

## Planning Statement

**Location:** The Innovation Quarter, Bicester Motion,  
Buckingham Road, Bicester OX26 5HA

**Proposal:** Variation of condition 3 (approved plans and  
documents) of application 19/02708/OUT to allow  
for design changes

**Prepared for:** Bicester Motion

**Date:** July 2023

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# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Bicester Motion (the 'applicant'), in support of an application for the 'variation of condition 3 (approved plans and documents) of application 19/02708/OUT to allow for design changes' at the Innovation Quarter, Bicester Motion, Buckingham Road, Bicester OX26 5HA (the 'site').
- 1.2 Under application 19/02708/OUT, outline planning permission was granted for:
- 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.*
- 1.3 This application seeks to update the approved plans listed at condition 3 in order to allow for a series of design changes which seek to enhance the approved design solution whilst adhering to the principles established under the extant consent.
- 1.4 Having regard to the positive design changes, this statement concludes that the proposed development remains acceptable in planning terms in that it continues to accord with the development plan and wider presumption in favour of sustainable development.

## Document Structure

- 1.5 The document is structured as follows:
- Section 2 introduces the site context (in relation to the constraints and character of the site and its surroundings);
  - Section 3 describes the proposed development;
  - Section 4 establishes the relevant planning history;
  - Section 5 establishes the relevant planning policy;
  - Section 6 assesses the key planning considerations; and
  - Section 7 concludes the statement and demonstrates how the proposal accords with the development plan and national policy.

## Supporting Information

- 1.6 The following documents are provided as part of this application:
- Location Plan (220127-3DR-XX-00-DR-A-08000 P1)
  - Existing Site Plan (220127-3DR-XX-00-DR-A-08001 P1)
  - Proposed Land Use Plan (220127-3DR-XX-00-DR-A-08002 P1)
  - Proposed Indicative Layout Plan (S73) (220127-3DR-XX-00-DR-A-08003 P1)
  - Proposed Developable Areas (220127-3DR-XX-00-DR-A-08004 P1)
  - Proposed Open Space / Landscape Plan (220127-3DR-XX-00-DR-A-08005 P1)



- Existing and Proposed Heights and Massing Plan (220127-3DR-XX-00-DR-A-08006 P1)
- Design and Access Statement (DAS) Addendum (220127-3DR-XX-XX-RP-A-09020)
- Planning Statement (689/3206)
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) (ASA-704-RP-901 D3)
- Ecology Briefing Note (7884M)
- Heritage Impact Assessment Addendum Report (dated July 2023)
- Application Form

1.7 These documents should be read in conjunction with this statement and are referenced where relevant in this statement.



## 2 Site Context

- 2.1 The site comprises the southwest quarter of the former RAF Bicester airfield that forms the northeast periphery of Bicester and lies approximately 1.5 miles northeast of the town centre. The site is outlined at **Figure 1**.



**Figure 1:** The application site, outlined in red.

### Settlement and Wider Area Context

- 2.2 Bicester is a market town and is one of two main towns in the District. It is identified in the 2021 Census as having a population of 37,020 (up from 32,642 recorded in the 2011 Census), showing the town's sustained growth. Bicester 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 automotive 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 to enhance this infrastructure. 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 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 Furthermore, Policy Bicester 8 (RAF Bicester) relates to the wider Bicester Motion site, including the Innovation Quarter, and outlines the Council's objective to support heritage tourism, leisure, recreation, employment and community uses.
- 2.7 Cherwell District Council (CDC) have been in consultation and are developing their Industrial Strategy, they 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.

### **Bicester Motion**

- 2.8 Bicester Motion operates the land at former RAF Bicester which 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, Waddesdon Manor and the Cotswolds receiving around 30 million 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 Experience Oxfordshire recognises the opportunity for Bicester Motion to become the most diverse employment, leisure and tourism offer in Oxfordshire and this is essential to supporting the regional recovery and growth of these sectors.

