

EDGARS

Planning Statement

Building 118, Bicester Motion, Bicester, OX27 8AL

Prepared for: Bicester Motion

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This planning statement has been prepared by Edgars on behalf of the Bicester Motion, henceforth referred to as the Client, for the change of use from Sui Generis MOD use to Class B2 / E to create workshop and office space at Building 118, Bicester Motion, Buckingham Road, Bicester, OX27 5HA.
- 1.2 The planning application includes the following documents:
- Application form
 - Planning Statement (this document)
 - Site Location Plan
 - Block Plan
- 1.3 The following sections of this planning statement consider:
- The site and surrounding area.
 - The relevant planning policy, including the Development Plan, NPPF and other material considerations.
 - The proposed use of Building 118.
 - The relevant material planning considerations.
- 1.4 Within that context, the statement concludes that the proposed development is acceptable in planning terms, is in accordance with the Development Plan and the wider presumption in favour of sustainable development.



2 Site and Surrounding Area

- 2.1 Bicester Motion is 2.4km (1½ miles) north/north east of the centre of the market town of Bicester. The application site, Building 118, is shown in Figure 1 below, which is adjacent to Hangar 113.

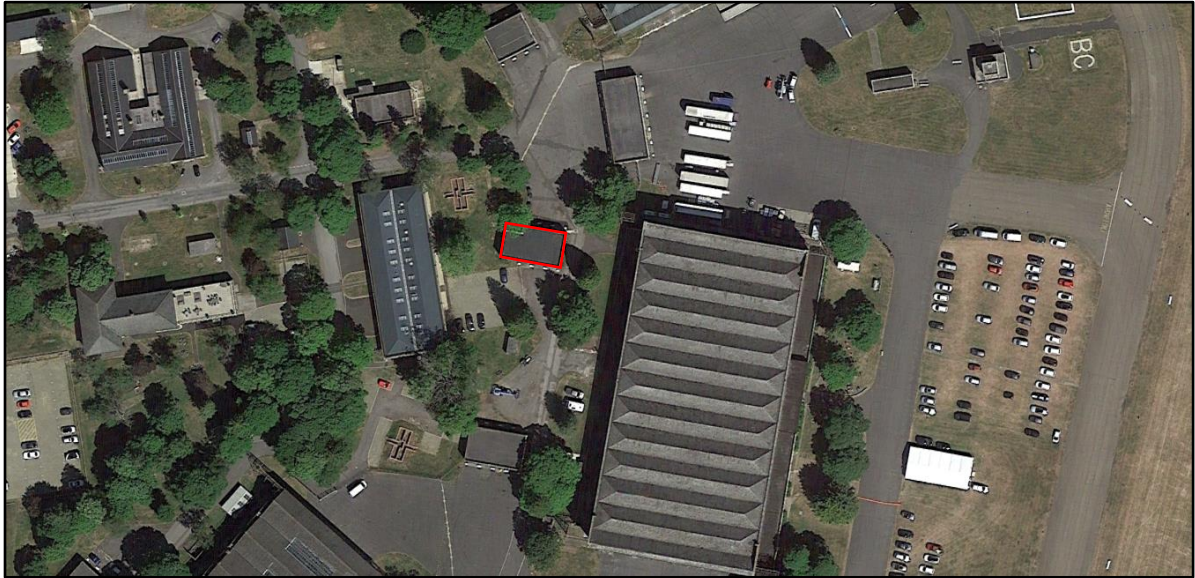


Figure 1: Aerial Image of Building 118

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.
- 2.6 The strategy's vision for Bicester identifies the expansion of the knowledge economy to encompass other areas of innovation and connections to local industry – an example suggested is the motorsport engineering strengths.
- 2.7 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 and Bicester Motion

