

Case Officer: Rebekah Morgan

Recommendation: Approve

Applicant: Bicester Motion

Proposal: Variation of conditions 1 (approved plans) and 3 (use of buildings) of 19/02275/F – to allow the Change of Use of Building 141 to B1a (Business) use at the New Technical Site.

Expiry Date: 19 May 2020

Extension of Time:

1. APPLICATION SITE AND LOCALITY

- 1.1. The application site comprises the former RAF Bicester Airfield which is located to the north of Bicester on the outskirts of the town. The site is comprised of the main 'technical site' area (where most of the buildings are located) and the flying field which extends to the north and east of the main technical site area, totalling around 141.5 hectares.
- 1.2. The whole of the site (including the flying field) is designated as a conservation area and most of the buildings within the main technical area are listed (Grade II). There are also several Scheduled Monuments located on the edges of the flying field and within the main technical area. Existing vehicular and pedestrian access to the site is gained just north of the roundabout on Buckingham Road. There are residential properties located to the west and southwest of the site.
- 1.3. For the purposes of this application, the site area and redline relates to a parcel of land situated on the southern edge of the existing technical site totalling 1.61 hectares. This parcel of land is therefore bounded by existing buildings of the technical site to its north and the airfield to the east. Skimmingdish Lane forms the southern boundary of the site, to the south of which there is currently a care home under construction.
- 1.4. The following constraints relate to the site:
 - The site is located within the Conservation Area of RAF Bicester;
 - The wider Bicester Heritage site contains 22 Grade II Listed Buildings with the remaining buildings making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area and are therefore considered to be non-designated heritage assets;
 - There are several Scheduled Monuments located within the main technical site area;
 - There is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within 2km of the site (the quarry to the north);
 - The site lies adjacent to a designated Local Wildlife Site which extends around the perimeter of the airfield;
 - There is a proposed District Wildlife Site to the south of the site on the opposite side of Skimmingdish Lane;
 - The Bicester Heritage site is bordered to the south by the A4421 Skimmingdish Lane and to the west by the Buckingham Road;
 - There are residential properties to the south, south-west and west of the Bicester Heritage site (opposite sides of the road), although none immediately to the south;

- The site is allocated in the Cherwell Local Plan for 'Tourism Development' (Policy Bicester 8).

2. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 2.1. This application seeks to amend application 19/02275/F which granted permission for the erection of 8 new employment buildings to the south of the existing technical site, comprising an area totalling 1.61 hectares. The buildings are to be used flexibly for B1, B2 and B8 uses and would provide 6530 square metres of additional floor space to the site.
- 2.2. The amendments seek a change of use to building 141 to allow B1(a) (Business) Use. The building has an approved floorspace of 1590sqm and the change of use would apply to the whole building.
- 2.3. The application includes proposals for external alterations; the replacement of the overhead access door with a glass arrangement in accordance with other fenestration on the building and the relocation of the pedestrian access door.

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1. The following planning history is considered relevant to the current proposal:

<u>Application Ref.</u>	<u>Proposal</u>	<u>Decision</u>
19/02275/F	Variation of condition 2 (plans) of 18/01333/F – various minor changes to approved plans including alterations to the fenestration of the buildings, as required to deliver the proposed buildings.	Application Permitted
18/01333/F	Extension to 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.	Application Permitted
18/01253/F	Erection of hotel and conference facility with associated access, parking, and landscaping.	Resolved to approve at committee in October 2018.
17/01847/F	Alterations to existing site access including installation of replacement security gates and erection of gatehouse.	Application Permitted.

- 3.2. The above planning history shows the applications directly relevant to the new technical site proposal. The adjoining technical site has a detailed planning history with several planning applications and listed building consent applications associated with individual buildings including a site wide consent for commercial uses.
- 3.3. The general approach taken on the technical site has been to allow changes of use that fit with the commercial nature of the site and minor physical changes to the buildings to ensure their long-term use and viability with the aim of conserving the heritage assets on the site.

4. PRE-APPLICATION DISCUSSIONS

4.1. No pre-application discussions have taken place with regard to this proposal.

5. RESPONSE TO PUBLICITY

5.1. This application has been publicised by way of a site notice displayed near the site, by advertisement in the local newspaper, and by letters sent to all properties immediately adjoining the application site that the Council has been able to identify from its records. The final date for comments was **10 April 2020**, although comments received after this date and before finalising this report have also been taken into account.

5.2. No comments have been raised by third parties.

6. RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

6.1. Below is a summary of the consultation responses received at the time of writing this report. Responses are available to view in full on the Council's website, via the online Planning Register.

