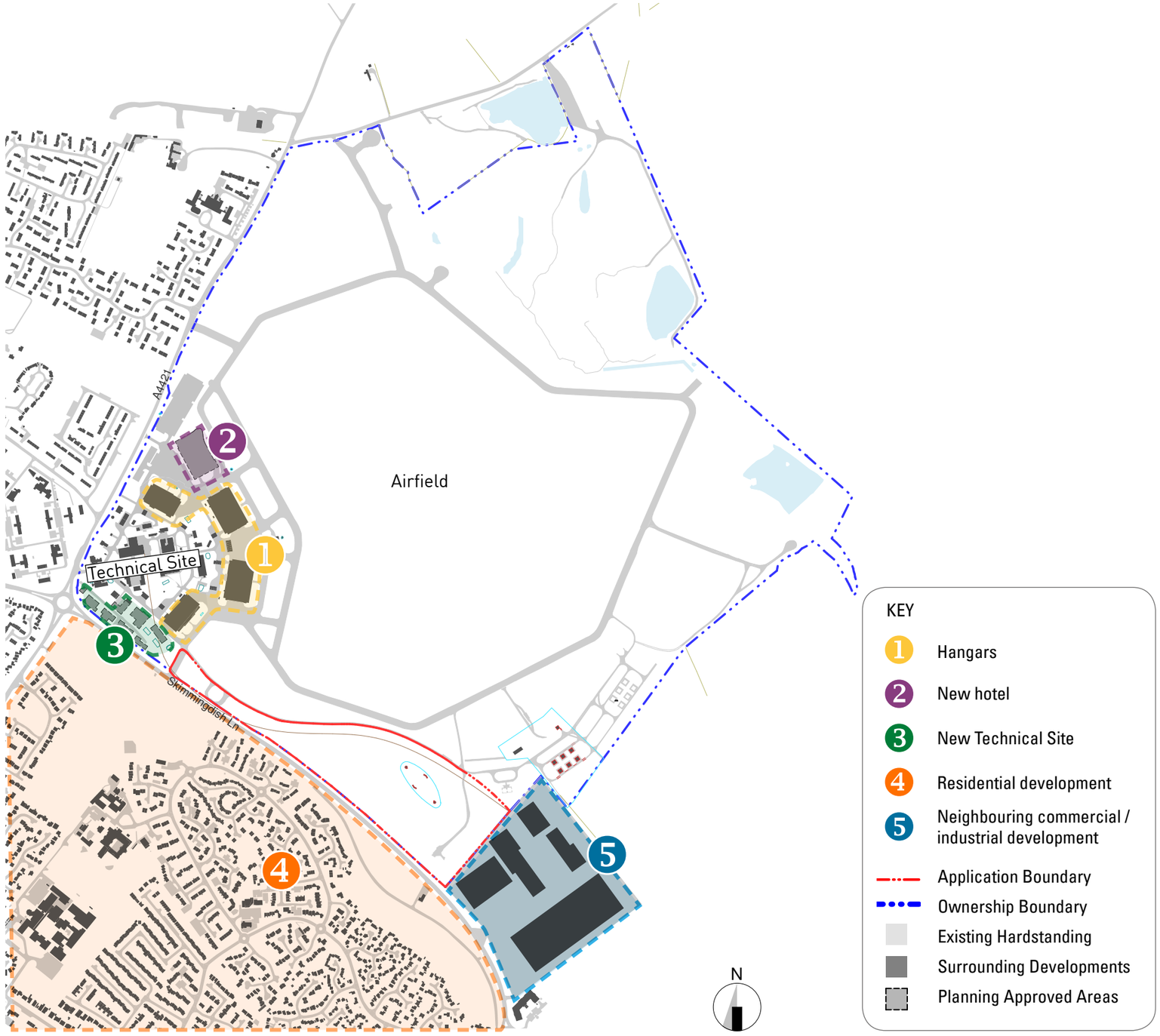


Figure 11. Character Analysis Location Plan (not to scale)

Other contextually relevant developments around the application site include:

- The New Technical Site, which is currently under construction, just west of the application boundary,
- The Hotel proposal, which is located within the Technical Site, also west of the application boundary.
- A large industrial development just east of the application site.
- Bicester town suburban developments to the south.