### **The Site – The Innovation Quarter**

- 2.10 The Innovation Quarter, previously referred to as the Future Automotive Speed and Technology (F.A.S.T.) development, comprises a 10.1-hectare parcel of land in the southwest corner of the wider Bicester Motion site. The site is subject to extant permission 19/02708/OUT under which permission was granted for '*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*'.
- 2.11 The site comprises Previously Developed Land featuring several historic 'Defence Structures' (Mushroom Pillboxes and Seagull Trenches), areas of poor-quality hard surfacing (the former dispersal tracks and 'panhandle' standings), grassland, scrubland and ruderal species. The site topography is flat and low lying. Generally speaking, views into the site from Skimmingdish Lane are screened by mature tree and hedgerow planting that runs along much of the site frontage.
- 2.12 The site is bounded by the airfield to the north, a large industrial development to the east, Skimmingdish Lane to the south and the Commands Works / Technical Site to the west.

### **Access**

- 2.13 At present, the main site access is via the South Gate onto the A4421 Skimmingdish Lane (c.250m southeast of the Buckingham Road / Skimmingdish Lane roundabout). A new vehicular access onto



Skimmingdish Lane located towards the southern corner of the site (opposite the former telephone exchange) was approved under application 19/02708/OUT.

### Planning Designations

- 2.14 **Historic environment:** The site falls within the RAF Bicester Conservation Area, which was originally designated in July 2002 and reviewed in November 2008. The site forms the southern periphery of the Flying Field character area; it is situated to the south of the perimeter track and the historic bomb stores. It adjoins the Technical Site character area to the west.
- 2.15 It is outlined within the RAF Bicester Conservation Area Appraisal that, at the outbreak of World War II, the Flying Field was considerably enlarged to the north and south with tracks, and 41 panhandle standings to enable the dispersed parking of aircraft. The part of the airfield to which the application relates was likely constructed during this period.
- 2.16 The wider Bicester Motion site contains 22 grade II listed buildings, with many of the remaining structures being labelled as 'Buildings making a positive contribution' or 'Defence Structures'. These structures are understood to be non-designated heritage assets. The wider site also contains multiple scheduled monuments, most of which are concentrated in the Technical Site.
- 2.17 The eastern aspect of the site contains a scheduled monument which includes the Mushroom Pillboxes and Seagull Trenches Defence Structures. A Fusing Point Building previously existed in this area but has been removed (building 229). This aspect of the site also adjoins the Bomb Stores area which contains several buildings that make a positive contribution, the closest being the Incendiary Bomb Store (building 223) and Fusing Point Building (building 226).
- 2.18 The western aspect of the site once contained structures 148 and 149. These structures have since been removed and the CA Appraisal does not identify what these structures were. This aspect of the site adjoins the Technical Site and forms the setting of the listed and non-designated heritage assets in visual proximity, notably including the grade II listed Buildings 113 (Type C Hanger) and 137 (Type A Hanger).
- 2.19 The site lies within an area of archaeological interest.
- 2.20 **Ecology:** The Stratton Audley Quarry Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) lies approximately 1km north of the site. The site forms part of the Bicester Airfield Local Wildlife Site and an area of NERC ACT S41 Habitat. It is understood this relates to the Calcareous Grassland identified in previously submitted ecological reporting.
- 2.21 **Flooding:** For the avoidance of doubt, the site falls within Flood Zone 1 and is predominantly at very low and low risk of flooding from surface water sources. It is otherwise at very low risk of flooding from all other sources.





### 3 Proposed Development

- 3.1 This proposal is for the 'variation of condition 3 (approved plans and documents) of application 19/02708/OUT to allow for design changes'.
- 3.2 This application is supported by a Design and Access Statement (DAS) Addendum prepared by 3D Reid which describes the proposal in terms of its rationale, context, evolution and revised parameter plans. This section summarises the Addendum and should be read in conjunction with it.
- 3.3 The Addendum explains that the revised proposal represents a more organic masterplan approach comprising seven evenly proportioned modular buildings, arrayed in a soft arc, which better harmonises with the landscape setting and is less regimented than the approved outline layout. This is best illustrated by the below comparison of the approved and proposed layout parameter plans at **Figure 2**.



