

# EDGARS

## Planning Statement

The Experience Quarter  
Prepared for: Bicester Motion  
April 2021

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Project Ref: 689/021  
Issue: FINALv1  
LPA: Cherwell District Council





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# 1 Introduction

1.1 This planning statement has been prepared by Edgars on behalf of Bicester Motion Limited for the Experience Quarter at Bicester Motion, Buckingham Road, Bicester, OX27 5HA.

1.2 The description of the proposed development is an outline application with all matters reserved (aside from that of access) for:

*“Automotive Experience Quarter comprising Commercial, Business and Services uses (Class E), Light Industrial (Class B2), Local Community and Learning Uses (Class F) and vehicle circuits (Sui Generis) with all matters reserved aside from that of access”.*

at the Experience Quarter development parcel, Bicester Motion, Bicester, OX26 5HA, formerly known during the pre-application discussions as the Brand Experience Centre.

1.3 The planning application comprises the following documents:

## **Admin**

- Application form (Edgars);
- Covering Letter (Edgars);

## **Drawings/Plans (Ridge)**

- Site Location Plan;
- Indicative Layout;
- Parameters plan: developable areas;
- Parameters plan: height, scale and massing;
- Parameters plan: access and movement
- Parameters plan: land use;

## **Reports**

- Topographical Survey (Ridge);
- Bicester Motion Vision Document (Bicester Motion);
- Planning Statement (this document) (Edgars);
- Design and Access Statement (Ridge);
- Design Code (Ridge);



- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) (ASA Landscape);
  - Ecology and Biodiversity Report (Ecology Solutions);
  - Arboricultural Report (Brian Higginson);
  - Transport Assessment and Framework Travel Plan (mode);
  - Heritage Statement (Worlledge Associates);
  - Archaeology Assessment (Oxford Archaeology);
  - Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy (Ridge);
  - Ground conditions and geology report (Crestwood Environmental);
  - Aviation Report (Air Motive Limited);
  - Noise Report (SPL Track Environmental – with input from Sharps Redmore Acoustic Consultants);
  - Energy Statement (Ridge); and
  - Track Design Report (Driven).
- 1.4 A Screening Opinion is also submitted in conjunction with the proposed development. A separate covering letter has been prepared to accompany that submission.
- 1.5 The Planning Statement is structured to first set the background and context for the planning application within the following sections:
- The Site and Surrounding Area;
  - Bicester Motion Vision;
  - Relevant Planning History;
  - Pre-application Discussions and Consultation; and
  - Relevant Planning Policy including the Development Plan, NPPF, and other key documents.
- 1.6 Following the above sections, the Planning Statement describes the proposed development before assessing the proposals against the material considerations.
- 1.7 The statement concludes that the proposed development is acceptable in planning terms in accordance with the Development Plan and the wider presumption in favour of sustainable development.



## 2 Site and Surrounding Area

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



*Figure 1: Site Location*

### **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 has a focus for housing supply and economic growth.
- 2.3 The adopted Local Plan states that 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.



- 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 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 M25 corridor and London markets.
- 2.5 The adopted Local Plan 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 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 recovery and growth and prosperity in the region as well as social, health and well-being benefits.
- 2.7 Local Industrial Strategy, OXLEP recognise the alignment of the Bicester Motion vision with the LIS objectives, recognise also that this will be a key site for Oxfordshire as part of the ARC. Bicester is located at the focal point of international motorsport and automotive expertise with 7 Formula 1 teams, and 7 tier 1 motorsport teams and suppliers located within 30 miles. Bicester Motion's plans have already created magnetism and growth within the automotive innovation and technology with new businesses locating within 1 mile of the site, these include Arrival and E-extreme. Beyond this approximately 15 centres of motor manufacturing excellence are also located within 40 miles

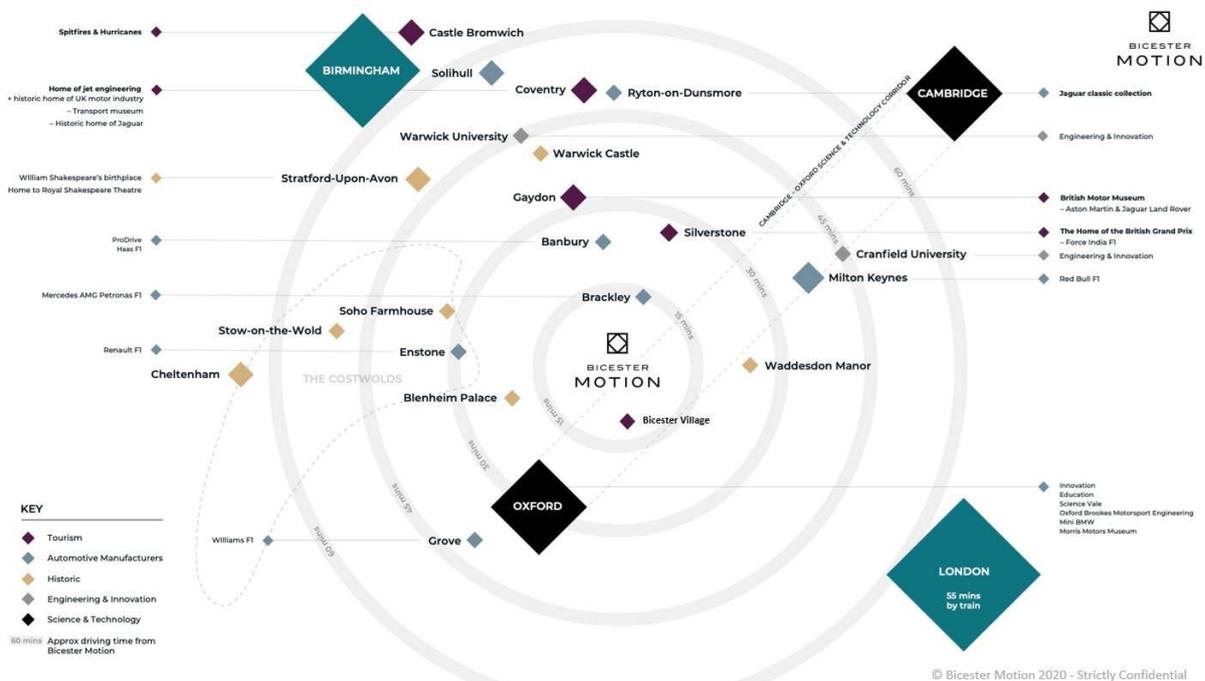


Figure 2: Bicester Motion Context Diagram



### **Bicester Motion**

- 2.8 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 stretches between Cambridge, Oxford and Silverstone whilst the latter include attractions such as Blenheim Palace, Bicester Village, Waddestone Manor and the Cotswolds receiving around 30m tourism visits each year. 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.
- 2.9 The first phase of Bicester Motion has been delivered successfully, this is the Heritage Quarter (Bicester Heritage) which is now home to over 50 specialist businesses and has already attracted many world-leading brands to Bicester in the automotive and technology sector these include: Mercedes AMG F1, Brabham Automotive, Bonhams MPH, KW Special Projects, Morgan Motor Company, Little Car Company, Physics X and The Road Rat Magazine. This is set to grow significantly as the Experience Quarter is delivered.
- 2.10 Experience Oxfordshire recognise opportunity for Bicester Motion to become the most diverse leisure and tourism offer in Oxfordshire, this is essential to supporting recovery in the leisure and tourism sector.

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

### **Experience Quarter**

- 2.11 The proposed development site is largely within the applicant's ownership boundary and situated between the Old Technical Site (south) and the Stratton Audley Quarry (north). The site was referred to as "Land north-west of former RAF Bicester" for pre-application purposes. It includes the former perimeter track and a portion of the current flying field.
- 2.12 Part of the former Stratton Audley Quarry forms the northern extent of the application site. This area is held on a long-term lease by Bicester Motion from Oxfordshire County Council (OCC).
- 2.13 To the south of the site is the former RAF Technical Site, which has been restored by Bicester Heritage Ltd, and [is](#) operating as Bicester Heritage an award-winning Centre of Excellence for historic motoring.
- 2.14 To the west of the site is Buckingham Road. Further to the west of the site is the existing built-up area of Bicester, which comprises residential development known as Caversfield, set back from the main road.
- 2.15 The former Bomb Stores are located east of the application boundary. The former Bomb Stores are separated from the proposed Experience Quarter by circa 1km. Beyond the former Bomb Stores is open countryside.

### Site Description



- 2.16 The site primarily comprises areas of grassland with areas of hard surfacing. The land is flat and low-lying. The site comprises Previously Developed Land (PDL). The existing infrastructure and hard surfacing at the site, including the panhandle areas and the extensive perimeter track, are still clear features of the site. Whilst some reclamation by landscaping at the peripheral areas has occurred, the site is still considered to be PDL in accordance with the NPPF definition.
- 2.17 The site is in Flood Zone 1 with a low probability of fluvial flooding. The site is located primarily within the RAF Bicester Conservation Area.

#### *Structures*

- 2.18 There are no buildings or structures within the application site boundary. For the avoidance of doubt there are no Scheduled Monuments (SM) within the application site.
- 2.19 Whilst there are no buildings or structures currently located on the site as highlighted within the submitted Heritage Report, the site has historically accommodated a variety of temporary buildings and airplane parking/storage.

#### *Site Levels*

- 2.20 The site can be described as mostly level given the historic airfield and MOD use of the land. Falls are on average 1:100, which is a gradual fall of about 10m over a kilometre cross sections of the site.
- 2.21 Former quarry activities within the OCC portion of land has resulted in a slightly more undulated range of levels in this area. At an average fall of 1:20, this area can still be described as relatively flat with some small 2m high embankments sloped at 1:2 in the most extreme case.

#### *Perimeter Track & Panhandle Areas*

- 2.22 The application site includes the existing perimeter track which originates from the 1940s expansion period when it connected the airfield with a vast network of dispersal roads leading to panhandle areas for aircraft. Most of these have been lost to development outside of the Bicester Motion ownership land and application site. These areas were connected to the perimeter track in 5 locations and are still evident and reflected in the existing track infrastructure.
- 2.23 The perimeter track is approximately 3.3km long and ranges in width from 12-14m. Its condition is poor in places. Evidence of the 6 dispersal road connections and the 3 panhandles remain identifiable within the current infrastructure on site (Figure 4).

#### *Screening and Visibility*

- 2.24 The perimeter track passes directly in front of the listed Type C hangars and the Watchtower (part of the Old Technical Site) and approximately 100m from the scheduled Bomb Stores. Most of the application site, however, is located away from the Old Technical Site and Bombs Stores and range in distance from 500m to over a kilometre.



- 2.25 Apart from the OCC portion of land (Stratton Audley Quarry), which is screened by woodland trees, the site is unscreened from the hangars and Watchtower buildings but viewed against a backdrop of tall trees. Views out are predominantly over the treeline with glimpses of long views over lower scrub and gaps in the vegetation along dispersal roads No.1, 2, 4 & 6 (Figure 4).



*Figure 3: View north towards application site from Technical Site*

- 2.26 Some views of the application site exist from a section of Caversfield in the vicinity of dispersal road. Further intermittent glimpses are possible along Buckingham Road, but for the most part these are from the road and the footpath as another layer of screening is provided by a second row of trees on the opposite side of Buckingham road.

#### *Existing Access*

- 2.27 There are eight existing and one historic access points to the wider Bicester Motion site. Of these, two are located within the application site and can provide direct access/egress to/from the Experience Quarter, both coincide with historic dispersal roads (numbers 1 & 2) and are located along Buckingham - and Bicester Road respectively. The Buckingham Road access, just north of the Old Technical Site, is currently used for events access. This can be identified on the Access Parameter Plan submitted with the application.
- 2.28 Figure 12 shows the existing surviving infrastructure within and immediately around the application site. The various tracks are colour coded to illustrate their general current condition. The dispersal tracks that once linked to the wider network of panhandle areas (see Figure 4) with the perimeter track, are numbered for reference.
- 2.29 A visual inspection and several core samples have been taken around the perimeter track to assess condition. The wider network of tracks outside of the Perimeter Track have been assessed based on visual inspection only.
- 2.30 It has been found that the perimeter track condition progressively worsens further away from the Technical Site due to limited use.



Figure 4: Historic and Existing tracks on site



### 3 Bicester Motion Vision



#### **Bicester Motion**

- 3.1 The Bicester Motion vision for the site, which proposes a shared masterplan vision for the site as a whole. Bicester Motion aims to provide a vibrant future for the former RAF Bicester, promoting public access and offering a collection of inclusive visitor experiences unlike any other destination in the country, providing a range of opportunities for businesses, skilled employment opportunities and education.
- 3.2 The vision is to create a sustainable and exciting future for the aerodrome through automotive and aviation activity. Bicester Motion believe that change to the historic environment, if managed effectively, can make a positive contribution to the lives of present and future generations. By creating a sustainable future for the aerodrome, they will give visitors the opportunity to experience the history and immerse themselves in the past, present and future of automotive and aviation culture and technology with Motion at its heart.
- 3.3 Bicester Motion will be an incomparable visitor attraction and business location, combining an enviable collection of dynamic and inclusive experiences with an integrated vibrant business economy. Arranged over more than four hundred acres, the unrivalled location is captured as four Quarters; Innovation, Heritage, Experience and Wilderness. Each Quarter is focused on enterprise and connected by a central historic airfield. Within these Quarters, visitors will be able to explore the parkland, beautiful lakes and winding nature-trails, as well as discover an array of overnight-stay opportunities.