It is worth noting that, with the exception of the relatively nucleus Technical Site and the gliding club using the flying field at present, the remaining, much larger, site is unutilised at present. This applies to the application site area as well.

Figure 11 identifies the study area in relation to the site.

A character analysis of the immediate and surrounding area has been conducted and relevant design elements informed and shaped the design proposals put forward for this outline planning application.

2.6.1.1 Type A and C Hangars

Constructed in 1924, the two Type A hangars were the first permanent end-opening hangars of the interwar period. The buildings represent good surviving examples of their type.

Type A hangars are large sheds with full height steel doors at each end with a series of 7 brickwork gables to each long side with encased steel external stanchions. Below these are a continuous strip of patent glazing, in 9 lights to each bay, with exception to the two end half-bays. Structurally and operationally these were cutting edge with very large hangar doors and impressive spans to house the new larger types of heavy bomber aircraft.

The last two hangars to be built were constructed after the second wave of development occurred and were Type C hangars. Type C hangars are large sheds with full height steel doors at each end. The roofs are a series of transverse ridges with hipped ends, behind a parapet, and with deep apron above doors.

Architecturally these are characterised as proud unapologetic (in stature) structures at the edge of the Technical site and splayed in an array facing the airfield. The roofscape creates a distinctive rhythm to these otherwise simple masses. The material palette is restrained palette of brick to compliment the existing technical site and functional with a rich texture.

Type A hangar

Type C hangar

2.6.1.2 Hotel

Within the curtilage of the Technical Site, planning consent for a new hotel is being granted and a new extension to the Technical Site is under construction, known as the New Technical Site. Combined, these will form part of a first phase in repurposing the former RAF site to provide a long term and sustainable business, tourism and recreational use. The focus is on reinforcing the site's acknowledged reputation, historically and currently as a site for creativity, innovation and excellence in motor engineering.

The shape, footprint and orientation of the hotel has been designed to provide a rectangular massing that sits naturally and proud within the existing pattern of development next to one of the C-Type hangars. The approach to the Hotel design was for it to read as a modern 'hangar' feature, in keeping with the original six hangar planned development of 1925, whilst still allowing the development to be legible as a modern hotel.
A subtle curve feature design to the building has been introduced in order to provide a design feature that distinguishes the hotel.

2.6.1.3 New Technical Site

Located to the south of the Old Technical Site, the New Technical Site is to create a sense of an extension of the Old Technical Site. The form of the buildings are simple, following the military 'austere', having clean lines (with single and double pitched roofs), gable end walls and differing heights which reflect the existing building variety on site. It is making direct references to existing site materiality to respect their context and ensure high quality aesthetics that align with the standard of the original Technical Site buildings. The following main materials are used in different variations in order to ensure consistency whilst avoiding monotony:

- Sinusoidal metal cladding in anthracite and muted olive green to reflect the military interpretation and colours of the existing Technical Site.
- Industrial vibrant brick gable ends.

2.6.1.4 Neighboring residential development

To the south of the site is a local residential area with associated day-to-day commercial facilities. These are predominately two to two and a half stories, semi-detached, dwellings and townhouses with pitched roofs. The finishing materials are mainly brick. This area demonstrate little architectural value.

2.6.1.5 Neighboring commercial / industrial development

To the south-east of the site, a recent large industrial development, of questionable architectural merit, dominate the eastern outlook from the application site. The development is characterised by light silver metal cladding that has become synonymous with so many faceless industrial developments.

2.6.2 Analysis

2.6.2.1 Scale:

The Technical Site demonstrates variety in scale. The four hangars, along with the proposed new hotel, visually dominate the Technical Site due to their size.

2.6.2.2 Form:

The form of the buildings are simple with clean lines. Roofs are pitched, doubled pitched, hipped or flat, along with a varied scale and materiality. Combined they create a uniformity but also demonstrate variety throughout the whole Bicester Heritage Site.
The roofscape of the hangars, in specific the gable ended A-type hangars, provide a unique military rhythm to their simple form. The hangar cluster group appear uniform and uncomplicated in form without much decoration or ornamentation.