- 2.8 Now forming a core component of Bicester Motion, Bicester Heritage is a business park dedicated to historic motoring excellence (the 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.
- 2.9 It has been achieved through a carefully considered restoration of the Technical Site, complemented by its extension through the well-designed and constructed Command Works and the equally well-designed hotel proposal. This is also reflected in the planning history for the site that demonstrates the high quality of development.
- 2.10 Development at the site has been delivered through a collaborative planning approach with Cherwell District Council, Oxfordshire County Council and Historic England. The parties worked together to create the second only Heritage Partnership Agreement in the UK.
- 2.11 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. Furthermore, the relationship has continued through the masterplan proposals with thorough pre-application discussions resulting in high quality development proposals at the site.
- 2.12 The Command Works continues the success of the wider site. The development has attracted national and international attention from media and businesses and will act as an expansion of the historic Technical Site, complementing the existing premises. Sporadic parking associated with the success of the existing business occurs within the technical site.
- 2.13 Once fully operational, the Command Works will provide the opportunity to attract at least 9 new businesses to the site and to create further job opportunities in the locality. Bicester Motion are in discussions with prospective occupiers of the buildings and are in the process of agreeing leases with new businesses and those already existing on the site which are looking to expand whilst remaining on the site.
- 2.14 Beyond the success identified above, Bicester Heritage also attracts thousands of people that regularly attend the events held each year. Bicester Heritage has made a significant contribution to the economy of the town and wider district since its inception in 2013 and will continue to do so through the creation of high-quality and welcoming places.

The Site

- 2.15 The application site is Building 118, historically used as a petrol tanker shed. The building is not listed but is within the vicinity of Hangar 113, a Grade II listed building, and falls within the RAF Bicester Conservation Area.
- 2.16 The RAF Bicester Conservation Area Appraisal states the following in relation to Building 118:
- Prior to the post-1934 Expansion Period, the method of refuelling aircraft was to taxi aircraft to the Aviation Petrol Installation where they were refuelled. After 1934, the RAF's mobile tanker system of refuelling aircraft became the standard practice. To house the many petrol tankers required, a range of Petrol Tanker Sheds were designed for all Expansion Period stations, sited close to the hangar aprons. These are brick-walled buildings with flat concrete roofs.*
- 2.17 Having reviewed the online records held by Cherwell District Council, there is no relevant planning history for Building 118.



3 Relevant Planning Policy

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 The relevant documents of the Cherwell Development Plan are identified as follows:
- Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031: Part 1; and
 - Saved Policies of the Cherwell Local Plan 1996.
- 3.3 A number of documents are identified as material considerations as follows:
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF);
 - National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG);
 - Bicester Heritage – Heritage Partnership Agreement;
 - RAF Bicester Planning Brief and Draft Development Principles (2009); and
 - RAF Bicester Conservation Area Appraisal (November 2008).

Cherwell Local Plan 2011 – 2031: Part 1

- 3.4 **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.
- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 **Policy PSD1 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development)** is a continuation of the NPPF and outlines a presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 3.7 **Policy Bicester 8 (Former RAF Bicester)** allocates the former RAF Bicester (including the Technical Site, Flying Field and Domestic Site). The Council will encourage conservation-led proposals to secure a long-lasting, economically viable future for the site. It supports proposals for employment.
- 3.8 **Policy 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.
- 3.9 **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.



- 3.10 **Policy SLE4 (Improved Transport Connections)** states that all development where reasonable to do so, should facilitate the use of sustainable modes of transport to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling.
- 3.11 **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.
- 3.12 **Policy ESD6 (Sustainable Flood Risk Management)** states that the Council will manage and reduce flood risk in the District through using a sequential approach to development; locating vulnerable developments in areas at lower risk of flooding. It states that flood risk assessment will be required for proposals located in flood zones 2 or 3, are 1 hectare or more in flood zone 1 or in areas that have experienced flooding.
- 3.13 **Policy ESD8 (Water Resources)** states that the Council will seek to maintain water quality by avoiding adverse effects of development on the water environment.
- 3.14 **Policy ESD10 (Biodiversity and the Natural Environment)** outlines an approach to protect and enhance biodiversity and the natural environment.
- 3.15 **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.
- 3.16 **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.

