

**Case Officer:** Rebekah Morgan

**Recommendation:** Approve

**Applicant:** Bicester Motion

**Proposal:** Change of use from Sui Generis MOD use to Class B2 / E to create workshop and office space.

**Expiry Date:** 29 April 2021

**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 centre. The site is now occupied by Bicester Motion, a company specialising in historic motoring and aviation, with Bicester Heritage comprising the business park element. The site occupied by Bicester Heritage comprises the main technical site area (where the majority of the buildings are located) and the flying field which extends to the north and east of the main technical site area. For the purposes of this application, the site area and redline just relates to a single building and does not include any other part of the site.
- 1.2. The whole of the site (including the flying field) is designated as a conservation area and the majority of the buildings within the main technical area are listed (grade 2). There are also a number of Scheduled Monuments located on the edges of the flying field and within the main technical area. 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 south-west of the site.
- 1.3. This application relates to Building 118 which is located in the central area of the technical site adjacent to hangar 113. There is also a small defence structure located to the northwest of the building; the defence structure is a Scheduled Monument.
- 1.4. The following constraints relate to the site:
  - The site is located within the Conservation Area of RAF Bicester;
  - The building is a Grade II listed building;
  - The majority of other buildings on the site are either Grade 2 listed or locally listed;
  - There are a number of Scheduled Monuments located within the main technical site area;
  - There is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within 2 km of the site (the quarry to the north);
  - There is a proposed District Wildlife Site to the south of the site on the opposite side of Skimmingdish Lane;
  - Much of the adjoining airfield is allocated as a Local Wildlife Site;
  - The 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 site (opposite sides of the road);

- 1.5. The site is allocated in the Cherwell Local Plan for 'Tourism Development' (Policy Bicester 8) and there is a site adjacent which is allocated for 'New Employment Development' (Policy Bicester 11).

## **2. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

- 2.1. The applicant seeks planning permission for the change of use of Building 118 from Sui Generis (MOD use) to Use Classes B2 / E to create a workshop and associated office space.
- 2.2. The proposal is for a Change of Use only and does not include any physical alterations to the building.

## **3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

- 3.1. There is a complex planning history relating to the redevelopment of the technical site at Bicester Heritage. The planning history does not relate to Building 118 and is not directly relevant to this application.

## **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 and by advertisement in the local newspaper. The final date for comments was **24 April 2021**, 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.

### NON-STATUTORY CONSULTEES

- 6.3. LOCAL HIGHWAYS AUTHORITY (OCC): No objection.

## **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)

- ESD15 - The Character of the Built and Historic Environment
- BIC8 – RAF Bicester

#### CHERWELL LOCAL PLAN 1996 SAVED POLICIES (CLP 1996)

- C28 – Layout, design and external appearance of new development

### 7.3. Other Material Planning Considerations

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

## **8. APPRAISAL**

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

- Principle of development
- Design, impact on heritage assets and impact on the character of the area
- Residential amenity
- Highway safety

#### Principle of development

- 8.2. The application seeks a Change of Use of the building to Use Class B2/ E in order to create a workshop and office space. The proposal is for Change of Use only and does not include any internal or external changes to the building.
- 8.3. The former RAF technical site has been redeveloped over the past few years with the majority of the old buildings on the site having been refurbished to a high standard and brought back into viable, commercial uses.
- 8.4. Policy Bicester 8 of the Cherwell Local Plan 2031 is a site-specific policy and states '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 heritage tourism, leisure, recreation, employment and community uses'.
- 8.5. The proposal seeks a Change of Use to Classes B2 and E. Under the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020. Policy Bicester 8 of the Cherwell Local Plan 2031 supports employment uses at the site which this proposal is considered to represent. This proposal is 'conservation-led' in terms of bringing a former building back into use.
- 8.6. Overall, the proposal is considered to be compatible with Policy Bicester 8 of the Cherwell Local Plan 2031 and would complement the other uses on the site and the future policy aspirations for the site. Therefore, the principle of the development is considered to be acceptable.

### Design, impact on heritage assets and impact on the character of the area

- 8.7. The property is a Grade II Listed Building located within the RAF Bicester Conservation Area and is within the setting of a number of listed buildings on the site. The proposal does not involve any physical alterations to the appearance of the building. Therefore, the proposal is not considered to have a detrimental impact on the character of the area or the heritage assets, including the character and appearance of the Listed Building, the setting of neighbouring Listed Buildings or the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- 8.8. For the above reasons, the proposal therefore accords with government guidance contained within the NPPF, Policy ESD15 of the Cherwell Local Plan 2031 and saved Policy C28 of the Cherwell Local Plan 1996.

### Residential amenity

- 8.9. The building, which is the subject of this application, is located within the technical site on the opposite side of Buckingham Road to the nearest residential properties. Due to the type of proposed use, the proposal would not cause harm to residential amenity. The proposal therefore complies with Government guidance contained within the NPPF, Policy ESD15 of the Cherwell Local Plan 2011 - 2031 Part 1 and saved Policy C28 of the Cherwell Local Plan 1996.

### Highway safety

- 8.10. The Local Highway Authority has raised no objections to the proposal. They advise *'the proposals represent an intensification of use at the site, although the building in question is of a modest size and unlikely to generate sufficient traffic to create an adverse traffic or road safety impact on the local highway network. Existing on-site parking remains unaffected and is adequate'*.
- 8.11. The site has adequate vehicular access and sufficient parking within the technical site to accommodate any additional car use associated with the proposed change of use. Furthermore, the site is within walking distance of existing bus stops providing public transport links to the site from the town centre and beyond. In addition, the Local Highways Authority provided no objections to the proposal.
- 8.12. The proposal would not have a detrimental impact on highway safety and is therefore considered to be acceptable in this regard.

## **9. PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION**

- 9.1. The NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Paragraph 8 requires that the three dimensions to sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) are not undertaken in isolation, but are sought jointly and simultaneously.
- 9.2. The proposal represents the re-use of a historic building which will be given a viable use. The proposed use is compatible with the surrounding site and would not have provide further employment uses on the site.
- 9.3. The proposal is considered to comply with Government Guidance contained within the NPPF, Policies ESD15 and Bicester 8 of the Cherwell Local Plan 2031 and saved Policy C28 of the Cherwell Local Plan 1996. Therefore, the proposal is recommended for approval, subject to appropriate planning conditions.

## **10. RECOMMENDATION**

That permission is granted, subject to the following conditions:

1. The development to which this permission relates shall be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason - To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. Except where otherwise stipulated by conditions attached to this permission, the development shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the application forms and the following plans and documents:

- Application form
- Planning Statement prepared by Edgars dated February 2021
- Building 118 Location Plan
- Building 118 Site Plan

Reason – For the avoidance of doubt, to ensure that the development is carried out only as approved by the Local Planning Authority and comply with Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Case Officer: Rebekah Morgan

DATE: 26/04/2021

Checked By: Andy Bateson

DATE: 28<sup>th</sup> April 2021

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