2.6.2.3 Materials & Colours

In general, colours are dark or natural and therefore recessive in character.
The existing material and colour palette of the Type A and Type C hangars, as well as the rest of the historic structures in Bicester Heritage Site, are limited due to the General Camouflage Policy enforced between 1838-1944.
Brick is the predominant material, followed by steel, concrete, timber and glass.
Both the hotel and the New Technical Site development largely adopt a similar material palette to the Technical Site. Albeit interpreted in a slightly more contemporary way, they demonstrate a homage to the architectural style of the Technical site.

It can be argued that, should the base have been functional today in a similar status as in its heyday, it would have moved with the times and new structures would have been innovative and of the time. It is therefore felt that a contemporary and innovative approach to new development within the larger former MOD site, would be appropriate in keeping with the spirit of the former Bicester RAF.

1. New hotel (planning approved)

2,3. New Technical Site (planning approved)

4. Neighbouring residential development

5. Neighbouring commercial / industrial development

2.7 EXISTING ACCESS

There are seven existing and one historic access points to the larger Bicester Motion site . The proposal is to reinstate the historic access along Skimmingdish Lane to provide access / egress to /from the F.A.S.T. development. This access coincides with the historic dispersal road number 5 (see Figure 13). The site is also well connected internally.

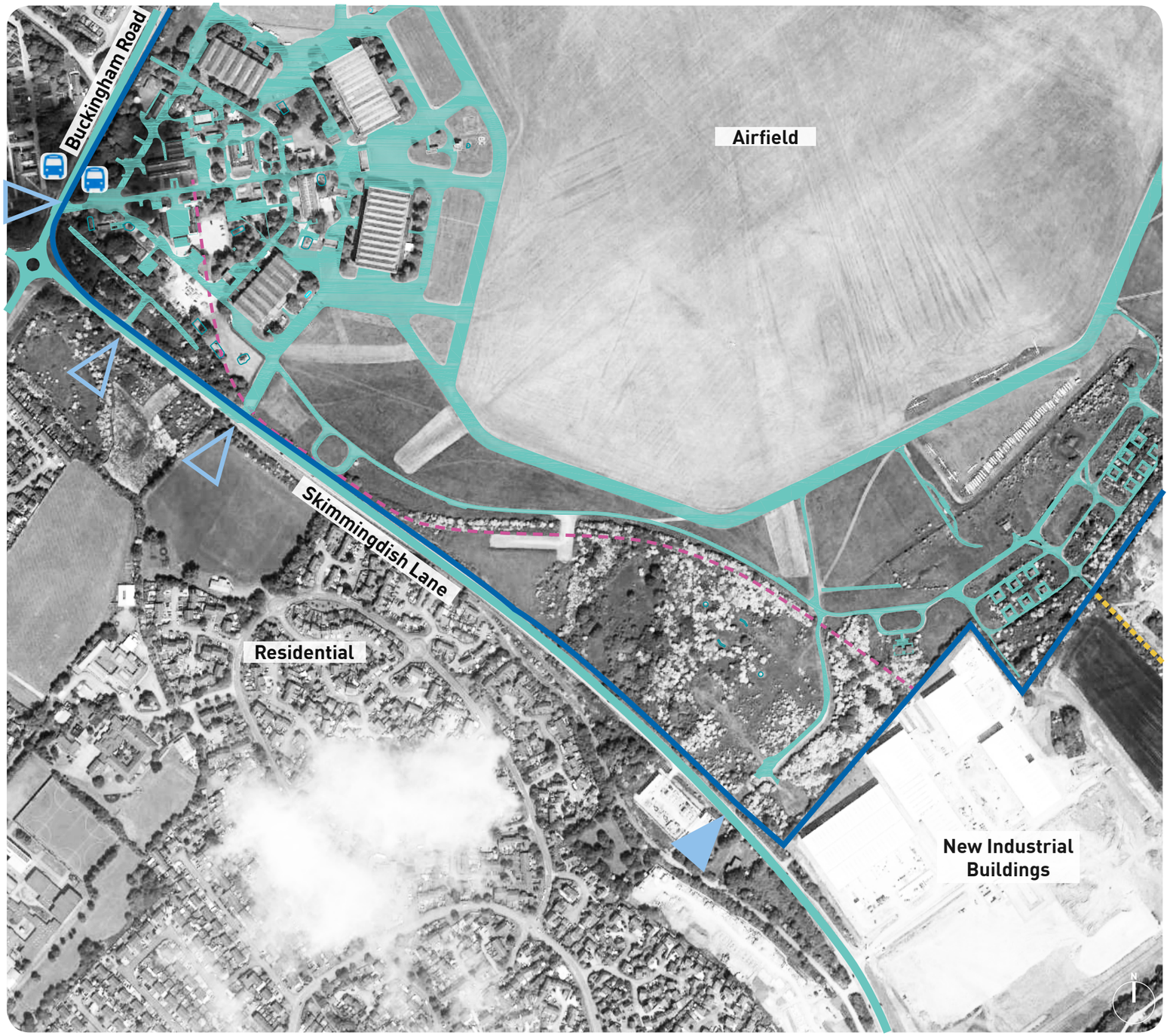
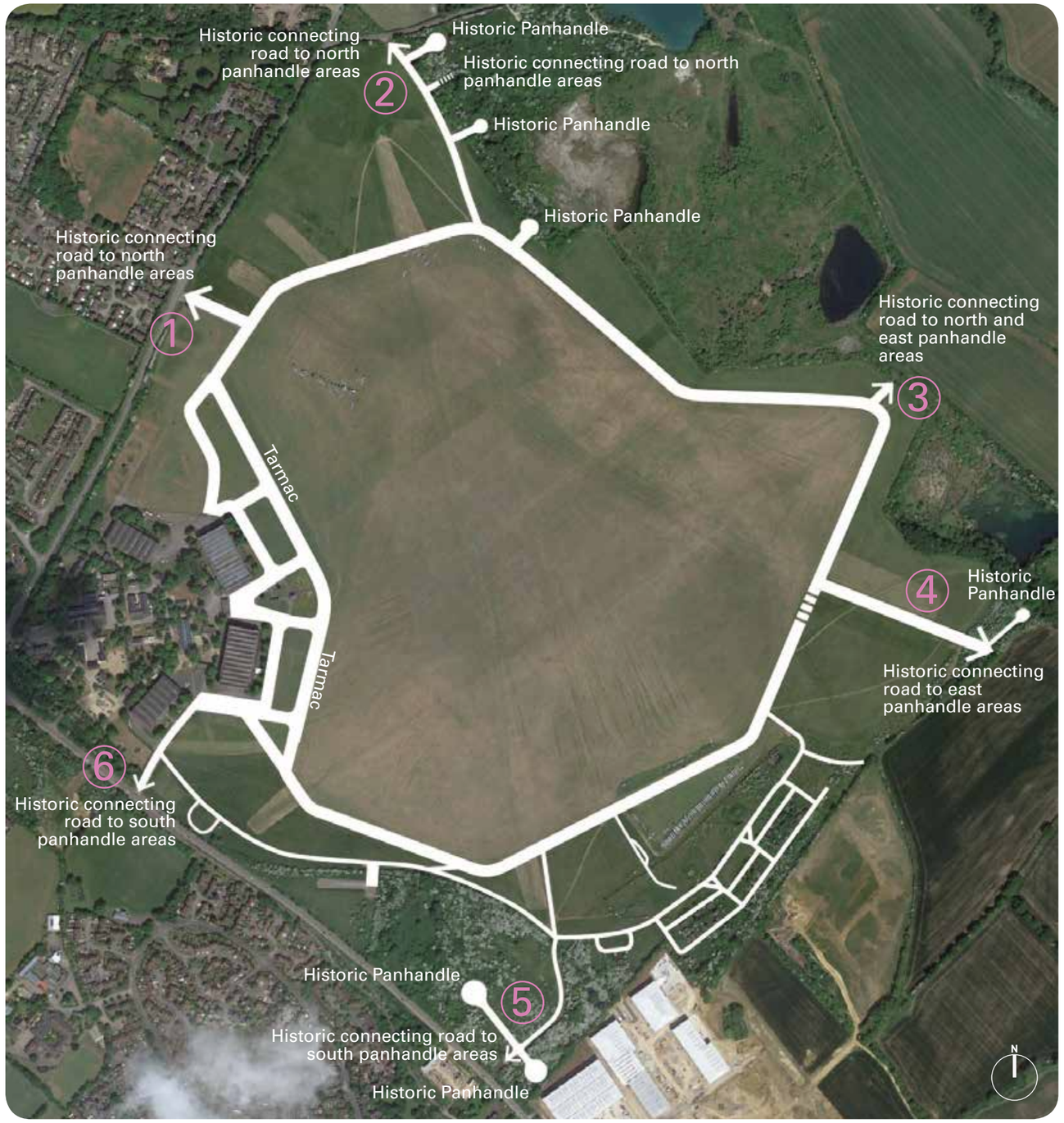