#### **Experience Quarter Development Proposals Vision**

- 3.4 The Experience Quarter offers a landmark opportunity for Bicester to become a world-leading destination to celebrate the past, present and future of automotive and aviation culture. The Experience Quarter will be a collection of the world's most exciting mobility brands situated in beautifully designed galleries with demonstration circuits. It is proposed to create a sustainable centre for automotive and aviation activity that will respect and enhance the historic environment at the site for future generations.
- 3.5 The Experience Quarter will have a wide range of activities, including:



- New driver training and handling tracks, which will allow for visitors to learn new skills in a safe and family focused environment, plus guests of all ages can get behind the wheel or simply enjoy the show from the planned viewing points and walkways. Their tracks are motorsport inspired and designed for driver training, time-trials and testing – as well as demonstration and experience activities.
- Demonstration and event areas are planned, enabling brands to showcase new and exciting technologies to the public. As we move towards a greener future, Bicester Motion's aim is that the Experience Quarter will be internationally recognised as the leading site for sustainable transport product launches and demonstrations, with the benefit of the on-road and off-road tracks, demonstration zones and airfield.
- The creation of new walkways and cycleways, connecting the four Quarters which will enable visitors to explore on foot, cycle, or scooters promoting health and well-being through the enjoyment of open green space filled with family friendly activities.

### 3.6 The benefits of the Experience Quarter include:

- The public being able to explore the historic site and participate in multiple activities.
- Inspiring the next generation.
- Create skilled apprenticeship and employment opportunities in automotive technology, leisure and business.
- Provide Bicester with dynamic, international exposure as a world-leader in Motion.
- Major investment and growth opportunity on a local, regional and national level.
- Help boost the economy and supporting recovery post COVID-19.

### 3.7 The Experience Quarter will deliver:

- High-quality buildings that will house world-leading brands across the 'Motion' sector.
- Motorsport inspired vehicle circuits.
- Demonstration and event areas are planned enabling brands to showcase new and exciting technologies to the public.
- An internationally recognised site for sustainable transport product launch and demonstrations with the benefit of the on-road and off-road tracks, demonstration

### 3.8 The ambition of the Experience Quarter will be fulfilled by the focus and commitment to the following principles:

- Designed to be inclusive and accessible
- Family friendly, offering a range of activities



- Promotes learning and cultural experiences
- Promotes an understanding of the site and historic significance to all visitors
- Supports health, well-being and mobility
- Encourages repeat visits and customer retention
- Promotes team-building and occupational skills
- Increases visitor dwell time in Bicester and Oxfordshire
- Becomes internationally recognised as Bicester Motion



## 4 Relevant Planning History

4.1 Having reviewed the online records held by Cherwell District Council, the most relevant planning history to the development proposal is outlined in the table below.

Reference	Description	Decision	Date
20/02631/F	Change of use from Sui Generis MOD use to Class E to allow for the making, sale and distribution of gin	Permitted	19/11/20
20/02497/F	Area of grasscrete and associated landscaping to form an extension to the Orchard Car Park.	Awaiting Decision	-
19/02757/SO	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	Screening Opinion not requesting EIA	21/01/20
19/02708/OUT	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	Resolution to grant planning permission S106 currently being progressed	-
19/02275/F	Variation of condition 2 (plans) of 18/01333/F - A number of changes to approved plans are required to deliver the proposed buildings. The changes include minor alterations to the fenestration of the buildings.	Permitted	31/01/20
19/02050/F	Erection of a new substation	Permitted	15/11/19
19/01147/F	Construction of a new timber framed car port within the existing car parking area	Permitted	15/11/19
19/01014/F 19/01015/LB	Change of use of Building 89 to offices (B1).	Permitted	26/07/19
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.	Permitted	03/09/19



18/01253/F	Erection of hotel and conference facility with associated access, parking, and landscaping	Permitted	11/03/20
18/00061/SO	Screening opinion to 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.	Screening Opinion not requesting EIA	16/08/18
18/00044/SO	Request for a screening opinion for proposed erection of new building to provide a hotel and conference facility with associated parking and landscaping.	Screening Opinion not requesting EIA	25/06/18
16/01805/F	Change of use of buildings from sui generis MOD use to various commercial uses as detailed in accompanying Planning Statement with associated physical works and demolition of buildings 101 and 104 and erection of replacement structures	Permitted	26/09/17

- 4.2 Further to the above, development known as New Technical Site or Command Works (app ref: 18/01333/F) has been implemented occupier fit out in underway and occupation planned during Q1 2021.



## 5 Pre-application Engagement

- 5.1 The applicant has sought to engage positively with Cherwell District Council. The pre-application engagement is summarising below and include:
- 5.2 19/02092/PREAPP in respect of “*Automotive experience centre comprising B1 (business), B2 (light industrial) and D2 (Leisure) uses with ancillary spectator facilities comprising D1 (Non-residential), Sui Generis (workshop/ showrooms), A3 (restaurants and cafes) and offices, storage, display and sales comprising the ‘Brand Centre’ at Bicester Motion, Bicester*” (now Experience Quarter)
- 5.3 This has resulted in three rounds of pre-application responses being receive from the Council. A site visit was undertaken on the 7<sup>th</sup> November 2019 and an initial response was received on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2019, followed by second pre-application response 14<sup>th</sup> February 2020 which constituted the Council’s formal response to the proposals submitted. A final pre-application response was received on the 27<sup>th</sup> November 2020.
- 5.4 In addition to the above pre-application responses, a number of round table discussions have been undertaken with the Council to facilitate pre-applications discussions. These meetings were supplemented with formal presentations and workshops with the Council were held on the following dates:
- **7<sup>th</sup> November 2019** – Attended by the Council (Planning, Ecology, Landscape, Design and Conservation), OCC (Highways), Bicester Motion, Edgars (Planning), Ridge (Architecture) and Technical Team (Landscape, Ecology, Heritage and Transport).
  - **18<sup>th</sup> December 2019** – Attended by the Council (Planning, Ecology, Landscape, Design and Conservation, and Environmental Health), OCC – apologies given (Highways), Bicester Motion, Edgars (Planning), Ridge (Architecture) and Technical Team (Landscape, Ecology, Heritage, Transport and Track Design and Noise).

### **Pre-application Response 07/11/2019**

- 5.5 The pre-application response covered the following matters:
- The principle of development;
  - Economic benefits;
  - The outline submission and parameter plans
  - Highway safety and connectivity
  - Visual and landscape impact
  - Heritage assets
  - Ecology/protected species/biodiversity
  - Impact on aviation



- Flood risk and drainage
- Energy efficiency measures
- Noise

5.6 The pre-application comments in relation to the above matters are summarised below.

#### The Principle of Development

5.7 The principle of development is identified to be acceptable in line with the remit of Bicester Policy 8 which allows for providing leisure, recreation and employment uses at the site. The Council highlighted that Policy Bicester 8 required development to comply with The RAF Bicester Planning Brief. It is highlighted that the Planning Brief does not form part of the Council's development plan but do ask that consideration be provided to it.

5.8 The Planning Brief (September 2009) suggests there should be no additional built development on the flying field, but the Case Officer identifies that "*Policy Bicester 8 includes all of the flying field within the allocation and the Planning Brief alone, does not carry enough weight to identify areas where development should be strictly prohibited.*" The pre-application response identifies the following material planning considerations that would reduce the weight attributed to the Planning Brief:

- Issuing of a new national planning policy framework (2019) and planning practice guidance (2014).
- 2013 - The sale of Bicester Heritage by the MOD and its acquisition,
- 2013 – current - Subsequent Investment and re-use by Bicester Heritage;
- 2020 - The granting of permission for an extension to the technical site and the grant permission for a new hotel;
- 2013 – current -The contribution that development at Bicester Heritage makes to the local and national economy and the employment, training and recreational offer now available at the site.

5.9 In addition to the above-mentioned considerations, a resolution to grant has further been delivered by Cherwell's Planning Committee in respect of the FAST development a.k.a Innovation Quarter, delivering "*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*".

5.10 In considering the future needs of the site and requirement to keep the flying field open, the Case Officer determined that the Planning Brief did not prohibit all development. It was concluded that the proposed location for new buildings as submitted to the pre-application response "*could be achieved without impacting on the overall openness of the flying field*". The pre-application goes onto confirm that the resulting benefits associated with the proposals would outweigh any harm associated with conflict with The Planning Brief.



Figure 5: Proposed Layout plan submitted for pre-application

- 5.11 Further detail was requested in relation to the proposed trackside pavilions and their proposed necessity, Bicester Motion explained that these were necessary to provide business and operational space in close proximity to track and e-karting operations, the opportunities currently being explored are for potential aviation and automotive clubs and businesses.
- 5.12 The Case Officer further highlighted that the 4x4 track within the former quarry site are not a recognised use within Policy Bicester 8 but agreed that these were appropriate for the location. The Officer identified that the use would complement the offering of the Experience Quarter.
- 5.13 The Officer considered that the development was further compliant with and supported by policy PSD1 and SLE2.
- 5.14 The Case Officer concludes that *“in principle terms, the proposals will provide jobs, secure economic growth and significantly boost tourism in the local area, which would overall be consistent with the CLP Part 1.”*



### Economic Benefits

- 5.15 It was identified within the response that “*the scheme would bring clear and significant economic benefits to the town and the wider region*” and it is encouraged that forthcoming planning application clearly identify the economic benefits of the proposed development.

### The Outline submission and parameter plans

- 5.16 The Council stated that the ancillary development (such as the trackside pavilions, any safety features and fencing around the airfield track) would need to be submitted with sufficient information to determine the impact of the scheme without adverse impacts.
- 5.17 It was further identified that the predominant use on the site should be employment and tourism/leisure and ancillary uses should be closely linked to that strategic use.
- 5.18 The Council accepted that the parameter height plan was appropriate.
- 5.19 The Council further commented that the application should be accompanied by a Design Code to show that proposed buildings will be of a high and appropriate design quality.

### Highway Safety and Connectivity

- 5.20 The Council requested that the application should be accompanied by a Connectivity and Movement Parameter Plan and that the Transport Assessment should include details of active travel modes and connectivity between the site and existing routes and transport hubs.

### Visual and Landscape Impact

- 5.21 The response highlighted that landscape mitigation and amenity proposals must go hand in hand with the development and be integrated into all aspects of the design where appropriate.

### Heritage Assets (Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments, Conservation Area)

- 5.22 The pre-application response provided by the Council’s Conservation Teams are summarised here:
- The north west of the airfield is considered to be marginally less sensitive than other locations.
  - Incremental development at the site could result in cumulative impacts upon the significance of the airfield.
  - Proposals to retain the perimeter track as the dominant feature of the airfield are welcomed and details of surfacing should be provided.
  - The proposed new track is on balance considered to be acceptable subject to details.
  - Any required barriers should be kept low as possible where they are required to preserve the openness of the airfield.



- Buildings are considered to respond best to the historic environment where a landmark and campus feel approach is utilised.
- Pavilion/spectator buildings are a concern in their current location and applicant is encouraged to explore options for spectator facilities to be located elsewhere.

Less than substantial harm would result from the development and an assessment of the public benefits would be required,

#### Ecology

- 5.23 The Council highlighted that where net gain cannot be demonstrated, consideration needs to be given as how works on other parts of the site can be secured to mitigate the development.

#### Impact on Aviation

- 5.24 The aviation report sets out that the existing aviation activity will not be compromised by the development.

#### Flood Risk and Drainage

- 5.25 No formal comment provided.

#### Energy Efficiency Measures

- 5.26 An Energy Statement will need to be submitted with consideration given to policies ESD1 - 4

#### Noise

- 5.27 The council and EHO were satisfied that noise can be mitigated and managed effectively through the development. A Noise Assessment and strategy will be required as part of the application.

#### **Pre-application Response 22/11/2019**

- 5.28 A response was received on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2019 following initial feedback on the submitted information, plans and evidence base submitted at part of the pre-application advice request. The following matters are responded to:

- The Planning, Design and Access Statement (DAS)
- The Nature and Principle of Development
- Parameter Plans
- Planning Policy Officer's Comments
- Oxfordshire County Council – Single Response
- Conservation Officer's Comments



- Landscape Officer's Comments
- Legal Services
- Other Matters

5.29 The comments in respect of the above matters are summarised below. Some of these comments are reflected in the original pre-application response and so are not repeated here.

5.30 Views from the watch tower and impact on the openness of the site and key considerations in this area. (The supporting text doesn't appear to reflect the designation or vice versa).

#### The Planning, Design and Access Statement (DAS)

5.31 The Case Officer sets out the following:

- The DAS states that the site is Previously Developed Land. This needs more clarification in relation to the NPPF definition. The applicant re-iterates that the existing infrastructure and hard surfacing at the site, including the panhandle areas and the extensive perimeter track, are still clear features of the site. Whilst some reclamation by landscaping at the peripheral areas has occurred, the site is still considered to be PDL in accordance with the NPPF definition.
- It would be helpful to establish/identify building frontages for the brand centre
- Views from the watch tower and impact on the openness of the site and key considerations in this area. (The supporting text doesn't appear to reflect the designation or vice versa).
- How do the uses within the brand centre relate to each? How will the guest experience work?
- Parameter plans – the number of plans are very limited. It would help if there was a distinction between areas likely to accommodate buildings

#### The Nature and Principle of Development

5.32 The Case Officer highlighted that further information was required to enable a full consideration of the proposal, this included:

- The overall quantum of development and proposed floor area be defined for each use.
- Potential concerns regarding external lighting and impact on the setting of the flying field.
- What (if any) security measures need to be in place to restrict access onto the technical site and/or flying field.
- Clarity as to any potential conflicts/limitations due to day-to-day operations between motor vehicle users (on track) and aviation users.

#### Parameter Plans

5.33 The Case Officer commented that a greater level of detail is required for some of these.



#### Planning Policy Officer's Comments

- 5.34 These comments highlighted that there are protected and notable species, local wildlife sites, NERC Act designations, and an Archaeological Constraint Priority Areas within the preapplication site boundary. Part of Stratton Audley quarry SSSI lies within a small part of the northern part of the pre-application site.
- 5.35 It was stated that *"In principle employment, leisure and tourism proposals at the former RAF Bicester would be consistent with the 2015 Cherwell Local Plan, including Policy Bicester 8."*
- 5.36 A question was raised in regard to restaurants and cafes which are 'town centre' uses as *"defined by the NPPF ...it will need to be explained as to why town centre uses are being proposed outside the town centre."*
- 5.37 It is further stated that *"Policy Bicester 8 also requires the protection and enhancement of biodiversity on the site. The proposals will be considered against Local Plan policy ESD10 and ESD15."*

#### Oxfordshire County Council – Single Response

- 5.38 These comments relate mainly to the site access and the Transport Assessment submitted with the pre-application. These are not repeated in full here but are set summarised briefly below.
- Further details of the access proposals for the Brand Experience Centre are required in the TA.
  - The TA and parameter plans should outline how the development is to be made accessible pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users.
  - Consideration should be given to opportunity to reopen and connect Public Rights of Way across and outside of the site and within the applicant's control
  - In line with guidance, surface water management must be considered from the beginning of the development planning process and throughout
  - A programme of archaeological investigation will be required ahead of the determination of any planning application for this site.