PARISH/TOWN COUNCIL AND NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUMS

6.2. LAUNTON PARISH COUNCIL: No objections or comments

6.3. CAVERSFIELD PARISH COUNCIL: No objections or comments

6.4. BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL: Welcome this planning application

NON-STATUTORY CONSULTEES

6.5. OCC SINGLE RESPONSE:

'The application is for the variation of conditions 1 & 3 of permission 19/02275/F to enable B1a office use of building 141 on the New Technical Site.

While office use is generally much more intensive than the permitted use classes, and consequently has a much higher typical trip generation, it is not considered that enabling the use of building 141 alone for B1a purposes would have a significant or severe detrimental highway or traffic impact.

However, should further changes to the permitted use classes be proposed, the county council would request that further traffic impact assessments are undertaken and any subsequent applications be accompanied by a Transport Statement or Transport Assessment as appropriate.

It is noted that the change in use is likely to necessitate an increase in on-site parking. Without additional vehicle parking, the application could lead to ad hoc parking within the site, for instance along internal access roads, but this is unlikely to lead to any impacts upon the highway beyond the site in the short term. I note that proposals for additional on-site parking will be subject to a separate planning application. The county council will comment on that application accordingly.

Additional cycle parking should be provided in accordance with the county council's standards for B1a office use (one space per 150m²) taking account of the more intensive use.

The county council does not object to the application subject to the cycle parking condition suggested below and any outstanding planning conditions and / or obligations related to the original permission for the New Technical Site (planning ref 18/01333/F) being applied'.

7. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

7.1. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

7.2. The Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 - Part 1 was formally adopted by Cherwell District Council on 20th July 2015 and provides the strategic planning policy framework for the District to 2031. The Local Plan 2011-2031 – Part 1 replaced a number of the 'saved' policies of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 1996 though many of its policies are retained and remain part of the development plan. The relevant planning policies of Cherwell District's statutory Development Plan are set out below:

CHERWELL LOCAL PLAN 2011 - 2031 PART 1 (CLP 2031 Part 1)

- PSD1 – Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development
- SLE1 – Employment Development
- SLE4 – Improved Transport Connections
- ESD1 – Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change
- ESD2 – Energy Hierarchy and Allowable Solutions
- ESD3 – Sustainable Construction
- ESD4 – Decentralised Energy Systems
- ESD5 – Renewable Energy
- ESD6 – Sustainable Flood Risk Management
- ESD7 - Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDs)
- ESD10 – Biodiversity and the natural environment
- ESD13 – Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement
- ESD15 - The Character of the Built and Historic Environment
- BIC8 - Former RAF Bicester
- INF1 – Infrastructure

CHERWELL LOCAL PLAN 1996 SAVED POLICIES (CLP 1996)

- TR1 – Transportation Funding
- C1 – Protection of sites of nature conservation value
- C2 – Development affecting protected sites
- C4 – Creation of new habitats
- C7 – Landscape Conservation
- C23 – Retention of features contributing to character or appearance of a conservation area
- C25 – Development affecting the site or setting of a schedule ancient monument
- C28 – Layout, design and external appearance of new development
- ENV12 – Development on Contaminated land

7.3. Other Material Planning Considerations

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

- RAF Bicester Conservation Area Appraisal – November 2008
- Bicester Masterplan – Consultation Draft August 2012 (limited weight)
- RAF Bicester Planning Brief 2009
- Cherwell Non-Statutory Local Plan 2011

8. APPRAISAL

8.1. The key issues for consideration in this case are:

- Principle of development
- Proposed changes and impact on the development
- Impact on heritage assets

Principle of the development

8.2. The application site falls within the Cherwell Local Plan 2031 strategic allocation covered by Policy Bicester 8. The policy is a permissive policy supporting 'heritage tourism uses, leisure, recreation, employment and community uses'.

8.3. The applicant has provided a clear justification for requiring the change of use (to meet the need of a future tenant) and why this use could not be accommodated by converting an existing historic building within the old technical site, thereby bring a disused building back into use. The proposed end user has specific requirements in terms of building size which cannot be met within available buildings on the old technical site (the larger buildings are already earmarked for projects).

8.4. The application relates to one building within the new technical site, which already benefits from planning permission and is currently under construction, therefore the proposal does not create any additional floorspace on the site. The proposed B1(a) use for building 141 is an employment use and therefore the use would be compliant with the policy Bicester 8.

8.5. The principle of the development is considered to be acceptable. The proposed use is compliant with Policy Bicester 8 and would provide a desired employment use on the site.