Figure 12. Site Access And Movement Diagram (not to scale)

KEY

- Historic access to be reinstated
- Other access points
- Existing infrastructure
- Public footpath
- Historic railway
- Public bus stop



KEY

1 2 3 4 5 6 Historical Dispersal Roads

Figure 13. Existing And Historic Track Diagram (not to scale)

2.8 EVIDENCE BASE

A sequence of workshops were held with the project team to review the evidence base and with a focus on understanding the challenges and opportunities, in order to unlock the development opportunities presented by policy Bicester 8 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2031. For ease of reference we summarise the heritage, landscape and ecology reports further below. These were most influential in establishing the opportunities and challenges illustrated in the diagrams on page 30 to page 33.

Figure 14. *View out from the mushroom pillbox obscured by modern development beyond airfield*

2.9 HERITAGE SUMMARY

A Heritage Report prepared by Nick Worlledge Associates is submitted in support of the proposed development. A summary of the report is set out below.

The report highlights that military airfields demonstrate a complex relationship between war and space. Airfields leave behind an imprint of war in their numbered buildings, grouped defences and miles of tracks and runways.

The preservation of the layout of airbases leaves an understanding of a particular moment and also an understanding of time. Airfields help to 'fix' an understanding of war in spatio-temporal terms and at the same time reveal the transient aspects of the war process.

RAF Bicester is recognised as a rare survival of a 1930s military airbase. Because of its limited use during and after the war it has survived better than any other to provide evidence of Hugh Trenchard's 1930s military offensive strategy in layout, building design, use and the functional interrelationships between those buildings.

The flying field retains the form and extent of runways that would have existed at the outbreak of war in 1939. The flying field is special because they survive as grass runways, where elsewhere others have been 'upgraded' to concrete. The flying field, peripheral areas and technical base) lie within a designated Conservation Area and many of the buildings and other structures are either listed or scheduled.

The report states that, for Bicester Motion, the heritage led business model seeks to promote leisure, tourism and business initiatives in a way that sustains what is special about the former airbase, whilst creating something new, innovative and inspiring, as the next chapter in the site's history.

The vision is to achieve this in a way that adds to people's understanding and enjoyment of a historic place, demonstrating that 'constructive conservation' is about embracing change for the benefit of the historic environment, the economy and for our health and well-being. This demonstrates the creative re-use of a redundant military airbase, the conservation of a site's history and the values it holds for people is not dependent on preserving a 'time capsule'. There is a more powerful story that can be told by allowing the place to continue to evolve and not freeze framed.

This is not about stopping change or 'freeze framing' the site; that runs counter to government and Historic England policy and practice. This is a challenging exercise to repurpose a redundant military airbase. Development needs to allow the history of the site to be read and experienced, at the same time providing a platform for creating a 21st century history. Fundamental to this approach is the acknowledgement that new development will be visible, which will change our experience of the site, from within and without. It cannot remain a time capsule and survive.

New development associated with economic identity of the region (as a motor engineering and innovation hub) is proposed that can extend our experience of the place and add to the values that are currently attributed to it. This is not about erasing its history or how we experience it, it is about adding to it.

The scale and siting of the proposed F.A.S.T. buildings have been informed by the open nature of the flying field and the identified views of the airfield from within and without. As well as this the historic functional interrelationships that existed between the various parts of the site and its buildings have been considered.

Figure 15. *View of site neighbouring modern development*

2.10 LANDSCAPE SUMMARY

A Landscape and Visual Appraisal is submitted in support of the proposed development which addresses the landscape and visual impact of the development site and its wider setting. A summary of the LVIA is set out below.

A key feature of the site is that it lies on the extreme periphery of the airfield well outside the perimeter track. The perimeter track defines the actual operational flying field (used by aviators) and the openness of this is a key characteristic of the site as a whole. The F.A.S.T. site does not impinge on the openness of the flying field.

Another key feature is the visual link between the wider Bicester site and the rural, distant landscape. These views are not affected by the F.A.S.T. development.

