

# PLACE AND GROWTH INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

**From:** Planning Policy, Conservation and Design Team

**To:** Assistant Director for Planning and Economy (FAO Rebekah Morgan)

**Our Ref:** Application Response

**Your Ref:** 19/02708/OUT

**Ask for:** Heather Seale

**Ext:** 7026

**Date:** 14/02/2020

## APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION PLANNING POLICY CONSULTATION RESPONSE

This response raises the key planning policy issues only.  
All material planning policies and associated considerations will need to be taken into account.

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| <b>Planning Application No.</b> | 19/02708/OUT   |
| <b>Address / Location</b>       | Bicester Heritage, Buckingham Road, Bicester   |
| <b>Proposal</b>                 | Outline – Provide new employment units comprising B1 (Business), B2 (General Industrial), B8 (Storage) and D1 (Education) uses with ancillary offices, storage, display and sales, with all matters reserved except for access   |
| <b>Key Policies / Guidance</b>  | <p><u>Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1</u></p> <p>Policy SLE1: Employment Development<br/>           Policy SLE3: Tourism Development<br/>           Policy SLE4: Improved Transport and Connections<br/>           Policy BSC7: Meeting Education Needs<br/>           Policy ESD1: Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change<br/>           Policy ESD2: Energy Hierarchy and Allowable Solutions<br/>           Policy ESD3: Sustainable Construction<br/>           Policy ESD6: Sustainable Flood Risk Management<br/>           Policy ESD7: Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)<br/>           Policy ESD10: Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment<br/>           Policy ESD13: Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement<br/>           Policy ESD15: The Character of the Built and Natural Environment<br/>           Policy Bicester 8: Former RAF Bicester</p> <p><u>Other material considerations</u></p> <p>National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)<br/>           RAF Bicester Planning Brief and Draft Development Principles (2009)<br/>           RAF Bicester Conservation Area Appraisal (November 2008)</p> |
| <b>Key Policy Observations</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outline planning permission is sought for the development of new employment units comprising B1 (Business), B2 (General Industrial), B8 (Storage) and D1 (Education) uses with ancillary offices, storage, display and sales, with all matters reserved except for access. The development proposed is the Future Automotive Speed and Technology Hub (F.A.S.T.).</li> <li>• The application site measures 10.076 ha and is located adjacent to the A4421 (Skimmingdish Lane) at the south east corner of the wider former</li> </ul>   |

RAF Bicester site. The site is in the area known as the flying field which is shown on page 10 of the Council's Comprehensive Planning Brief (2009) for the former RAF Bicester.

- To the west of the application site is the existing former RAF Bicester technical site. To the south is the A4421 and beyond this is the existing built up area of Bicester, which comprises residential development set back away from the road. To the east of the site is new employment warehouse development and to the north is the flying field.
- The application site is located within former RAF Bicester Conservation Area and is near a Scheduled Ancient Monument to the north. The site is partially within Bicester Airfield Local Wildlife Site and there is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) approximately 1km to the north.
- The applicant's Planning Statement explains how the wider former RAF Bicester site is being restored by Bicester Heritage to create a nationally recognised culture, events and tourism venue. It explains how the site has become a national centre of excellence for the classic car industry, providing a range of activities and events involving the operational airfield, motorsport track, exhibition hangars and historic Technical Site.
- The F.A.S.T. hub 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 facilities for the emerging and future automotive sector. The F.A.S.T. hub will become a world-leading international innovation and technology cluster, home to leading international and technology businesses. There is also an aspiration to create an automotive technology education and apprenticeship academy.
- Planning permission was approved for an extension to the existing Technical Site for employment use (18/01333/F) in September 2019, known as the New Technical Site and this is under construction. The Council has resolved to grant planning permission for a hotel and conference facility (18/01253/F).
- The Design and Access Statement explains how the proposed development will comprise a series of buildings with a total footprint of 10,103sqm within 10.08ha of land. The F.A.S.T. zone is characterised by large footprint units which increase in size away from the Technical Site. Building heights will be approximately 9 to 11.5m.
- The existing Skimmingdish Lane entrance will form the principle entrance for the development with the existing Technical Site entrance on Skimmingdish Lane also maintained.
- Local Plan Policy SLE1 explains that employment development will be focussed at the towns and it lists the requirements for employment proposals at Bicester.
- The application site is part of the wider former RAF Bicester site which is allocated in the 2015 Cherwell Local Plan (see Policy Bicester 8). The Proposals Map for Policy Bicester 8 identifies the whole of the former RAF Bicester site for Tourism Development. Policy Bicester 8 however also identifies employment uses as one of the uses that the Council will

support. The policy states that the Council will encourage conservation led proposals to secure a long-lasting, economically viable future for the Former RAF Bicester technical site and flying field. It will support tourism, leisure, recreation, employment and community uses.