Proposed changes and impact on the development

8.6. The proposed external alterations to the buildings are minor given the overall scale of the buildings and do not alter the layout or relationship between the buildings. The elevational changes proposed are in keeping with the approved design style for the development and would not undermine the overall appearance of the buildings. The changes are appropriate given the context of the development and are considered to be acceptable. Furthermore, the changes would not have a negative impact on the energy efficiency of the buildings as the construction method/type will not change.

8.7. The proposals do not increase the number of parking spaces at the site, although a separate application (20/00575/F) has been submitted for additional car parking as the applicant believes there will be a future need for increased provision for the whole of the new technical site (this is subject to separate consideration).

8.8. The Local Highways Authority has raised no objections to the application; they have assessed it as a standalone application and are content that any additional parking requirements (associated with this change of use) can be accommodated within land owned by the applicant. Whilst no additional parking is proposed, there is clearly sufficient space within the wider Bicester Heritage site to accommodate parking needs.

- 8.9. Whilst a separate application has been submitted for additional car parking, the conclusions reached by the Local Highway Authority means it is not necessary to formally tie the two applications at this stage.
- 8.10. The Local Highway Authority requested additional cycle parking due to the intensification of the use. The applicant had previously discharged conditions relating to cycle parking provision; they have submitted an amended cycle parking plan showing additional provision. The Local Highway Authority have confirmed they are content with the proposed cycle parking provision.
- 8.11. The proposed amendments set out in this application will not materially alter the scheme, the previous case officer reports for applications 18/01333/F and 19/02275/F considered in detail all the necessary material planning considerations including wider highways impacts, drainage, design, impacts on residential amenity, ecology, trees and landscaping, contamination and energy efficiency. Having reviewed the previous reports, the proposed alterations in this application would not alter the conclusions reached on those matters.

Impact on heritage

- 8.12. As set out in the case officer reports for applications 18/01333/F and 19/02275/F, the significance of this site relates to this being one of the best-preserved examples of an inter-war airfield, developed after the First World War at a time when technological advances in aircraft led to a need for different philosophies in military architecture and urban planning, led by Sir Hugh Trenchard (founder of the RAF).
- 8.13. The entire airfield site (including the whole of this application site) is a designated Conservation Area. There are a significant number of listed buildings (mainly located within the original technical site area) on the site and a several Scheduled Monuments.
- 8.14. Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that special attention shall be paid in the exercising of planning functions to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area. Likewise, Section 66(1) of the same Act states that in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
- 8.15. Paragraph 192 of the NPPF advises: '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 viability;
 - and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness
- 8.16. Paragraph 193 goes on to advise: '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 (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance'.
- 8.17. Applications 18/01333/F and 19/02275/F concluded that *"taking into account the advice in the NPPF, the proposal is considered to cause less than substantial harm*

to the heritage assets at the site. The applicants have minimised the harm as much as possible whilst also providing the contemporary design approach they are seeking". In accordance with paragraph 196 of the NPPF, this identified harm was weighed against the public benefits of the scheme (securing an optimum use for the site, bring economic benefits to Bicester and ensuring the longer-term conservation of the heritage assets on the site) and concluded that the substantial public benefits outweighed the harm.

- 8.18. When considering the amendments proposed as part of this application, the same conclusion can be reached. The amended scheme would create no greater harm to the heritage assets (still considered to be less-than substantial) and the same public benefits are still associated with the development. Therefore, the public benefits of the scheme would still outweigh the identified level of harm.

Other Matters

- 8.19. The recommendation will include the re-imposition of conditions included on the decision notice for application 19/02275/F. Where details have already been agreed via an application to discharge conditions or additional information has been provided , the conditions on this application will be revised to capture the approved details. As development has commenced, there is no need to re-impose a time limit condition.
- 8.20. A Section 106 agreement was required with application 18/01333/F. The agreement includes a clause to tie it to subsequent applications including Section 73 applications, therefore a linking agreement is not required with this application and the original Section 106 agreement will remain enforceable.

9. PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION

- 9.1. The proposed amendments set out in this application do not significantly alter the proposals set out in application 19/02275/F. The conclusions reached by the previous case officer are still considered to be relevant and applicable to this application. The proposed Change of Use is compliant with Policy Bicester 8 and is an acceptable use for this site.
- 9.2. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with the relevant policies of the Development Plan set out in the report, specifically Policy Bicester 8 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

10. RECOMMENDATION

That permission is granted, subject to the conditions and planning notes/informatives listed on the Decision Notice.

Case Officer: Rebekah Morgan

DATE: 27/04/2020

Checked By: Samantha Taylor

DATE: 7th May 2020