#### Conservation Officer's Comments

- 5.39 It is considered that these comments are captured within the original pre-application response.

#### Landscape Officer's Comments

- 5.40 The Landscape Officer highlighted that:
- *"The Brand Area is low sensitively and less tranquil than the other areas due to the proximity of the busy Buckingham road..."*



- *The Pavilion site is deemed to be more sensitive than the Brand site because of the rural backdrop, however I am encouraged that the building height is to be 5 m and below the existing tree line.*
- *The 4x4 area is low sensitivity due the unrestored quarry*
- *The proposed 1 m high earth bunding around the perimeter track will have minimal impact and effects at a distance*
- *The cumulative effect of all the individual developments is explained and the residual effects are not significant.”*

#### Environmental Protection Officer's Comments

- 5.41 Environmental Protection Officer agreed that it would be prudent for a phase 2 contamination report to be submitted with the application.
- 5.42 They would like to see an assessment of the air quality to be submitted with the application which achieves this and takes note of Cherwell District Councils Air Quality Action Plan. The applicant notes that the site is not within close proximity to an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and that no assessment of Air Quality was not required in respect of application ref: 18/01253/F (Innovation Quarter / FAST)
- 5.43 The Environmental Protection Officer noted the information provided is a fair assessment of the potential noise impact.

#### Legal Services

- 5.44 This proposal would have an effect on the Stratton Audley public footpath numbered 371/7. The applicant notes that this PRoW is intended for retention at this time, with further OCC collaboration proposed in respect of PRoW management and facilitation.

#### Other Matters

- 5.45 It would be helpful for the planning documents to clearly identify residential amenity as a key consideration and address any potential impact including noise and proximity of the buildings.

#### **Pre-application Response 27/11/2020**

- 5.46 Following the above pre-application response, a third and final response was provided by CDC on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2020. This pre-application response focussed on providing additional comments in respect of The Impact on Aviation (following input from Council appointed Aviation Consultants) and Heritage Impact of the proposed development.

#### Aviation

- 5.47 The Council appointed an independent aviation consultant who has reviewed the proposed submission and have concluded that *“the buildings should be able to sit comfortably alongside without compromising the safe or efficient operation of the airfield in accordance with the proposed amended runway layout.”*



### Heritage Impact

- 5.48 The response highlights that “*In principle the proposed new track is considered on balance to be acceptable subject to appropriate detailing and materials*”. Additional information in regard to materials and detailing is submitted with this outline application.
- 5.49 It is noted that Council agree that “*The proposed green bunding/ha approach is favoured over the wholesale installation of engineered safety barriers*”. Further details of proposed bunding are submitted in the Driven Report, submitted as part of this application.
- 5.50 The Council’s position in regard to the overall heritage impact is highlighted here “*They (development) are considered to constitute less than substantial harm, however, your application will need to clearly set out the public benefits of the proposal and why you consider them to outweigh the harm*”. The Public Benefits associated with this report are clearly defined within the Relevant Material Considerations section of this Statement.

### **Historic England Engagement**

- 5.51 A meeting was organised with Historic England (Rachel Fletcher) on the 15<sup>th</sup> December 2020 to discuss the proposals further. It was attended by Worledge Associates (Heritage Consultant) Jon Westerman (Edgars, Planning Consultant) and the applicant. A summary of Historic England’s comments is set out below:
- *RF recognised the exceptional qualities of what had already been delivered on site and the ingenuity of the business model in developing appropriate/complimentary new uses and development.*
  - *RF confirmed that the amended proposals seek to address previous concerns and would reduce the level of harm, recognising that the development would also deliver a range of public benefits.*
  - *RF confirmed that the scale and design and materiality of the new buildings is still very important and would be critical in ensuring that any harm can be minimised or eliminated.*
  - *RF to respond with written comments. (yet to be received).*



## 6 Public Consultation

- 6.1 Bicester Motion has been proactively undertaking engagement and consultation with stakeholders ahead of this submission. Whilst initial plans for this consultation included exhibition opportunities and other events, COVID-19 and Lockdown 2.0 has limited the engagement methods available to Bicester Motion.
- 6.2 Despite this, Launton, Caversfield and Stratton Audley Parish Councils have been directly approached with the proposed development and provided opportunity to give feedback. Consultation has further been conducted directly with Bicester Town, Cherwell District and Oxfordshire County Councils.
- 6.3 In addition, Bicester Motion have prepared a community engagement video that sets out the proposed vision and development for the Experience Quarter. This has formed the basis for an online public consultation event that went live 30th November 2020 and will remain active during the determination of the application. Bicester Motion are keen to engage with local stakeholder beyond the submission date of the outline application and ensure that any detailed comments can be considered at the Reserved Matters stage too. In order to support the community engagement video, a dedicated email address was set up to allow members of the public to submit comments and questions to Bicester Motion.
- 6.4 Further meetings have been held with the following stakeholders:
- Councillor Ian Hudspeth (Leader Oxfordshire Council) (01/10/2020)
  - Robert Jolley (Assistant Director: Growth & Economy Cherwell District Council) (02/11/2020)
  - David Peckford (Assistant Director: Planning and Development), Robert Jolley and Rebekah Morgan (Planning Officer) (09/11/2020)
  - Susan Halliwell (Director for Planning & Place), Owen Jenkins (Director of Growth & Economy) (10/11/2020)
  - Victoria Prentis MP (13/11/2020)
  - Nigel Tipple - Chief Executive OxLEP (18/11/2020)
  - Rachel Fletcher – Historic England – (15/12/2020)
- 6.5 Additional meetings have been undertaken with District Councillors directly.
- 6.6 Bicester Motion has valued the input from local stakeholders and residents in proximity to the site. The feedback ventured has allowed Bicester Motion to amend and adapt their proposals to best suit the site and local environment, whilst seeking to deliver an internationally recognised hub for motor and aviation heritage and innovation.



## 7 Relevant Planning Policy

7.1 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.

7.2 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

7.3 The relevant documents identified as material considerations are as follows:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)
- Bicester Heritage – Heritage Partnership Agreement
- Draft Bicester Masterplan (August 2012)
- RAF Bicester Planning Brief and Draft Development Principles (2009)
- RAF Bicester Conservation Area Appraisal (November 2008)

### **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

7.4 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.

7.5 **Chapter 2 (Achieving Sustainable Development)** states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, which is summarised in the document as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

7.6 Paragraph 8 states that there are three dimensions to sustainable development and planning is required to perform a number of roles:

- Economic: contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation.
- Social: supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities.
- Environmental: contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment.



- 7.7 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. All plans should be based upon and reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development, with clear policies that will guide how the presumption should be applied locally.
- 7.8 **Chapter 3 (Plan Making)** states that up-to-date plans should provide a positive vision for the future of each area.
- 7.9 **Chapter 4 (Decision Making)** states that local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way.
- 7.10 Paragraph 38 outlines that planning should secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.
- 7.11 Paragraph 39 states that early engagement has significant potential to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community.
- 7.12 Paragraph 41 states that the more issues that can be resolved at pre-application stage the greater the benefits. Statutory consultees should take the same early, pro-active approach and provide advice in a timely manner throughout the development process.
- 7.13 **Chapter 6 (Building a Strong, Competitive Economy)** outlines the how planning should facilitate the growth and support of businesses.
- 7.14 Paragraph 80 states 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.
- 7.15 Paragraph 82 states that planning decisions should recognize and address the specific location requirements of different sectors, including making provision for cluster or networks of knowledge and high technology industries.
- 7.16 **Chapter 8 (Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities)** outlines how plan should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe communities.
- 7.17 Paragraph 91 states that places should promote social interaction, should be safe and accessible, should enable and should support healthy lifestyles.
- 7.18 **Chapter 9 (Promoting Sustainable Transport)** requires development proposals to consider transport impact.
- 7.19 Paragraph 103 states that the planning system should actively manage patterns of growth and maximise sustainable transport opportunities.



- 7.20 Paragraph 108 states that appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport have been taken up and that safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users.
- 7.21 Paragraph 110 states that proposals should create places that are safe, secure and attractive minimising conflict between various modes of travel.
- 7.22 Paragraph 111 requires development proposals to be supported by a travel plan.
- 7.23 **Chapter 11 (making Effective Use of Land)** sets out objectives for planning to secure the most effective use of land.
- 7.24 Paragraph 117 states that planning decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting needs whilst safeguarding and improving the environment.
- 7.25 Paragraph 118 requires that decisions encourage multiple benefits from both urban and rural land and support opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable land. Planning should also promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings.
- 7.26 **Chapter 12 (Achieving Well-Designed Places)** encourages development proposals to be of high-quality design.
- 7.27 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.
- 7.28 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.
- 7.29 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.
- 7.30 **Chapter 14 (Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change)** states that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate.
- 7.31 Paragraph 148 requires planning to shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.
- 7.32 **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.



- 7.33 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.
- 7.34 **Chapter 16 (Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment)** sets out objectives for the planning system to protect the historic environment.
- 7.35 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.
- 7.36 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.
- 7.37 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.
- 7.38 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.
- 7.39 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.
- 7.40 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.

#### **The Planning Practice Guidance "PPG"**

- 7.41 **Design** – *"Good design is set out in the National Design Guide under the following 10 characteristics; context, identity, built form, movement, nature, public spaces, uses, homes and buildings, resources, and lifespan"*. (Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 26-001-20191001)
- 7.42 The PPG sets out that Design Codes are an effective method for delivering well-designed places (Paragraph: 008 Reference ID: 26-008-20191001)



- 7.43 *“Applications for outline planning permission seek to establish whether the scale and nature of a proposed development would be acceptable before fully detailed proposals are put forward. In some instances, it may be appropriate as part of the outline application to prepare and agree a design code to guide subsequent reserved matters applications. Design quality cannot be achieved through an outline planning application alone...but can include design principles where these are fundamental to decision making.”* (Paragraph: 010 Reference ID: 26-010-20191001).
- 7.44 The PPG further sets out that tools such as parameter plans, and design and access statements are effective in ensuring good design.
- 7.45 **Site - specific flood risk assessment** – *“The objectives of a site-specific flood risk assessment are to establish:*
- *whether a proposed development is likely to be affected by current or future flooding from any source;*
  - *whether it will increase flood risk elsewhere;*
  - *whether the measures proposed to deal with these effects and risks are appropriate;*
  - *the evidence for the local planning authority to apply (if necessary) the Sequential Test, and;*
  - *whether the development will be safe and pass the Exception Test, if applicable”* (Paragraph: 030 Reference ID: 7-030-20140306)
- 7.46 **Noise** – *“Noise needs to be considered when development may create additional noise or would be sensitive to the prevailing acoustic environment”* (Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 30-001-20190722).
- 7.47 *“Plan-making and decision making need to take account of the acoustic environment and in doing so consider:*
- *whether or not a significant adverse effect is occurring or likely to occur;*
  - *whether or not an adverse effect is occurring or likely to occur; and*
  - *whether or not a good standard of amenity can be achieved.”* (Paragraph: 003 Reference ID: 30-003-20190722).
- 7.48 The PPG directs that consideration be given to the “Noise policy statement for England” and “Noise exposure hierarchy table”.
- 7.49 **Permission in Principle** – *“The scope of permission in principle is limited to location, land use and amount of development. Issues relevant to these ‘in principle’ matters should be considered at the permission in principle stage. Other matters should be considered at the technical details consent stage. In addition, local authorities cannot list the information they require for applications for permission in principle in the same way they can for applications for planning permission.”* (Paragraph: 012 Reference ID: 58-012-20180615”



### **Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031: Part 1**

- 7.50 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.
- 7.51 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.
- 7.52 Policy PSD1(Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development) is a continuation of the NPPF and outlines a presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 7.53 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.
- 7.54 Bicester 8 supports proposals for heritage tourism, leisure, recreation, employment and community uses. It states that proposals will be required to accord with the approved Planning Brief for the site and take in to account the Bicester Masterplan. Bicester 8 also states that proposals must maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area, protect listed, scheduled and other important buildings, their setting, and protect the sensitive historic fabric of the buildings and preserve the openness of the airfield. Biodiversity should be protected and enhanced. The continuation of gliding use will be supported. Opportunities for improving access to the countryside will be encouraged. The Council's SFRA should be considered. Proposals should be considered against Policy ESD 15.
- 7.55 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.
- 7.56 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.
- 7.57 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.
- 7.58 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.



- 7.59 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.
- 7.60 Policy BSC7 (Meeting Education Needs) states that the Council will work with partners to ensure the provision of educational facilities which provide for education and the development of skills.
- 7.61 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.
- 7.62 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.
- 7.63 Policy ESD3 (Sustainable Construction) states that all new development should incorporate sustainable design.
- 7.64 Policy ESD4 (Decentralised Energy Systems) encourages the use of decentralised energy systems.
- 7.65 Policy ESD5 (Renewable Energy) states that Council supports renewable and low carbon energy provision.
- 7.66 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. 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. The policy also states that development should be safe and remain operational (where necessary) and proposals should demonstrate that surface water will be managed effectively on site and that the development will not increase flood risk elsewhere, including sewer flooding.
- 7.67 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.
- 7.68 Policy ESD8 (Water Resources) states that the Council will seek to maintain water quality by avoiding adverse effects of development on the water environment.
- 7.69 Policy ESD10 (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.
- 7.70 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.