Saved Policies of the Cherwell Local Plan 1996

- 3.17 The relevant saved policies that remain part of the Development Plan for the District are outlined below.
- 3.18 **Saved Policy C5 (Protection of Ecological Value)** states that the Council will seek to protect the ecological and rural character of areas in the district.
- 3.19 **Saved 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.
- 3.20 **Saved 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.
- 3.21 **Saved 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.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)



- 3.22 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 identified in this section below.
- 3.23 **Paragraph 8** states that the planning system has three overarching objectives:
- **Economic:** to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure.
 - **Social:** to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being.
 - **Environmental:** to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.
- 3.24 **Paragraph 11** states that policies in Local Plans should follow the approach of the presumption in favour of sustainable development so that it is clear that development which is sustainable can be approved without delay.
- 3.25 **Chapter 4 (Decision Making)** sets out that local authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way, seeking to approve applications for sustainable development.
- 3.26 **Paragraph 15** states that the planning system should be genuinely plan-led. Succinct and up-to-date plans should provide a positive vision for the future of each area; a framework for addressing housing needs and other economic, social and environmental priorities; and a platform for local people to shape their surroundings.
- 3.27 **Paragraph 16** outlines that plans be prepared with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development and be prepared positively, in a way that is aspirational but deliverable.
- 3.28 **Chapter 6 (Building a Strong, Competitive Economy)** states, in **paragraph 80**, that planning policies and decisions should help create the 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. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. This is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation, and in areas with high levels of productivity, which should be able to capitalise on their performance and potential.
- 3.29 **Paragraph 82** states that planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes making provision for clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries; and for storage and distribution operations at a variety of scales and in suitable accessible locations.
- 3.30 **Chapter 8 (Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities)** states that planning decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places, which promote social interaction, are safe and accessible and enable and support healthy lifestyles.
- 3.31 **Chapter 11 (Making effective use of land)** states that planning decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for various uses. Paragraph 120 states that planning decisions should reflect changes in the demand for land.



- 3.32 **Chapter 12 (Achieving well-designed places)** states, in paragraph 124, that the creation of high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve.
- 3.33 **Paragraph 127** states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:
- will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
 - are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
 - are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
 - establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
 - optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
 - create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.
- 3.34 **Chapter 15 (Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment)** requires, in paragraph 170, planning decisions to prevent new and existing development being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of noise pollution.
- 3.35 **Paragraph 180** states that planning decisions should ensure new development is appropriate to its location and to mitigate and reduce to a minimum any potential adverse impacts resulting from noise.
- 3.36 **Chapter 16 (Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment)** states, in paragraph 185, that plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. This strategy should include:
- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
 - the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;
 - the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and
 - opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.
- 3.37 **Paragraph 189** states that local planning authorities should require an applicant 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 the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary.



- 3.38 **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.
- 3.39 **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, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

Non-statutory Cherwell Local Plan 2011 (December 2004)

- 3.40 The Non-Statutory Cherwell Local Plan 2011 is not part of the statutory development plan but was approved as interim planning policy for development control purposes in December 2004.

Bicester Heritage – Heritage Partnership Agreement

- 3.41 The document aims to provide a blanket vision for the site acquired by Bicester Heritage. The HPA considers the history of the site, site constraints and opportunities, the Bicester Heritage business plan, and economic considerations. It is relevant as background information.

RAF Bicester Planning Brief (September 2009)

- 3.42 Notwithstanding that the brief is not a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), the document is identified as a material planning consideration. The Planning Brief contains informal development principles drafted prior to disposal of the site by the MOD. The site was in a poor state of repair and the planning brief was drafted within that context. Having regard to the above and the planning history of the site, the planning brief is of limited weight in the consideration of this application.

RAF Bicester Conservation Area Appraisal (October 2008)

- 3.43 The RAF Bicester Conservation Area was designated in 2002 and reviewed in 2008. The 2008 review led to the boundary being extended. The Conservation Area Appraisal has been considered as part of this application.



4 Development Proposal and Use

- 4.1 The development proposal is for the change of use from Sui Generis MOD use to Class B2 / E to create workshop and office space at Building 118, Bicester Motion, Buckingham Road, Bicester, OX27 5HA.
- 4.2 It is outlined in The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020, which came into force on the 1st September 2020, that Class E (Commercial, Business and Service) includes:
- g) for—
 - i. an office to carry out any operational or administrative functions,
- 4.3 Furthermore, it is stated in The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020, that Class B2 (General Industry) includes:
- Use for the carrying on of an industrial process other than one falling within the uses described in Schedule 2, Class E, sub-paragraph (g).*
- 4.4 The proposed office use would fall under Class E g) i) and the proposed workshop use would fall under Class B2.
- 4.5 No internal or external alterations to Building 118 are sought as part of this application.