**Figure 2:** Comparison of the approved and proposed indicative layout parameter plans.

- 3.4 The key design changes between the approved and proposed schemes are as follows:





- The re-orientation and re-shaping of the developable area from a linear and deepening layout to a narrower, gently winding arc.
  - Reconfiguring the indicative building forms from 6 linked buildings of varying shape, size and height (ranging from 9-11.5m) to 7 separated and evenly proportioned modular buildings (with a height of 10.5m).
  - Curving the built form away from the site frontage and relocating servicing, access and parking areas to facilitate landscaping and functionality enhancements.
  - Pulling the developable area away from the scheduled monument and the Defence Structures within its perimeter.
  - Enlarging the ecology area from 2.85ha to 2.87ha.
- 3.5 As set out in the introduction, the rationale of the proposed development is to improve the design of the approved outline scheme whilst retaining its broad principles and characteristics. In more detailed terms, the organic masterplan approach seeks to improve the connection and relationship of the scheme with the historic site context, enhance its integration with the landscape, reduce its impact upon the proximate heritage assets and deliver more attractive building proportions and practical layout functionality that better meet the needs of future tenants.
- 3.6 The application package demonstrates how the site could be developed to achieve the vision for a unique destination for automotive technology businesses and this aspiration is reflected by the artist impression at **Figure 3**.



**Figure 3:** Artist impression of the Innovation Quarter viewed from the Flying Field Perimeter Track.



- 3.7 For the avoidance of doubt, the proposed building footprint remains 10,103sqm – the same as the previously approved development. In addition, the land uses remain the same as approved, albeit they have been updated to reflect the proposed building reconfiguration and the September 2020 update to the Use Classes Order (i.e. the approved Class B1/B2/B8/D1 use has now evolved to a B2/B8/E/F1 use).
- 3.8 Having regard to the above, this application proposes that condition 3 be updated (as indicated by the [bracketed text]) to reflect the submitted parameter plans and Edgars therefore respectfully request that the condition be reworded as follows:

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

*Plans:*

- [Location Plan (220127-3DR-XX-00-DR-A-08000 P1)]
- [Existing Site Plan (220127-3DR-XX-00-DR-A-08001 P1)]
- [Proposed Land Use Plan (220127-3DR-XX-00-DR-A-08002 P1)]
- [Proposed Indicative Layout Plan (S73) (220127-3DR-XX-00-DR-A-08003 P1)]
- [Proposed Developable Areas (220127-3DR-XX-00-DR-A-08004 P1)]
- [Proposed Open Space / Landscape Plan (220127-3DR-XX-00-DR-A-08005 P1)]
- [Existing and Proposed Heights and Massing Plan (220127-3DR-XX-00-DR-A-08006 P1)]

*Documents:*

- [Planning Statement (689/3206)]
- [Design and Access Statement Addendum (220127-3DR-XX-XX-RP-A-09020)]
- [Bicester Motion Heritage Impact Assessment Addendum Report (230705)]
- *Archaeological Desk Based Assessment prepared by Oxford Archaeology dated September 2018*
- [Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) (ASA-704-RP-901 D3)]
- *Arboricultural Implications Assessment prepared by Brian Higginson (On Centre Surveys Ltd) dated April 2019*
- *Flood Risk and Drainage Assessment prepared by Ridge dated November 2019*
- *Phase 1 Land Contamination and Ground Condition Report prepared by Crestwood Environmental Ltd dated July 2018*

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



## 4 Planning History

- 4.1 The planning records of relevance to this application include those relating to the Innovation Quarter site (set out at **Table 1**) and the key projects relating to the wider Bicester Motion site (set out at **Table 2**).