- 7.71 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.
- 7.72 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.
- 7.73 Policy INF 1 (Infrastructure) states that the Council will identify required infrastructure and work with partners to ensure delivery.

#### **Saved Policies of the Cherwell Local Plan 1996**

- 7.74 The relevant saved policies that remain part of the Development Plan for the District are outlined below.
- 7.75 Saved Policy C1 (Protection of Sites of Nature Conservation Value) seeks to promote the interest of nature conservation, it goes on to state that development which would result in damage to or loss of sites of special scientific interest or other areas of designated wildlife or scientific importance will not normally be permitted.
- 7.76 Saved Policy C2 (Development Affecting Protected Species) states development which would adversely affect any species protected by schedule 1, schedule 5 and schedule 8 of the 1981 wildlife and countryside act, and by the E.C Habitats Directive 1992 will not normally be permitted.
- 7.77 Saved Policy C4 (Creation of New Habitats) promotes the interests of nature conservation within the context of new development. The Council will establish or assist with the establishment of ecological and nature conservation areas.
- 7.78 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.
- 7.79 Saved 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.
- 7.80 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.
- 7.81 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.



- 7.82 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.

#### **Non-statutory Cherwell Local Plan 2011 (December 2004)**

- 7.83 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**

- 7.84 The document aimed to provide a blanket vision for the site acquired by Bicester Heritage. It focused on the existing Technical Site. The HPA sets out Specifically Agreed Refurbishment Works, Specifically Agreed External Works, and more detailed requirements such as paint colours, materials and construction methods. The document identifies that Bicester Heritage is the most appropriate user possible and the combination of a historic site and historic vehicles is a natural fit.
- 7.85 It is noted that new development is not covered by the HPA and would need independent planning, listed building and/or Conservation Area consents.

#### **RAF Bicester Planning Brief (September 2008)**

- 7.86 Notwithstanding that the brief is not a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), the document is identified as a material planning consideration due to its reference within Policy Bicester 8. It is noted from pre-application discussions that this position is agreed with. Indeed, the pre-application response sets out that the Planning Brief on its own does not carry sufficient weight to determine spatial control over new development.
- 7.87 The Planning Brief contains informal development principles drafted prior to disposal of the site by the MOD. The site was considered to be in a poor state of repair and the planning brief was drafted within that context.

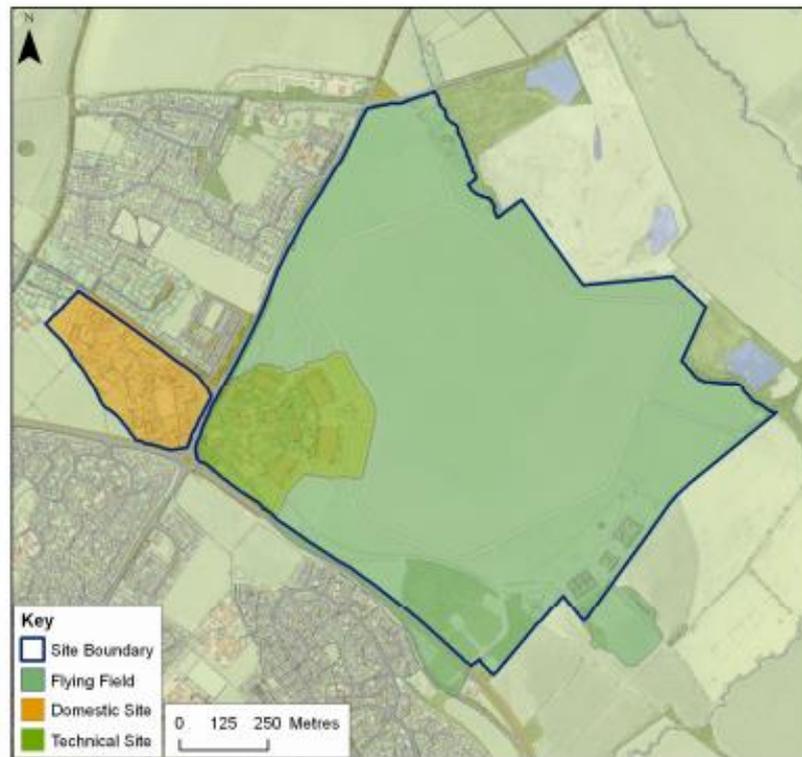


Figure 6: Extract from Planning Brief (2009)

7.88 The Planning Brief Sets out the Following:

- *“Vistas across the flying field from various key vantage points were imperative in both in the operation and defence of the air station”*
- *“The virtually unaltered views from the technical area and flying field are an intrinsic part of its appeal and contribute to the reasoning behind the conservation area and listings”.*
- *“The Council’s preference is strongly for the continued use of the flying field for aviation purposes.”*

7.89 It is identified in the February 2020 pre-application response that the Officer highlighted that the Planning Brief was out of date. This position reflects that presented to Planning Committee in respect of application ref: 19/02708/OUT. Despite this the pre-application response ref: 19/02092/PREAPP invites this Planning Statement to identify the weight that is attributed to the Planning Brief and any conflict the proposed development is considered to have with the Planning Brief. This will be responded to in full within the Principle of Development section of this statement.

#### **RAF Bicester Conservation Area Appraisal (October 2008)**

7.90 The RAF Bicester Conservation Area was designated in 2002 and reviewed in 2008. The 2008 review led to the boundary being extended.

7.91 The Appraisal identifies that an English Heritage study published in 2000 concluded that:



*“RAF Bicester retains, better than any other military airbase in Britain, the layout and fabric relating to pre-1930s military aviation...With West Rainham in Norfolk it comprises the best-preserved bomber airfield dating from the period up to 1945...It also comprises the best preserved and most strongly representative of the bomber stations built as part of Sir Hugh Trenchard’s 1920s Home Defence Expansion Scheme.”*

- 7.92 The document states that designation ensures consideration is given to the special qualities of the area when proposals for new development are being considered; it should not be seen as a means of preventing development, but rather of ensuring that these areas remain responsive to change.



## 8 Development Proposal and Use

8.1 The description of the proposed development is an outline application, with matters including Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Scale reserved. Details pertaining to access are submitted as part of the application. The proposed description of development is for:

*“Automotive Experience Quarter comprising Commercial, Business and Services uses (Class E), Light Industrial (Class B2), Local Community and Learning Uses (Class F) and vehicle circuits (Sui Generis) with all matters reserved aside from that of access”.*

8.2 at the Experience Quarter parcel, Bicester Motion, Bicester, OX26 5HA.

8.3 The application is in outline with all matters reserved with the exception of access to the site. The application will secure the principle of development and set a code for design to inform how the development could come forward in future applications for the approval of Reserved Matters.



Figure 7: Indicative Layout (Red Line – application site, Blue line – site ownership)



### **Use and Amount**

- 8.4 The proposed development seeks to deliver in the region of c. 22,338m<sup>2</sup> (GIA) consisting of Class E, Class B2 and Class F development.
- 8.5 This proposed floor space will be situated on a footprint of 15,411m<sup>2</sup> (165,890 ft<sup>2</sup>) contained within 114.7 Acres (46.41 Ha) of land. The density of the Experience Quarter area is therefore 134.4 m<sup>2</sup> (1,447 ft<sup>2</sup>) per acre of the application site.
- 8.6 Specific floor spaces per proposed use class are not provided at this time. This will allow a degree of flexibility for the development to respond to the requirements of future occupiers.

### Demonstration and Experience Track

- 8.7 The proposed development will re-use the existing perimeter track of the airfield to deliver a 3.1km vehicle circuit that can operate as a 1.3k loop and 1.5km loop that can operate independently as well as a 600m mini loop and low friction training surface area.
- 8.8 Demonstration areas are also proposed as well as 4x4 tracks in the former Stratton Audley Quarry area of the site (this area of the former Stratton Audley Quarry is not subject to any restoration action). The off-road area will feature rutted tracks and a range of obstacles and activities. More specific detail of this is not provided with this application. Further detail in terms of design can be ascertained from the Driven Report submitted to this application.
- 8.9 Localised landscape bunds are proposed in locations where they are necessary for driver and viewing safety and have been designed to have minimal impact on the landscape and character of the site.
- 8.10 The proposed tracks are motorsport inspired but are not designed to cater for multi car racing events and are designed for driver training, time-trials and testing as well as demonstration and experience activities. Demonstration of road legal vehicles.



Figure 8: Proposed Track Plan

### Access

- 8.11 The sites principal access will be from Buckingham Road. Improvements will be made to the existing airfield access along Buckingham Road to facilitate the sites principle vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access. The improvements will include the relocation of existing access by circa 18m to the south. This will include the introduction of a right filter lane to enter the site from Buckingham Road and the implementation of a left only exit strategy.
- 8.12 The new access will be provided via a new ghost island priority junction set c.50m to the south of Thompson Drive. The access is located c.240 metres north of the proposed site access to the consented hotel aspect of the Bicester Motion masterplan. Detailed drawings of the access can be found at Appendix E of the submitted Transport Assessment. The access represents a 6.0m wide carriageway.
- 8.13 A 3.0m wide shared cycle/footway will be provided on the northern side of the proposed internal access road.
- 8.14 An existing access from Bicester Road is proposed for improvement and utilisation for Servicing and Emergency Access only. Detailed drawings of the access can be found at Appendix E of the submitted Transport Assessment.



### Parking Provision

- 8.15 A total of 400 car parking spaces are proposed to cater for the development. Within the overall total car parking layouts for each land use, 10% of the total spaces will be allocated as disabled parking bays, in order to meet the required OCC parking standard.
- 8.16 Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points will also be provided within the car parking areas throughout the site; the level of provision will be provided at c.3% of total parking spaces (as agreed as part of the hotel application)
- 8.17 124 cycle parking spaces will be provided at the site and be located adjacent to the main buildings to reduce parking – destination distances. The cycle parking will be covered Sheffield stands in accordance with Council Guidance.

### **Development Parameters**

- 8.18 A suite of parameter plans has been submitted with the application to guide the future detailed development of the site, including:
- Proposed Developable Areas
  - Proposed Land Use
  - Proposed Indicative Site Layout
  - Proposed Development Height
  - Proposed Access and Movement
- 8.19 These are summarised here.

### Proposed Developable Areas

- 8.20 The proposed developable area of the site is demonstrated on plan ref: 5002854-RDG-Z01-ST-PL-A-0092. This identifies that the principal cluster of buildings, as part of the Experience Quarter is to be located to the north west of the application site, within the airfield's western boundary adjacent to the Buckingham Road. Through in-depth heritage and landscape analysis this area has been identified as appropriate for development.
- 8.21 A small separate development area is proposed at the airfield's eastern boundary, where it is proposed that the automotive and aviation and automotive pavilions will be located.
- 8.22 The proposed developable areas are located outside of the existing perimeter track.

### Proposed Land Use

- 8.23 Plan ref: 5002854-RDG-Z01-ST-PL-A-0090 highlights the proposed land uses as part of the proposed development. The plan would propose the provision of the proposed Commercial, Business and Services uses (Class E), Light Industrial (Class B2) and Local Community and Learning (Class F) uses beyond the limits of the perimeter track.



- 8.24 As noted from the plans, the tracks and other open areas will be utilised to deliver leisure activities (not built form) and other ancillary functions, such as car parking. As such, the existing airfield will be kept free from built form.

#### Proposed Indicative Site Layout

- 8.25 The layout suggested by plan ref: 5002854-RDG-Z01-ST-PL-A-0030 is, at this outline stage, indicative and does not necessarily reflect the final layout of the proposed development which would be subject to subsequent applications for the approval of reserved matters.
- 8.26 The proposed layout suggests that the majority of built form associated with the development will be grouped together at the north west limits of the airfield. Individual structures are proposed to be situated around a piazza to create a sense of place and clear identity.
- 8.27 The proposed layout seeks to work with the existing access tracks within the site and bring these back into a functional access use.
- 8.28 As is already mentioned, away from the main Experience Quarter campus, the only other built form would be the automotive and aviation. These have been sited against the airfield's existing north east boundary.

#### Proposed Development Heights

- 8.29 Plan ref: 5002854-RDG-Z01-ST-PL-A-0094 (Existing and Proposed Heights) sets out proposed height of proposed development at the site. The proposed built form will not exceed upwards of 10.5m in building heights. It is further proposed that periphery structures will transition to a lower scale of development (circa 5m).
- 8.30 The proposed building heights have been proposed as such in order that the development does not rival the scale of structures located at the Technical Site.

#### Access and Movement

- 8.31 Plan ref: 5002854-RDG-Z01-ST-PL-A-0098 sets out the proposed site access and major internal movement routes within the Experience Quarter.
- 8.32 The existing Buckingham Road entrance will form the principal entrance for the application development. An existing entrance on Bicester Road (approx. 90m from the Buckingham / Bicester Road junction) will also be maintained for emergencies and services. A further access off Bicester Road (approx. 300m from the Buckingham / Bicester Road junction) is not proposed for access to the proposed development but will be retained to allow angler access to the existing waterbody at the eastern limits of the site.
- 8.33 The entrance is appropriately located next to a key access route and near the existing public bus stops. Pedestrian access and circulation are based around the piazza concept, but it is envisaged that future developments outside of this application will further unlock pedestrian movement around the entire masterplan site.



- 8.34 The proposed pedestrian accesses and routes invite visitors to enjoy the central Experience Quarter. From here, there are pedestrian and cycling links to the other Quarter. Proposals allow for a walking and cycling route to and from the automotive and aviation clubhouses which will be accessed from the Experience Quarter.
- 8.35 More detailed information pertaining to internal movement and access will form part of reserved matters applications in due course.