5 Relevant Material Planning Considerations

5.1 Having regard to the Development Plan and NPPF, the relevant material planning considerations are identified as follows:

- Principle of Development
- Heritage

Principle of Development

5.2 The proposed development will allow Building 118 to be used as a workshop and office space which will allow for its occupation and integration into the wider vision of the site.

5.3 Policy Bicester 8 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. The supported uses include recreation and employment uses. The proposed Class B2 / E uses falls under this description and is therefore considered to be in line with Policy Bicester 8.

5.4 Furthermore, Policy SLE1 (Employment Development) outlines that employment development will be focused on existing employment sites, such as on existing operational sites at Bicester. Building 118 is within an allocated site (Policy Bicester 8), would utilise an existing building, has good accessibility and would not have an adverse effect on the surrounding land uses as a result of the proposed development. As such, the application is in accordance with Policy SLE 1 of the Local Plan.

5.5 The principle of development is also supported by paragraph 80 of the NPPF, which states that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity. The change of use from sui generis MOD to Class B2 / E will bring Building 118 into use and support the economic growth of the wider site.

5.6 The proposed development supports and facilitates the use of sustainable modes of transport to make the fullest use of public transport, walking and cycling. The proposed development is in accordance with Policy SLE4 (Improved Transport Connections).

5.7 In conclusion, the principle of development is considered acceptable as the proposed development is an employment use within an existing employment site. Class B2 & E uses are established on the wider site and have been approved across the site, which are all in accordance with Policy Bicester 8, and is supported by paragraph 80 of the NPPF as the change in use will allow for the economic growth of the site.

Heritage

5.8 The proposed development is for a change of use with no internal or external alterations. Building 118 is not a listed building. It is adjacent to Hangar 113, a Grade II listed building. Additionally, it is sited within the RAF Bicester Conservation Area.

5.9 It is outlined in Policy ESD15 (Character of the Built and Historic Environment) that where development is in the vicinity of the District's distinctive natural and historic assets, delivering high quality design that complements the asset will be essential. It continues to comment that development proposals should conserve, sustain and enhance designated and non-designated heritage assets and that regeneration proposals that make sensitive use of heritage assets into appropriate use will be encouraged.

5.10 With the above in consideration, the proposed development will conserve and sustain Building 118 by bringing it into use and contributing positively to the area's character and identity, as the use would be in line with the supported use of Policy Bicester 8.



- 5.11 The proposed development will not impact the significance of the heritage assets on the site, in accordance with paragraph 193 of the NPPF. As such, the proposed development is in accordance with Policy ESD15 and the NPPF.



6 Summary and Conclusion

- 6.1 This planning statement has been prepared by Edgars on behalf of the Bicester Motion, for change of use from Sui Generis MOD use to Class B2 / E to create workshop and office space at Building 118, Bicester Motion, Buckingham Road, Bicester, OX27 5HA.
- 6.2 The application site is Building 118. The building is not listed but is within the vicinity of Hangar 113, a Grade II listed building, and falls within the RAF Bicester Conservation Area.
- 6.3 The proposed development will allow Building 118 to be used as a workshop and office space which will allow for its occupation and integration into the wider vision of Bicester Heritage.
- 6.4 Policy Bicester 8 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. The supported uses include recreation and employment uses. The proposed Class B2 / E uses fall under this description and is therefore considered to be in line with Policy Bicester 8.
- 6.5 Policy ESD15 (Character of the Built and Historic Environment) states that where development is in the vicinity of the District's distinctive natural and historic asset, delivering high quality design that complements the asset will be essential. It continues to comment that development proposals should conserve, sustain and enhance designated and non-designated heritage assets and that regeneration proposals that make sensitive use of heritage assets into appropriate use will be encouraged. Therefore, the proposed use is in accordance with Policy ESD15.
- 6.6 The application is also supported by paragraph 80 of the NPPF, which states that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity. The change of use from sui generis MOD to Class B2 / E will bring Building 118 into use and support the economic growth of the wider site.
- 6.7 In conclusion, the proposed development is in accordance with the Development Plan and documents identified as relevant material planning considerations. In accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development, it is respectfully requested that the application be granted without delay.