Within the site itself views are sensitive, being within the setting to the Conservation Area and including numerous listed buildings and scheduled monuments. There will be a change to some views, for example from the former Control Tower. Development in this location will not be dominant in the view and will be seen against a backdrop of existing commercial/industrial development. Therefore, the development is not out of scale with or inappropriate for the site and the change to the view will result in less than significant harm.

The new buildings will not compete visually with the historic structures and the form and materials used for the new buildings will be sensitive to those already used within the site. The predicted views included within the LVIA illustrate the massing and form. In the round, taking account of the existing and future uses and context of the site, the visual impact is considered to be acceptable.

Local views and receptors from the Skimmingdish Lane and some residential properties, and including cyclists and pedestrians to the south will experience a some adverse impacts in the view, however these are predicted to be limited to local significance and would be mitigated in the medium to longer term by the establishment of tree planting within the site boundary that would break up the mass of the buildings and help to screen the views.

The proposals will not be out of character or inappropriate for the re-purposed site. The current proposals will have localised impacts within one peripheral area of the site. The large scale of the airfield will mean that the F.A.S.T buildings will not dominate the rest of the site or change the underlying open character of the main flying field and setting to the main Technical Site. The cumulative effects of the F.A.S.T. development, though significant within the its own peripheral zone, are not predicted to be of such a quantum as to significantly harm the underlying character of the site overall.

The development is located on the furthest south west boundary of the site near to existing large-scale commercial development and adjacent to a busy road. There is a new substation opposite the site and the residential edge of Bicester is set behind a swathe of mature scrub vegetation. The landscape character is predominantly sub-urban with commercial/industrial influences.

The design team has been landscape and heritage-led to evolve the design to an agreed scale, mass, form and height. The building footprints are reduced in size as the development extends along Skimmingdish Lane. The buildings heights also reduce from 11.5m for the southern most building to 10.5m for the 4 middle buildings to 9m for the northern most building. This will assist in creating a transition between the F.A.S.T. development and the open gap that will existing between the F.A.S.T. buildings and the Technical Site.

Overall, in landscape and visual terms, the F.A.S.T. development will have site and localised impacts, but these impacts will be partly mitigated over time, as new planting establishes and matures. The impacts on key features of the existing Bicester Heritage site and the wider landscape are considered to have less than significant harm.


BIODIVERSITY
MATTERS

2.11 ECOLOGY SUMMARY

An Ecology Report is submitted in support of the proposed development. A summary of the ecology report is set out below. The ecological survey work undertaken at the site has informed emerging masterplan proposals for the wider site, as well as the F.A.S.T. site. No statutory designated sites were recorded within or immediately adjacent to the F.A.S.T. site.

The F.A.S.T. site comprises a component of the Bicester Airfield LWS (Local Wildlife Sites), albeit the vast majority of the LWS is located outside of the F.A.S.T. site boundary (within the wider site). Habitat survey work in 2018 has reaffirmed the presence of the range of habitats identified in the site citation for the LWS, albeit the value in some areas has been significantly diminished by on-going scrub succession. Due regard has been given to this LWS, with appropriate mitigation measures proposed to safeguard the sites biodiversity interest in the long-term.

The F.A.S.T. site comprises an area of land at the southern edge of the wider site. It predominantly comprises semi-improved grassland, dense scrub, broad-leaved semi-natural woodland and areas of hardstanding and built form.

Appropriate principles and measures have been identified to avoid impacts where possible and otherwise to guide appropriate mitigation and enhancement opportunities which may be implemented at a detailed stage of planning.

As such, it is considered that the F.A.S.T. proposals may offer long-term enhancements for biodiversity over the existing situation, in line with relevant legislation and planning policy.

2.12 CONCLUSION & MOVING FORWARD

In heritage terms the evidence base demonstrates how the new development, associated with engineering and technology provides the opportunity to extend our experience of the place and add to the values that are currently attributed to it. The heritage statement concludes that the impact of this development proposed is less than substantial harm and provides an opportunity for the historic site and features to be experienced in new and exciting ways.

In landscape and visual terms the F.A.S.T. will have site level and local level impact, but these impacts will be partly mitigated over time, as new planting establishes and matures.

In terms of ecology, it is considered that the F.A.S.T. proposals offer long terms enhancement for biodiversity over the existing situation, in line with relevant legislation and planning policy.