### **Design Code**

- 8.36 Whilst the proposed development is proposed with all matters reserved, this includes appearance, a in line with Council requests at pre-application discussions a Design Code has been prepared and is submitted as part of this application. Following any approval given to the proposed development, Reserved Matters applications would seek to deliver new development in line with the design Code submitted to this application.
- 8.37 The Design Code for development has been informed principally by the historic environment and heritage assets located in proximity to the site. The Design Code seeks to establish 11 Design Codes that future development will reflect. These include:
- Outline Architecture and Landscape Design Principles
  - Building mass and Articulation of form
  - Frontage
  - Built character & architectural expression
  - Materials & colours
  - Site circulation, parking & servicing
  - Landscape
  - Boundary treatment
  - Building clutter & servicing
  - Wayfinding
  - Lighting
  - Sustainability



## 9 Relevant Material Considerations

- 9.1 The description of the proposed development is an outline application, with matters including Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Scale reserved. Details pertaining to access are submitted as part of the application. The proposed description of development is for:
- 9.2 *“Automotive Experience Quarter comprising Commercial, Business and Services uses (Class E), Light Industrial (Class B2), Local Community and Learning Uses (Class F) and vehicle circuits (Sui Generis) with all matters reserved aside from that of access”*.at the Experience Quarter parcel, Bicester Motion, Bicester, OX26 5HA.
- 9.3 Having regard to the Development Plan, NPPF and planning history of the application and wider site, the key planning considerations in respect of this application are considered to be:
- Principle of development;
  - Economic benefits;
  - Design and Scale;
  - Heritage Impact;
  - Access, transport and parking;
  - Noise;
  - Aviation;
  - Landscape and Visual Impact;
  - Ecology;
  - Flooding and drainage; and
  - Land contamination.

### **Principle of Development**

- 9.4 The Experience Quarter development site is located at the Former RAF Bicester within the policy Bicester 8 allocation. Policy Bicester 8 (Former RAF Bicester) allocates the wider site for development in order to secure an economically viable future for the former RAF Bicester Technical Site and Flying Field. Bicester 8 is a permissive policy supporting employment, tourism and leisure uses.
- 9.5 The proposed development is in accordance with the allocation by delivering new employment development comprising Class E (Business and Services), B2 (Light Industrial) and Class F (Local Community and Learning Uses) uses including ancillary spectator facilities, Sui Generis (Vehicle Circuit).



- 9.6 Policy Bicester 8 seeks to encourage a mix of uses aligned to the constraints and sensitivities of the site whilst also recognising the need for flexibility to secure the commercially viable future for the allocation site. The proposal will support the delivery of a mix of business, employment and leisure with a range of ancillary uses to support the repurposing of the wider site for new uses to ensure it has a sustainable future.
- 9.7 The proposed development will deliver substantial economic benefits (discussed later in this statement) whilst being sensitively designed in recognition of the historic and landscape qualities of the site. Heritage and landscape specialists have been closely involved in shaping the proposal to ensure the sites context is respected (also discussed later in this statement).
- 9.8 Policy Bicester 8 seeks to protect the biodiversity of allocated site. Ecological assessments have been undertaken for the site and are submitted in support of this proposal. The ecology surveys indicate there is no impact on protected habitats and species that cannot be appropriately mitigate for and appropriate net gain deliver.
- 9.9 In accordance with Policy Bicester 8, the proposed development will maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and will protect other buildings identified as being important – including Listed Buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments. The proposed development has responded to the sites heritage sensitivities and development forming part of this application will be located at a less sensitive location within site.
- 9.10 A Heritage Report has been prepared by Worlledge Associates is submitted in support of this application. The Heritage Report concludes the proposals will result in less than substantial harm to the heritage assets and the public benefits will outweigh that harm.
- 9.11 Policy Bicester 8 sets out that proposals for development will need to comply with the RAF Bicester Planning Brief and Masterplan. Whilst these documents do not represent formal policy within the Development Plan, they have been considered in the preparation of these proposals. As highlighted in the Councils pre-application response the Brief does not have sufficient weight to determine the spatial location of new development. The pre-application advice received sets out that the following material considerations weigh against any conflict the proposals have with The Planning Brief. These include:
- *“The ...national planning policy framework and planning practice guidance;*
  - *the sale of Bicester Heritage by the MOD and its acquisition,*
  - *investment and re-use by Bicester Heritage;*
  - *the granting of permission for an extension to the technical site and the resolution to grant permission for a new hotel;*
  - *the granting of planning permission for development within the environs of Bicester Heritage;*
  - *the contribution that development at Bicester Heritage makes to the local economy and the employment and recreational offer now available at the site.”*



- 9.12 It is clear from the above that the planning context in which the Planning Brief was written has changed significantly. In addition, whilst referred to by Policy Bicester 8 – the Planning Brief underwent no public consultation or examination. As such, it cannot carry the same weight as adopted policy, and indeed is considered to carry limited weight and it is agreed with the Council that the Planning Brief does not carry sufficient weight to spatially control new development.
- 9.13 A key aim of the Planning Brief is to preserve the openness of the airfield. As such it seeks to direct that new structures should not be located on the open flying field. Furthermore, it is noted that the Planning Brief defines all land, other than the Technical Site and Domestic site (to the west of Buckingham Road) as the airfield. This includes land beyond the functional limits of the airfield and the retained perimeter track
- 9.14 Whilst the development would introduce buildings on to the flying field (as defined within the Planning Brief), proposed structures are located outside the flying fields perimeter track. Built form associated with the Experience Quarter would be circa 230m to the north of the Technical Site at their nearest point. The proposed automotive and aviation clubhouses are located circa 670m to the north east of the Technical Site. As such the flying field retains a sweeping area free from built form.
- 9.15 Due to the definition of the limits of the airfield set out in the Planning Brief, the development would introduce built form into the area marked to be retained by the Planning Brief. However, the Planning Brief includes land beyond the active airfield and perimeter track. The proposals therefore retain the flying field's open character.
- 9.16 The interaction of development with the Planning Brief is summaries here:
- Only limited weight can be ascribed the Planning Brief due to its age and the changes in planning context that have occurred since it was written;
  - The proposed development only represents limited conflict with the Planning Brief and does retain significant open space to retain the character of the historic airfield;
  - There are considered to be significant economic benefits associated with the proposed development that would outweigh such limited conflict.
  - Development of the Cherwell Industrial strategy and Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy set new ambitions for the local area as a whole and these are not considered in the PB.
- 9.17 In light of the above, the proposed development is considered to comply with Policy Bicester 8, this was supported by the case officer during the pre-application stage.
- 9.18 The proposal is in accordance with Policy ESD15 (Character of the Built and Historic Environment). The proposed development will complement and enhance the character of the site through sensitive siting, layout and high-quality design. The scale and massing of the proposed new buildings and overall configuration of the proposal respect the sensitivities of the site. These elements are discussed later in this planning analysis.



- 9.19 The proposal is in accordance with Policy SLE1 (Employment Development). The proposed development will deliver substantial economic benefits for the area associated to the employment uses to be delivered. It will make efficient use of an underused site and will make efficient use of Previously Developed Land and support the re-purposing of the wider site. The proposed development will be of high-quality design and appropriate scale and will respect the existing character of the area.
- 9.20 In respect of policy SLE2 (supporting tourism growth) it is highlighted in the pre-application response that Cherwell's Planning Committee has already resolved to grant planning permission for a hotel to the south west of the site. A functional link between the hotel and the proposed development is clear. As such, the proposed development would further meet the goals of policy SLE2 and support tourism growth and diversification.
- 9.21 It is noted that the part of the proposed development (4x4 Tracks within former Quarry) is beyond the spatial policy of Bicester 8. As such, this section of the development would be considered as part of the open countryside.
- 9.22 The Council highlighted that the 4x4 opportunity would complement the proposed development and offer of the wider Experience Quarter. It was further stated within pre-application responses that the development represents a unique opportunity to deliver such a feature.
- 9.23 The site is located predominantly to the north west corner of the former RAF Bicester Site and Previously Developed Land. The NPPF at paragraph 118 sets out that planning decisions should give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land to meet identified needs.
- 9.24 Pre-application advice provided by the Council states that *"in principle terms, the proposals will provide jobs, secure economic growth and significantly boost tourism in the local area, which would overall be consistent with the CLP Part 1"*. To summarise, the principle of development is accepted for the following reasons:
- The site is allocated for development in the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031: part 1 by Policy Bicester 8 (Former RAF Bicester);
  - The proposed development is in accordance with Policy Bicester 8;
  - The proposed development is in accordance with Policy ESD15, SLE1 and SLE2;
  - The significant positive weight attributed to economic growth by paragraph 80 of the NPPF;
  - The positive role development can play in the COVID-19 recovery; and
  - The proposed development will make effective use of Previously Developed Land.
  - The role Bicester Motion has already and will play in promoting Bicester internationally as a hub for automotive and aviation enterprise in support of the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy ambitions.



- The diversification of business, leisure and tourism offer in Bicester and the positive impact this will have on the regeneration of the Town Centre through increased visitor dwell time in the local area.

### **Economic Benefits**

#### *COVID-19 Context*

- 9.25 The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a dramatic shrinking of the economy which has driven up rates of unemployment. The proposed development will help deliver new jobs across a variety of sectors. Further, the development will provide new training opportunities and education bring new skills and resources to the area. The proposed development would secure significant employment and tourism in Bicester. The NPPF already attributes significant weight to supporting economic growth. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is considered vital for that new development secure lasting economic growth. The proposed development would be a significant tool in stimulating the local, regional and wider economies and the below benefits should be considered in the context of the necessity to stimulate an economic recovery.

#### *Economic Context*

- 9.26 Having regard to paragraph 80 of the NPPF, the proposed development will help to build a strong, responsive and competitive economy. The proposed development will support growth, innovation and improved productivity. New employment space will be delivered, creating highly skilled jobs, training and apprenticeship opportunities aligned with the identified priorities of the Development Plan. It will deliver high quality world-leading leisure facilities.
- 9.27 The proposed development will deliver sustainable development in a positive way in accordance with the wider presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in paragraphs 10 and 11 of the NPPF. Economic conditions of Bicester, Cherwell district and Oxfordshire will be improved in accordance with paragraph 38 of the NPPF. It will help to address the economic and societal challenges of the future by providing highly skilled employment. Local business needs and wider opportunities have been considered through this proposal. It will create conditions in which both UK and international businesses can invest, expand and adapt, in accordance with paragraph 80 of the NPPF. The proposed new buildings will facilitate the expansion of a knowledge driven, creative and high-technology industry and provide attractive and healthy leisure facilities. It will attract UK and international businesses to the site, with some having already expressed interest in the proposal.
- 9.28 Indeed, the Experience Quarter at Bicester Motion is driven by demand from international 'mobility' businesses their aim is to provide personalised experiences that both nurtures their relationship with existing customers and create exciting opportunities to promote their brand and products to a wider audience, building a community and loyal following to their journey.
- 9.29 The proposal will seek to create skilled apprenticeship and employment opportunities in automotive and aviation technology, leisure and business. It will provide Bicester with dynamic international exposure as the world's leading experiential destination focused on 'Mobility'.



9.30 It is clear, therefore, that the proposals will build on the strengths and success of Bicester Heritage, capitalise on its excellent location in Bicester to contribute to the economy of Cherwell district, south-east England and United Kingdom. Oxfordshire, Cherwell district and Bicester itself will receive international exposure as a leading centre of mobility experience, innovation and technology.

9.31 To demonstrate the economic benefits that will be delivered by the scheme, an Economic Impact Study prepared by Oxford Brookes University is submitted in support of the proposed development. It provides a snapshot of the economic impact generated by Bicester Heritages activities, commitments and investments (current and future). This is revealed in the report by the following key economic facts:

- Over 100,000 people visited Bicester Heritage and they spend roughly £3.51 million. This expenditure generates £4.13 million in Gross Value Added (GVA) contributions with 79 jobs supported in the UK economy;
- The direct economic and employment contribution of Bicester Heritage is £761,000 with 15 jobs supported;
- The combined Gross Value Added (GVA) contribution of two selected tenants (Showroom & Workshop) is over £2 million with 38 jobs supported in the UK economy; and
- The proposed development is part of a wider vision for the site that has a projected construction spend (GVA) in the hundreds of millions (£), with thousands of jobs being supported and millions projected from recurrent visitor spend (GVA) with further jobs being supported.

9.32 Furthermore, the proposed development will contribute to the success of Oxfordshire, which is a globally renowned region with a strong and diverse economy. This is demonstrated by the following key economic facts:

- £22bn GVA is generated by Oxfordshire for the UK economy each year - having grown by 47% (£7.3bn) between 2006 and 2016;
- Oxford University is ranked 1st in the Times Higher Education global rankings – approximately 14 miles from the site;
- Oxfordshire is 1 of 3 net contributors to the UK exchequer;
- 1,500 high-technology firms are located in Oxfordshire;
- Oxfordshire includes one of the largest life sciences clusters in Europe and the highest concentration of science research facilities in western Europe;
- 30 million people visit Oxfordshire each year; and
- 40,000 new private sector jobs have been created in the wider LEP area since 2011.

9.33 This is also demonstrated by the strength of the tourism sector in the Oxfordshire economy. According to Experience Oxfordshire's Economic Impact (2017) report:



- 30 million trips were made to Oxfordshire in 2017;
- £2.17 billion is the value of tourism in Oxfordshire;
- 36,896 jobs are supported by tourism activity;
- 2.8 million overnight trips; and
- 9.7 million nights spent in County in total.

9.34 The Strategic Economic Plan for Oxfordshire aims to deliver a vibrant, sustainable, inclusive, world leading economy, driven by innovation, enterprise and research excellence. The proposed development will align with and strongly contribute to delivering that aim, capitalising on being sited in a key location within the Oxfordshire 'knowledge spine' and being in close proximity to Oxfordshire's Strategic Economic Assets.

9.35 Sitting underneath the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) is the Creative, Cultural, Heritage and Tourism Investment Plan (CCHTIP) that will help to deliver economic growth in Oxfordshire up to 2030. The CCHTIP makes a compelling case for investment in the Oxfordshire visitor economy. The proposed development will support the delivery of the document's key priorities, including developing skills and talent, delivering business growth, representing creative place-making, and providing productive and engaging experiences.