- The proposals will provide jobs and secure economic growth which is consistent with Strategic Objective 1 of the Local Plan. The Local Plan at paragraphs 1.09 and 1.11 states that the Local Plan seeks to strengthen the role of the towns as the centre of local economy and secure growth that improves our places. Paragraph 1.13 explains how the Plan seeks to secure a productive high value economy and paragraphs B.6 and B.7 identify how the District is looking to strengthen the high-tech performance engineering sector and support investment made in new technology. Paragraph B.33 sets out the aims for Bicester which includes utilising ex MOD land, maintaining and increasing the motorsport sectors and improving the town's self-sufficiency.
- In principle employment proposals at the former RAF Bicester would be consistent with the 2015 Cherwell Local Plan, including Policy Bicester 8. Proposals will however also need to have regard to and be considered against other planning policy requirements.
- Policy Bicester 8 states that all proposals will be required to accord with the approved Planning Brief for the site. The Council's Comprehensive Planning Brief (2009) is therefore a material consideration in considering this application and should be afforded significant weight. It highlights the historic value of the former RAF Bicester and the flying field. At paragraph 4.1.3 the Brief states that should aviation not continue, alternative uses of the flying field must ensure the retention of the open grass flying field across its existing extent. It states that new uses should not result in the erection of any structures, either temporary or permanent, on the open flying field. In this regard the application proposals would be contrary to Policy Bicester 8 and the Comprehensive Planning Brief for the site as they encroach on to the flying field. It will however be necessary to consider the impacts of the development proposals in detail with regard to the current site and policy context and wider site proposals.
- Policy Bicester 8 states that proposals must maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area, protect listed, scheduled and other buildings, their setting and protect the sensitive historic fabric of the buildings and preserve the openness of the airfield. Paragraph C.92 of the Local Plan sets out the approach for development proposals which includes a conservation led approach, a mix of uses which preserves historic environment but which allows some flexibility in the interest of securing an economically viable future for the site. The Local Plan itself does not specify where on the former RAF Bicester site different uses should be located.
- Chapter 16 of the NPPF is particularly relevant for considering proposals and regard should be had to the Council's Conservation Area appraisal for the site. In the context of chapter 16 of the NPPF it will be necessary to consider the impacts of the proposals on heritage assets including preserving the openness of the airfield and to consider the potential benefits of the application including how the application relates and contributes to the wider masterplan for the site and its delivery, and the objectives of the Local Plan including in relation to employment, education and tourism.

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|                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant land is allocated for flexible mixed-use employment development elsewhere at Bicester in the Local Plan. The proposed development should reflect the conservation led, tourism-based nature of Policy Bicester 8, the Local Plans aims to secure high-tech employment at Bicester and be linked to the overall masterplan for the site. Consideration should therefore be given to the applicant’s justification for the type and overall quantum of B8 uses on the site.</li> <li>• Policy Bicester 8 makes clear that any development of the site should not preclude use of the flying field for flying.</li> <li>• The applicant’s Planning Statement refers to the creation of “an automotive technology education and apprenticeship academy” as part of the development proposals. Further information regarding how education (use class D1) interacts with the wider site and uses should be provided.</li> <li>• Policy Bicester 8 also requires the protection and enhancement of biodiversity on the site. The proposals will need to be considered with regard to this policy requirement and against Local Plan policy ESD10.</li> <li>• The design of the proposal must be considered carefully with regard to policy ESD15. Effective and high-quality design may contribute towards reducing impacts and preserving and enhancing the Conservation Area.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Policy Recommendation</b></p> | <p>No objection, in principle, subject to the specific requirements of Policy Bicester 8 being met.</p>   |