9.36 The proposed Experience Quarter will be a unique site of mobility experience drawing visitors locally, nationally and internationally. The site is located such that the dwell time of tourists already visiting the region will be increased alongside attracting those who may not otherwise visit the area. Employment in the leisure and tourism sector will be supported by the proposal.

9.37 Bicester itself is well-located to capitalise on Oxfordshire's success and other wider initiatives that will bring economic benefits to the town, including the following:

- Local infrastructure funding;
- The Cambridge – Milton Keynes – Oxford corridor and associated projects will increase the GVA of the area from £163bn to £250bn;
- The Economic Development Strategy for Cherwell recognises that Bicester is provided with the opportunity to become a location for high value and knowledge-based business;
- East-west rail will provide enhanced public transport connectivity for Bicester;
- Improvements have been made to rail connectivity and these continue;
- Bicester is identified as an eco-town; and
- Growth in the housing stock at Bicester and a need to provide highly skilled employment opportunities.



- 9.38 The Experience Quarter is well-positioned to take advantage of these economic opportunities, including in locational terms. It will build upon the achievements of Bicester Heritage to date and help to secure the economic successes for Bicester and Cherwell.
- 9.39 The proposed development seeks to deliver the economic ambitions and priorities of the Cherwell Local Plan Part 1, including those relating to Bicester in the following ways:
- Delivering knowledge-based employment;
  - Exploiting the site's location in the Cambridge-Milton Keynes Oxford Arc;
  - Exploiting the good transport connectivity;
  - Utilising ex-MOD land;
  - Maintaining and increasing the role of the motorsport industry and performance engineering;
  - Encourage international brands and visitors to Bicester complementary to the Town Centre and Bicester Village;
  - Encouraging and delivering high-technology business;
  - Encouraging and delivering high value distribution companies; and
  - Improving the sustainability and self-sufficiency of Bicester.
- 9.40 The proposed development will create unique and diverse leisure and tourism opportunities that will support and strengthen the Oxfordshire tourism offer as part of the vision for the wider site, in accordance with Policy SLE3 (Sustainable Tourism Growth).
- 9.41 The Oxfordshire Growth Board is seeking to facilitate and enable joint working on economic development, strategic planning and growth across Oxfordshire. A project overseen by the Growth Board is the Oxfordshire housing deal, which requires the delivery of 100,000 homes by 2031 to be delivered through the district's Local Plans and an Oxfordshire-wide statutory joint local plan. This is supported by £215million of new funding for infrastructure.
- 9.42 It is also noted that Cherwell Industrial Strategy is under development. In it, Bicester Motion is recognised as a key component for the delivery of economic and social growth and sustainability. Furthermore, Bicester is part of the Government's Garden Communities Programme which supports places seeking to deliver high quality new development.
- 9.43 Having regard to paragraph 185 of the NPPF, the proposal will support a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment to help deliver the wider economic benefits conservation of the historic environment can bring.
- 9.44 In accordance with Policy Bicester 8 (Former RAF Bicester), the proposed development will help to secure an economically viable future for the wider site as a whole. The proposed uses will be complementary to the existing site.



9.45 In accordance, with Policy SLE1, the proposed development will support existing businesses on the site by meeting their needs. The proposed development will also help to attract new international business to the site. The application site is allocated for employment uses, is outside of the Green Belt and will make efficient use of PDL. The proposed development will improve and encourage accessibility by sustainable transport, will be designed to high standards and use sustainable construction methods. The proposed development will not have an adverse effect on surrounding land uses, residents and the historic and natural environment.

### **Design, Scale and Layout**

9.46 The NPPF (paragraph 124) highlights that good design is a key component of good planning. In response to this, the applicant has worked closely with the LPA in preparing the design parameters for the proposed development. As the application is an outline application, in line with the PPGs guidance the applicant has prepared a suite of Parameter Plans and a Design Code, following input from pre-application advice, to be submitted and agreed to as part of this application. These design documents will, thereafter, be the basis for any detailed design coming forward as part of any Reserved Matters application.

9.47 As is highlighted in this statement, the site is allocated under Policy Bicester 8. That policy sets out that development should “*maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area, protect listed, scheduled and other important buildings, their setting, and protect the sensitive historic fabric of the buildings and preserve the openness of the airfield.*”. The policy further refers back to the Planning Brief which sets out that a “conservation-led” approach should be utilised for the site. In addition, policy ESD15 states that “*The design of all new development will need to be informed by an analysis of the context, together with an explanation and justification of the principles that have informed the design rationale.*”.

9.48 In response to the above policy, a Heritage Report prepared by Nick Worlledge Associates and a Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal prepared by ASA Landscape Architects are submitted in support of the proposal and have been led the design approach adopted at the site.

9.49 Over 70 hours of collaborative design workshop and site studies, with the joint findings of the relevant specialists have fed into the architectural and masterplan proposals to inform the quantum of development for the site. From this spatial analysis, a suitable developable area has been arrived at. This has then been further refined by the parameter plans informing the overall design of the proposal. Whilst remaining indicative, the design has been informed by these plans to arrive at a sensitively designed scheme that responds to the site’s characteristics and delivers a positive contribution to the area.

9.50 The submitted Design Code responds directly to the pre-application advice and provides 11 sub design codes relating to; Outline Architecture and Landscape Design Principles, Building mass and Articulation of form, Frontage, Built character & architectural expression, Materials & colours, Site circulation, parking & servicing, Landscape, Boundary treatment, Building clutter & servicing, Wayfinding, Lighting and Sustainability. The Design Code provides a framework from which high quality new design can emerge and thus create a clear sense of identity to this landmark development.



### *Scale*

- 9.51 The proposed development will comprise an Experience Quarter with a total footprint of circa 15,000sqm, with the main built form incorporated in the north-west corner of the site with the automotive and aviation pavilions in a peripheral area to the north of the site. The proposals would deliver up to 22,338sqm (GIA) of floorspace.
- 9.52 The proposed development will be delivered to high standards of design and the new buildings will be of an appropriate form, scale, mass and will respect the character of their surroundings, in accordance with Policy SLE1 and ESD15.
- 9.53 As can be seen from the Existing and Proposed Parameter Plan, the scale of the proposed structures has been considered in the context of built form on the Technical Site which are key heritage assets contributing the significance of the airfield as a whole. The proposed buildings have been set to be at maximum 9.5m lower than the visually dominant hangers at the Technical Site to ensure no visual rivalry would result from the development. Buildings at the extreme east and west of the Experience Quarter will be further limited to being no more than 5m.
- 9.54 The proposed Experience Quarter will be seen against a backdrop of the adjacent urban edge of Bicester to the west and the highway immediately adjacent to the west.
- 9.55 The automotive and aviation pavilions would be restricted to up to 5m in height. This height has been imposed so that their built form would not break the existing skyline established by landscaping binding the site's north and north east boundary.
- 9.56 The proposed tracks within the flying field are proposed to be at ground level and will not be raised. Where safety dictates it to be necessary, bunding at a maximum of 1m height will be situated to facility safety barriers at certain locations on the track. As is set out in the LVIA, these limited interventions within the flying field will not be readily visible and will have a minor impact on the openness of the flying field.

### *Layout*

- 9.57 Whilst the overall site layout is indicative, the site configuration comprising new Experience Quarter buildings, new automotive and aviation pavilions and new hard surfacing has been informed by the site's context. The site configuration has been designed such to create a commercially successful development, whilst minimising the impact on heritage assets, landscape character and other site sensitivities.
- 9.58 The configuration has been informed significantly by the character of the flying field, the character of the perimeter track, and views of the airfield from outside and within. Significantly, all built form proposed (aside from safety bunding) is to be located outside of the perimeter track to preserve the openness of the flying field.
- 9.59 The proposed tracks have been considered with key reference to the existing aviation activities operating at the site. As discussed in further detail later in this Statement, the proposed tracks are considered located in positions that do not hinder or prevent aviation activities. This aligns with the aims of the Planning Brief and Policy Bicester 8.



9.60 The proposed development, through carefully considered design, retains the historic character and landscape context of the site whilst deliver opportunity to deliver striking architecture that befits this landmark development opportunity and the vision of Bicester Motion to become an internationally recognised automotive and aviation hub. These proposals have been cognisant of the requirements of policies ESD15 and Bicester 8 as well as the NPPF and PPG and comply with them.

### **Heritage Impact**

9.61 Paragraph 184 of the NPPF requires that heritage assets be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations. In accordance with paragraph 189 of the NPPF, a Heritage Report (December 2020) prepared by Worledge Associates considers the heritage significance, impact, management and benefits of the proposal.

9.62 Policy Bicester 8 states that conservation-led proposals to secure a long-lasting, economically viable future for the wider site will be encouraged by the Council.

9.63 Paragraph 193 of the NPPF requires that great weight should be given to the asset's conservation, irrespective of the level of any potential harm. Paragraph 194 states that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification.

9.64 The report highlights that "*RAF Bicester is recognised as a rare survival of a 1930s military airbase.*" As such, a assessment of the site's significance and the impact of the development has been made. The Heritage Report summarises the heritage significance of the site at page 6. The significance of the site is assessed to be found within:

- The architecture and design of buildings and other structures and high historic integrity with a significant number of surviving buildings and structures. In particular the alignment of the perimeter track survives from its 1939 construction;
- Interrelationships as planned groups helps to explain how the site operated and the interdependence between buildings and spaces;
- The layout and routes connecting surviving structures;
- Built structures within the site also provide a focus of commemoration and remembrance, for example the watch tower;
- The airbase evidences each period of airfield design;
- Its historic integrity though has been eroded by the loss of the panhandle areas;
- The spatial relationship within and between the core areas (Technical Site, Domestic Site, Married Quarters and Flying Field) with views across the flying field to the open countryside beyond;
- It is the most complete airbase to have survived from the pre- 1934;



- There is a strong functional relationship between the siting of buildings and between the flying field and the structures that sit adjacent to it; and
  - The openness of the flying field (defined by the perimeter track).
- 9.65 The identified significance of the site has been what has directed the proposed location, layout and scale of development.
- 9.66 The proposed location for the new buildings is on a part of the airfield that has diminished heritage significance. The report identifies that the peripheral areas are understandable because of the surviving panhandle areas despite a number having been lost. The significance of the perimeter track has been eroded by this loss of the panhandle dispersal areas and routes, which were conceived as part of the whole. This is under threat, again from the degradation of the metalled surface and the further loss of sections of track would erode significance. The division of the historic airfield, with land and the old officer's mess sold into different ownership, has contributed to the diminished significance of this part of the site.
- 9.67 The report goes onto highlight that the loss of the historic extent of the airfield undermines its integrity and history, eroding our understanding of the later phases. The peripheral area of the airfield is currently unused, and the perimeter track is deteriorating from lack of a use. Left unused, these elements will continue to deteriorate and our understanding of their significance and their contribution to the heritage value of the airfield will be eroded.
- 9.68 The proposed development involves the re-use of the perimeter track. The track historically was put to use to allow vehicles and their loads to access aircraft parked on the soft verges and within panhandle areas. It is proposed that the track will once again serve this primary servicing purpose, providing the means to access the outlying areas and to allow managed public access around the flying field.
- 9.69 The Heritage Report considers the impact of the proposed development. It states that the proposed development will not have any direct adverse impact on any listed building but has the potential to affect the character and appearance of a conservation area and the setting of listed buildings. The full impact assessment is set out in the report.
- 9.70 The Heritage Report states that "*having carried out an assessment of the significance of the designated heritage assets and the contribution of their settings to that significance, **is that the harm is less than substantial.***" (emphasis added). The report goes onto identify that this less than substantial harm results from the proposed change to the setting of the flying field by development within the peripheral areas.
- 9.71 Whilst the above less than substantial harm is identified, it's also identified that the significance of the flying field and its setting has been eroded through the development of residential dwellings to the north and west of the site. such development also features in the views from the Watch Tower and Technical Site and was directly responsible for the loss of a number of 1940s panhandle areas. In the context of the proposed development delivering less than substantial harm, it is considered that thought appropriate design and landscaping, the impact of the development can be further mitigated.
- 9.72 The Heritage Report concludes:



*“There is no threat from the proposed development that understanding and experience of the airfield’s historically rural context would be lost or that the openness of the flying field and the spatial relationship with and within the Technical Site would be lost. Thus, the harm does not amount to ‘substantial harm’.”*

9.73 Within the scale of “less than substantial harm” the proposed development is assessed to result in impact towards the low end (minor effect) of this scale.

9.74 Paragraph 196 states 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. Paragraph 197 states that a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the asset.

9.75 The public benefits associated with the proposal are as follows:

- The proposal will contribute to the delivery of the Council’s objectives including sustainable economic growth as identified in this document;
- Contribute to achieving a long-term commercially successful future for the wider site;
- Contribute to repurposing the perimeter track and finding a new and long-term sustainable use for the airfield;
- Deliver substantial economic benefits to the town of Bicester and wider district;
- Facilitate economic stimulation into the post-Covid recovery;
- Provide public access to an otherwise closed and inaccessible site enabling understanding of this historic area;
- Develop an underutilised Previously Developed Site; and
- Deliver heritage benefits (which are public benefits) associated with the proposal.

9.76 The heritage benefits set out in the Heritage Report can be summarised as follows:

- Offering new ways of experiencing the airfield from the proposed tracks with diverse automotive activity offerings;
- Improved access to the site to the public;
- Restoring and repurposing the historic perimeter track by giving it a new purpose that showcases the relationship between track and buildings on the Technical Site, thereby aiding public understanding of the workings of a wartime airfield;
- Sustaining the physical evidence of the panhandle areas and therefore enhancing understanding of the wider dispersal strategy that characterised later development of the airfield;



- Reinstating an historic dispersal route;
- Retaining and enhancing the continued use of the grass runways for aviation;
- Creating new views across the flying field, which express its open character and large scale;
- Giving the whole site a unified purpose that secures a long-term future for the site;
- Ensuring the heritage assets are not fragmented any further, focusing on the preservation and enhancement of the historical and visual interdependence;
- Improving public access to the site, both physical and intellectual;
- Preserving the significance of the adjacent listed buildings and scheduled monuments by improving access;
- Providing new opportunities for the interpretation and enhancement of the memories associated with the site;
- Creating new experiences that derive from the site's history of innovation and experiment, with the potential to add new chapters to the history of the place, which in turn will be valued by society; and
- Ensuring that present and future generations can learn from and enjoy this component of our historic environment.

9.77 Having concluded that the proposed development will result in less than substantial harm to heritage assets, the report concludes that there would be numerous public benefits (including heritage benefits) that will outweigh that level of harm, in accordance with paragraph 196 of the NPPF.

9.78 In accordance with paragraph 200 of the NPPF, the proposed development will provide the opportunity for scrub clearance that will better reveal the significance of the heritage assets of the wider site.

9.79 In accordance with Policy Bicester 8 the proposal will maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the Former RAF Bicester Conservation area, listed buildings, scheduled and other important buildings, their setting and support the protection of the sensitive historic fabric of the buildings on the application site and across the wider site.

9.80 In accordance with Policy ESD15 (Character of the Built and Historic Environment) the proposal will complement and enhance the historic character of its context. The proposed development is in accordance with Saved Policy C23 (Retention of Features Contributing to Character or Appearance of a Conservation Area).

## **Landscape and Visual Impact**



- 9.81 A Landscape and Visual Appraisal prepared by ASA Landscape Architects is submitted in support of the proposed development. The report addresses the landscape and visual impact of the Experience Quarter development on the site itself, its wider setting of the former RAF Bicester and of the wider landscape. For specific landscape assessment detail and methodology, reference to the LVIA submitted should be given.
- 9.82 The site does not sit within any landscape designations or landscape protection policy areas, but key consideration has been given to the Conservation Area Appraisal. The site is bound to the south, west and north west by development forming part of Bicester. To the north and east the site is bound by former quarry land and the open countryside. Public Rights of the Way (do cross the site). To the north east of the site footpath 371/7/10 and 371/7/20 circulates the part of the disused Stratton Audley quarry site before returning to Stratton Audley.
- 9.83 The LVIA identifies that the site's local landscape characteristics have been eroded through the delivery of the airfield itself, local road network and the existing urban development of Bicester.
- 9.84 The proposed development will deliver circa 22,338sqm of floorspace. Development of this scale will inevitably result in a local change to the site. The LVIA concludes that "*the proposals will have a local impact on nearby landscape receptors including residential, road and roadside footpath users, but these impacts are local in significance and will be mitigated over time with proposed new structural tree planting*". It is further identified by the Cherwell District Landscape Character Assessment that the landscape needs restoration and that it '*would benefit from the introduction of a new character and strong sense of place*'. The proposed Experience Centre would deliver a flagship development, possessing a strong sense of place and identity achieved through the proposed parameter plans and Design Code submitted with this application.
- 9.85 The report identifies that where new buildings will be located is an area of landscape character that is predominantly suburban and sits within what can be described as a transitional landscape between town and country. In addition, views from the Technical Site and Watch Tower are identified as important. It is considered the view will change and the Experience Quarter development will clearly be visible, but it will not be dominant in the view and will be partly seen against a backdrop of an existing residential area and the Buckingham Road. The LVIA identifies that:
- The new developments will appear below the skyline and will not compromise the visual relationship with the agricultural landscape beyond the airfield boundaries. Neither will the EQ development compete with the established buildings and heritage assets of the Technical Site.*
- 9.86 Development has been carefully designed and located so that the wider site's relationship with the open countryside beyond will be preserved. In addition, development also protects the landmark features of the site without harming the interrelationships between the airfield and the Technical Site.
- 9.87 In regard to the proposed tracks within the airfield, development has striven to retain the characterful openness of the airfield. New tracks will not be raised, will be largely invisible from ground level, and limited bunding proposed (max 1m in height) will not result in undue harm. The LVIA states that "*Overall, it is considered that the tracks will not cause unacceptable harm to the openness of the flying field.*"



9.88 Policy ESD13, seeks to restrict development that causes undue intrusion or harm to the open countryside and natural environment, are inconsistent with local character, harm areas of high tranquillity, harm the setting of landmark features, and or harm the historic value of the landscape. The LVIA concludes that:

- The proposals will not cause significant impact to the open countryside;
- The proposals will not cause any significant harm to existing landscape features or topography;
- There will be no impact on areas of high tranquillity;
- The site is not within an area of high tranquillity being subject to aircraft noise, road noise and existing motoring uses; and
- That the proposed development does not impinge on the openness of the flying field.

9.89 In light of the above despite some change and local impact from the development, the proposals are considered to comply with policy ESD13.

9.90 Any impacts resulting from the development are local in nature and will be mitigated over time as new planting establishes and matures.

9.91 Further to policy ESD13, the proposed development will not result in harm to landmark features and in accordance with Saved Policy C7 the proposal will not cause demonstrable harm to the topography or character of the landscape.

9.92 Having regard to NPPF, including paragraph 109, the proposal will not harm protected and valued landscapes.

### **Noise**

9.93 Policy ESD15 (The Character of the Built and Historic Environment) identifies that development proposals should consider the amenity of both existing and future development, including matters of privacy, outlook, natural lighting, ventilation, and indoor and outdoor space. Policy BSC 8 (Securing Health and Well-Being) seeks to promote and health and well-being. Whilst the policy does not specifically refer to noise, the explanatory identifies that planning decisions can have an effect noise which contributes to health and well-being.

9.94 In support of the pre-application enquiry an Environmental Noise Impact Assessment has been prepared by SPL Track Environmental. Prior to undertaking the baseline survey and noise modelling used to inform the Noise Impact Assessment, the methodology was discussed and agreed with the Council's Environmental Health Officer (Neil Whitton). An updated Environmental Noise Impact Assessment has been prepared to accompany the submission of the application. Furthermore, in order to ensure that a robust noise assessment has been undertaken, the applicant chose to engage the services of Sharps Redmore Acoustic Consultants to provide input into the final Noise Assessment and recommendations. As such, the modelling, findings, assessment and recommendations have been ratified by both SPL and Sharps Redmore Noise Consultants.



- 9.95 Baseline noise surveys were undertaken between the 22<sup>nd</sup> March and 1st April 2019. The baseline survey including two baseline survey locations and six virtual receptors. The baseline surveys included Blencowe Close and Fulmar Court. These locations were agreed with CDC.
- 9.96 A live test was conducted on the 24<sup>th</sup> March 2021 using a selection of vehicles. A test circuit was configured using part of the old taxiway hardstanding. This area is not in a similar position to the proposed circuits but is closer to the west boundary of the site. It demonstrates the accuracy of the predictive models and correlation with drive-by measurements. Using a combination of modelling and drive-by management, the applicant is therefore able to accurately predict and manage the environmental impact of any type of circuit activity.
- 9.97 The test results with respect to NPPF impact thresholds for the test configuration under short-term continuous use. Were the assessment to be performed over a longer sample period (e.g. 30 minutes), the NPPF assessment would be none/low for all receptors in each case. It is also apparent that normal circuit activities will not have a significant adverse impact upon residents under the objectives of the Noise Policy Statement for England (NPSE). This position has been confirmed by both SPL and Sharps Redmore consultants.
- 9.98 Where events that may involve high noise levels, with large public attendance, mitigation of noise impact can be achieved through:
- restricting the number of days in the year on which high impact and moderate impact activity was permitted or;
  - restricting the amount of time in each hour or day during which noisy activity was permitted (e.g. by restricting the number of laps per hour that a noisy vehicle could operate) or;
  - a combination of strategies.
- 9.99 Various permutations of these noise mitigation methods are employed at most UK motorsport venues. Noise monitoring equipment installation at the Experience Quarter includes a ‘look forward’ calculation that is able to show at what time noise limits will be reached based upon accumulated data, making enforcement a manageable and accurate process. Full data and enforcement reporting would be available to demonstrate compliance.
- 9.100 A complete description of agreed mitigation and logging procedures will be set out in the Noise Management Plan that will be agreed with Cherwell District Council and will remain a “live” document for regular review.
- 9.101 The proposals are therefore in compliance with policy ESD15 and the NPPF.

## **Ecology**

- 9.102 Policy ESD10 (Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment) requires relevant ecological surveys to be prepared. A Phase 1 Ecological Survey is submitted alongside this application prepared by Ecology Solutions which evaluates the habitats present in accordance with published guidance and best practice guidelines.



9.103 Ecology Solutions was commissioned by Bicester Heritage in 2018 to undertake Ecological Assessment work of lands at Bicester Heritage (Bicester Airfield), Bicester, Oxfordshire (see Plan ECO1), hereafter referred to as the wider site. The wider site has considered which primarily comprises an airfield largely supporting short mown grassland, associated historical defence structures and infrastructure, in addition to Stratton Audley Quarry, a partially restored quarry and inert landfill, which supports a number of waterbodies, grassland, scrub and young woodland.

9.104 In addition to the Phase 1 Survey, species surveys have been undertaken in respect of:

- Bats;
- Badgers;
- Great Crested Newts;
- Reptiles; and
- Invertebrates.

9.105 The results of the above surveys are set out in Ecology Solutions report.

9.106 No statutory designated sites are recorded within or immediately adjacent to the Experience Quarter site. The Experience Quarter site includes for parts of two non-statutory sites, Bicester Airfield LWS, and Stratton Audley Quarry LWS. The majority of both sites lies outside of the Experience Quarter red line boundary, but within the wider site.

9.107 The Ecology Report states “*Much of the Experience Quarter site comprises areas of hardstanding, short mown grassland, scrubby woodland, dense scrub and a waterbody. These habitats are considered to be of limited intrinsic value in the context of the site. Habitats of relatively higher value include those areas of semi-improved calcareous grassland and recolonising hardstanding.*”

9.108 Whilst there would inevitably be some initial impact from the proposed development, the Ecology Report identifies appropriate mitigation and habitat creation that would allow the proposed development to enhance the biodiversity value of the site. A habitat creation plan ref: ECO3 is submitted with this application detailing such opportunities, all of which can be achieved within the applicant’s ownership.

9.109 The ecology report sets out “*recommendations have been put forward in this report that would allow the emerging Experience Quarter proposals to fully safeguard the existing ecological interest of the Site*”.

9.110 The proposed development is therefore considered to comply with policies at both local and national level whilst delivering the clearly identified requirements for (heritage based) conservation led development within the site, in line with Policy Bicester 8.



- 9.111 Policy ESD10 seeks the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, including by protecting, managing and enhancing resources to achieve a net gain in biodiversity from any proposed development. In response to this a Biodiversity Matrix has been prepared and submitted as part of this application. It sets out that a net gain of 69.6 biodiversity units can be achieved through the current proposals in compliance with ESD10. It is established that this application is for outline planning permission and so biodiversity will continue to be a relevant consideration for any reserved Matters applications forthcoming. It is considered that this can further be secured through appropriately worded planning conditions.
- 9.112 As part of the allocation for development, Policy Bicester 8 requires the protection and enhancement of biodiversity of the site. As set out, appropriate mitigation is identified to deliver ecological enhancement of the application site.

### **Access, transport and parking**

- 9.113 Policy SLE4 (Improved Transport and Connections) supports the implementation of proposals in the local Movement Strategies and Local Transport Plan. Furthermore, the NPPF sets out that development should be refused where it results in severe impacts on road safety and function (paragraph 109).
- 9.114 A Transport Assessment prepared by Mode Transport Planning is submitted alongside this application. The report discusses the proposed sites accesses (Buckingham Road and Bicester Road). An existing Buckingham Road access is proposed to provide the main staff and visitor entrance (vehicular, cycle and pedestrian). Following pre-application advice and further highway design, the existing access is proposed to be relocated approximately 18m to the south to avoid any conflict with Thompson Drive access on the opposite side of the road.
- 9.115 A further existing access off Bicester road will be utilised for service vehicles. Technical drawings demonstrating the functionality and safety of the proposed access are shown as appendix E and of the TA.

### *Parking*

- 9.116 A total of 400 parking spaces are provided within the proposed development. A total uplift of visitors is assessed at 400,000 per annum. This has been used to determine the required level of parking needed at the site. The expected trip rates generated by staff and visitors to the Experience Quarter would result in 350 spaces for car parking at weekends and 300 on weekdays. The Experience Quarter will be capable of hosting event days / weekends, as is already associated with Bicester Heritage and a symptom of the success earlier development has had at the airfield. As such an uplifted number of 400 spaces is proposed. The provision is considered to be compliant with standards.
- 9.117 As the application is in Outline the parking standards and associated provision will be specified during the reserved matters/detailed design stages. 10% of the total spaces will be allocated as disabled parking bays, in order to meet the required OCC parking standard. In addition, Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points will also be provided within the car parking areas throughout the site; the level of provision will be provided at c.3% of total parking spaces (as agreed as part of the hotel application); in the absence of specific OCC and CDC policy/guidance, this is considered to be an appropriate level in order to accommodate sustainable EV provision



9.118 As the planning application is in Outline, the cycle parking will be specified in more detail during the reserved matters/detailed design stages. However, it should be noted that cycle parking will be provided in the form of covered Sheffield stands compliant with Oxfordshire Standards.

#### *Impact on the road network*

9.119 The Transport Assessment identifies that access junction capacity assessments have been undertaken and conclude that these will all operate with significant reserve capacity with only a single vehicle queueing on both the major and minor (site access) roads. The TA concludes that the proposed access junctions are therefore considered sufficient and appropriate to serve the proposed wider masterplan development. In line with the NPPF the proposed development does not result in severe harm to the safety or function of the local road network.

9.120 Policy SLE 4 and paragraph 110 of the NPPF states that sustainable transport modes should be promoted. The TA sets out that *“The site is adequately accessible by sustainable modes of travel; existing pedestrian and cycle links are located within close proximity of the site and provide good connections with local facilities/amenities in the local area and towards Bicester town centre. The level of existing infrastructure for these users is also subject to a number of committed improvements as a result of previous consented developments that collectively will enhance pedestrian and cycle access.”* The proposed development further provides cycle parking, and EV charging (discussed below) and so complies with NPPF paragraph 110.

9.121 Therefore, in accordance with paragraphs 103, 104, 110, and 111 of the NPPF, the proposal is considered to be acceptable in transport terms.

#### **Impact on archaeology**

9.122 In accordance with policy ESD15 (Character of the Built and Historic Environment) new development proposals should conserve, sustain and enhance designated and non-designated heritage assets including archaeology. An archaeological Desk Based Assessment (2018) prepared by Oxford Archaeology is submitted alongside this application incorporating a walkover survey of the site. No over-riding archaeological constraints which are likely to prohibit development have been identified.

#### **Trees**

9.123 Policy ESD10 encourages the protection of trees and those trees within a Conservation Area are also afforded protection. The proposal seeks to protect trees, particularly those with arboriculture interest or merit and these will be retained where possible.

9.124 An Arboricultural Implications Assessment prepared by Higginson Associates is submitted with this application. The proposed development has been carefully designed to ensure a successful retention of existing trees where possible. The proposed development will not fall within the root protection area of any retained tree and will not require any facilitation pruning to any retained trees.

9.125 It is noted that part of Group 418 (cat B) trees will be lost to facilitate the proposed development. The loss of these trees is to facilitate track connectivity with the Experience Quarter and the proposed 4x4 tracks. As such, it is considered that a significant portion of the tree group 418 can be retained, and any removals will be selective.



9.126 It is reiterated the proposed development is for outline planning permission, and whilst the siting of any development is a reserved matter, tree retention will be a consideration of any forthcoming application.

9.127 The proposed development will further seek to deliver new landscaping that will mitigate the loss of any trees. The proposals have been achieved through a heritage and landscape led approach in order to safeguard the character of the Conservation Area.

9.128 The proposed development is considered to comply with policy ESD 10 of the local plans.

### **Flooding and drainage**

9.129 In accordance with Policy ESD3, ESD6 and ESD7 the proposed development will incorporate a sustainable drainage design. A Flood Risk and Drainage Assessment has been prepared by Ridge and Partners LLP and is submitted with this planning application in accordance with the policy ESD6.

9.130 The site as a whole is located within Flood Zone 1 (low risk). The site has further been assessed from in terms of fluvial, pluvial, tidal, surface water and artificial source flooding and has been found to be at low risk in all accounts. The proposed development therefore complies with policy ESD6.

9.131 The development will include a Sustainable Drainage System. Whilst the proposals are at outline stage, the report highlights that the following SuDS mechanisms could be included into the proposed development:

- Green Roofs
- Rainwater Harvesting
- Permeable Surfacing
- Filter Drains
- Filter Strips
- Swales
- Ponds
- Wetlands
- Detention Basin
- Soakaways; and
- Infiltration trenches

9.132 The proposed SuDS strategy seeks to drain surface water at source through a combination of infiltration and attenuation measures. The Strategy sets out that “*Attenuation or infiltration structures shall accommodate up to a 1in100 year +40% for climate change storm event and the upstream drainage networks should not flood in a 1:30 year return period*”.



9.133 It is considered that the proposed strategy will effectively manage surface water on site and not increase flooding elsewhere – including sewer flooding. It is considered that the proposed development accords with policies ESD6 and ESD7. The proposed SuDS system has the capacity to deliver pollution benefit through treatment of run off in line with policy ESD8.

### **Land contamination**

9.134 Saved policy ENV12 (Development on Contaminated Land) requires that adequate measures should be taken to remove any threat of contamination to future occupiers of the site. Having regard to the previous military use of the site there is a need to ensure that any contamination is addressed effectively through redevelopment.

9.135 A Phase 1 Land Contamination and Ground Condition Report is submitted alongside this application. The Report concludes that it is unlikely that ground conditions or potential pollutant sources identified would have any significant impact on the condition of the land or the receptors identified, including people. It is noted that appropriate construction methods to meet health and safety requirements, including the use of PPE, will be utilised.

### **Aviation**

9.136 Policy Bicester 8 sets out that the continued aviation activity at former RAF Bicester will be supported. The use is further considered to be a functional link to the site's past and contribute to its character and significance as a heritage asset. It has always been the aim of Bicester Motion to retain the aviation activities at that site and make sure the any proposed development is compatible with it.

9.137 The topic has been discussed significantly at pre-application stages and the Council instructed an independent aviation consultant to review the information submitted to pre-application. In the Council's October 2020 pre-application response, it was summarised that "*the buildings should be able to sit comfortably alongside without compromising the safe or efficient operation of the airfield in accordance with the proposed amended runway layout.*"

9.138 Further to the above, an Aviation Impact Assessment has been prepared by Air Motive Limited in regard to the proposed development and submitted with this application. The Assessment proceeds with "*measuring the impact of the proposed development interaction with aviation activities at Bicester Aerodrome against the applicable regulatory guidance provided by the UK regulator – the Civil Aviation Authority.*"

9.139 Subject to recommendations, the report identifies that "*the Experience Quarter development will not have any adverse impact on the safety and efficiency of aircraft operations at Bicester Aerodrome.*"

9.140 As such it is determined that that proposed development is compatible with the aviation activity at the airfield and in line with Policy Bicester 8 positive weight should be ascribed to the proposals.

### **Energy and Sustainability**

9.141 An Energy and Sustainability Design Strategy has been prepared in support of the proposed development by Ridge and Partners LLP. The Strategy sets out how the development will seek to reduce its carbon emissions. This responds to policy ESD1 of the Local Plan that sets out that "*Measures will be taken to mitigate the impact of development within the District on climate change*"



9.142 Policy ESD2 sets out an Energy Hierarchy for the new development to adhere to. The Strategy highlights that the Lean, Clean and Green methodology in order to reduce its energy demands and carbon emissions.

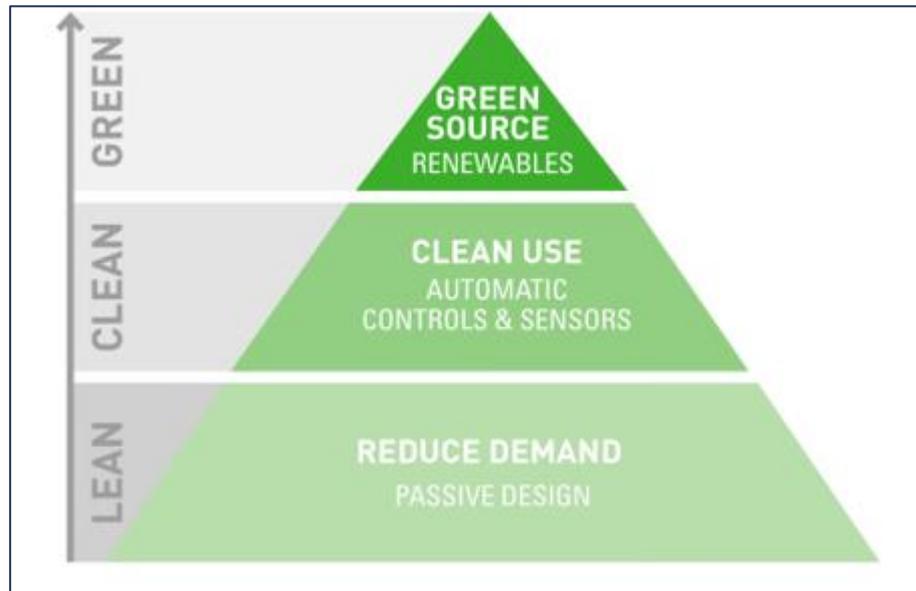


Figure 9: Energy Hierarchy

9.143 Policy ESD3 states that “All development proposals will be encouraged to reflect high quality design and high environmental standards, demonstrating sustainable construction methods including but not limited to:

- Minimising both energy demand and energy loss.
- Maximising passive solar lighting and natural ventilation”.

9.144 The strategy submitted identifies how the choice of high-quality materials, building layout/form, orientation, reducing heating demand, natural day lighting can be utilised at detailed design stages to ensure a “lead development”.

9.145 Policy ESD4 states that “A feasibility assessment for District Heating / Combined Heat and Power, including consideration of biomass fuelled CHP, will be required for: ...All applications for non-domestic developments above 1000m<sup>2</sup> floorspace”.

9.146 The Strategy sets out that appropriate measures can be incorporated into the proposed development that will deliver appropriate efficiencies and carbon reductions within the development.

9.147 In view of the above, it is considered that the proposed development is compliant with policies ESD1 – 4 of the Local Plan



## 10 Summary and Conclusion

10.1 This outline planning application seeks to secure planning permission in principle (all matters aside from access reserved) for:

*“Automotive Experience Quarter comprising Commercial, Business and Services uses (Class E), Light Industrial (Class B2), Local Community and Learning Uses (Class F) and vehicle circuits (Sui Generis) with all matters reserved aside from that of access”.*

10.2 at the Experience Quarter, Bicester Motion, Bicester, OX26 5HA.

10.3 The world of mobility and how people move ‘Motion’ is going through revolutionary change, Bicester Motion will be a world-leading enterprise at the heart of the movement. The Experience Quarter proposal has been developed to create conditions in which both UK and international based businesses can invest, expand and adapt, in accordance with paragraph 80 of the NPPF. Some businesses have already expressed an interest in the proposal. The proposed new buildings will facilitate the expansion of the knowledge, creative and high-technology industry and provide attractive leisure facilities.

10.4 The principle of development is considered to be acceptable as the proposal is in accordance with Policy Bicester 8 and makes effective use of Previously Developed Land.

10.5 In accordance, with Policy SLE1 (Employment Development), the proposed development will support existing businesses by meeting their needs and attract new UK and international businesses to the site.

10.6 There are substantial economic benefits associated with the proposed development that will help to contribute to an economically successful future for the wider site as part of the vision for Bicester Motion.

10.7 The Experience Quarter proposal will deliver significant economic benefits associated with the employment uses to be delivered by responding positively to identified opportunities for growth, particularly in the knowledge driven, creative and high technology industries. There will also be economic benefits through the provision of high-quality leisure facilities. Local business needs and wider opportunities have been considered through this proposal. International businesses will be attracted to the site and those already on site will be able to expand, building on current success.

10.8 The economic benefits that the development can bring will benefit Bicester as a tourist and visitor attraction, and so bring economic benefits at a County and Regional level. This benefit must further be recognised as a means to stimulate the economy in the Covid – 19 recovery.

The site forms part of a recognised heritage asset that has formed the basis for the success of conservation-led development to date. The Heritage Report concludes that the level of harm associated with the proposed development would be placed at the lower end of the less than substantial scale. The public benefits of the proposed development demonstrably outweigh the less than substantial harm to heritage assets, in accordance with paragraph 196 of the NPPF. Such benefits include:



### **Public Benefits**

- The proposal will contribute to the delivery of the Council's objectives including sustainable economic growth;
- Contribute to achieving a long-term commercially successful future for the wider site;
- Contribute to repurposing the perimeter track and finding a new and long-term sustainable use for the airfield;
- Deliver substantial economic benefits to the town of Bicester and wider district;
- Provide public access to an otherwise closed and inaccessible site enabling understanding of this historic area;
- Develop an underutilised Previously Developed Site; and
- Deliver heritage benefits (which are public benefits) associated with the proposal.

### **Heritage Benefits**

- Offering new ways of experiencing the airfield and ability for the public to see aviation taking place on the airfield
- Repurposing the historic perimeter track by giving it a new purpose that showcases the relationship between track and buildings on the Technical Site, thereby aiding public understanding of the workings of a wartime airfield;
- Sustaining the physical evidence of the panhandle areas and therefore enhancing understanding of the wider dispersal strategy that characterised later development of the airfield;
- Reinstating an historic dispersal route thereby opening up and enhancing views of the airfield
- Retaining and enhancing the continued use of the grass runways for aviation;
- Creating new views across the flying field, which express its open character and large scale;
- Ensuring the heritage assets are not fragmented any further, focusing on the preservation and enhancement of the historical and visual interdependence;
- Improving public access to the site, both physical and intellectual;
- Preserving the significance of the adjacent listed buildings and scheduled monuments by improving access;
- Providing new opportunities for the interpretation and enhancement of the memories associated with the site;



- Creating new experiences that derive from the site's history of innovation and experiment, with the potential to add new chapters to the history of the place, which in turn will be valued by society; and
- Ensuring that present and future generations can learn from and enjoy this component of our historic environment.

- 10.9 Overall, the LVIA concludes that the proposed development will have site and local level impacts on one peripheral area of the site. When set within the context of the wider site, the indicative layout demonstrates that the proposed development including new buildings will not dominate the rest of the site or change the underlying open character of the flying field and setting of the existing technical site. Any impacts will be mitigated over time as new planting establishes and matures.
- 10.10 In accordance with Policy ESD13, the proposed development will not result in harm to landmark features and in accordance with Saved Policy C7 (Landscape Conservation) the proposal will not cause demonstrable harm to the topography or historic value or character of the landscape. Furthermore, good design will ensure that impacts of the proposed development are limited.
- 10.11 The proposal is in accordance with Policy ESD15 and the proposed development will complement and enhance the character of the site through sensitive siting, layout and high-quality design.
- 10.12 The proposed development will be delivered to high standards of design and the new buildings will be of an appropriate form, scale, mass and will respect the character of their surroundings, in accordance with Policy SLE1.
- 10.13 In accordance with Policy SLE4, the Transport Assessment concludes that the proposed development will not have a significant adverse impact on the operation of the highway network and also supports the use of sustainable modes of transport.
- 10.14 The proposed development is in accordance with Policy ESD10 and achieves a net gain in biodiversity.
- 10.15 Having regard to the key planning considerations the proposal is considered to be in accordance with the Development Plan for the district of Cherwell and national planning policy. Therefore, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policy PSD1 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development) and paragraph 11 of the NPPF. It is therefore respectfully requested that the proposed development be approved without delay.