Table 1: Planning records relating to the Innovation Quarter site.			
Reference	Description	Decision	Date
19/02708/OUT	<i>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</i>	Approved	27/08/2021

- 4.2 Application 19/02708/OUT was considered at Planning Committee on the 16<sup>th</sup> July 2020 and Members resolved that authority be delegated to the Assistant Director of Planning and Development to grant permission, subject to conditions.

- 4.3 The key comments of the Committee Report that are pertinent to the consideration of this Section 73 application are set out below:

- *“Parameter plans have been submitted to demonstrate maximum heights, developable area, open space/landscape parameters and building uses. The combination of developable areas which are clearly identified, constrained spaces for the location of buildings and the open space/landscape information, means that there will be very limited options in terms of building footprint at the reserved matters stage. Combined with the height parameters, the plans suggest a series of buildings which increase in size/height from west to east. The tallest building would be located closest to the neighbouring employment development to the east and would not exceed its height.”*
- *“The parameter plans would allow for potential gaps between buildings, which would be imperative to meet the suggestions made by Historic England in relation to views from the Scheduled Monument (see the heritage section of this report for further consideration of this point). Whilst the plans do not identify the locations or width of any gaps, the design will need to take a conservation-led approach to ensure any impact on heritage is minimised. The parameter plans, as currently set out, would not prevent this approach from occurring.”*
- *“The parameter plans, as submitted, are considered to be appropriate. The heights would not exceed those of the neighbouring buildings and the gradual change in heights would help to set the buildings within the context of the site.”*
- *“Given the proposal shows the potential for a series of buildings on the site, there is a risk that proposals for each building could come forward separately, especially if individual occupiers have the opportunity to influence their building. Therefore, a cohesive design*



*approach is going to be essential to ensure the buildings work collectively whilst potentially allowing some individuality or variation. On this basis, a condition has been recommended to require the approval of a design code for the whole site prior to the submission of any reserved matters application. The design code will need to be detailed, dealing with potential design features, materials palette, boundary treatment, hard and soft landscaping, building frontages and servicing arrangements.”*

<b>Table 2: Planning records relating to other key projects at the Bicester Motion site.</b>			
<b>Reference</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Date</b>
21/01224/OUT (Experience Quarter)	Outline planning application 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).	Approved	31/03/2023
18/01333/F (Command Works)	Extension to existing Technical Site to provide new employment units comprising flexible B11 light industrial, B2 (general industrial), B8 (storage or distribution) uses with ancillary offices, storage, display and sales, together with associated access, parking and landscaping	Approved	03/09/2019
18/01253/F (Hotel)	Erection of hotel and conference facility with associated access, parking, and landscaping.	Approved	11/03/2019

- 4.4 It should be noted that subsequent Section 73 applications relating to both applications 18/01253/F and 18/01333/F have been granted. Those applications relating to the Hotel enabled variations to the access, energy strategy and training and employment plan while those relating to the Command Works enabled various changes to the use and externals of individual buildings.
- 4.5 The above site history represents the four major developments that have been permitted on the wider Bicester Motion site; the Hotel, Command Works, Innovation Quarter and the Experience Quarter. In addition, the original technical site has a detailed planning history with several planning applications and listed building consent applications associated with individual buildings including a site wider consent for commercial uses.
- 4.6 As noted in the Committee Report of application 19/02708/OUT: *“The general approach taken on the Technical Site has been to allow changes of use that fit with the commercial nature of the site and minor physical changes to the buildings to ensure their long-term use and viability with an aim of conserving the heritage assets on the site.”*



## 5 Planning Policy

- 5.1 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. This is echoed in paragraph 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in July 2021, which is itself a material consideration.
- 5.2 Section 66 of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 directs that in considering a proposal, special regard is given to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting.
- 5.3 Section 72 (of the same Act) directs that special regard is given to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of Conservation Areas.
- 5.4 The following development plan documents are relevant to this application:
- The Cherwell Local Plan 2011 – 2031 (adopted July 2015)
  - The saved policies of the Cherwell Local Plan 1996 (adopted November 1996)
- 5.5 The following documents are material considerations relevant to this application:
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (published July 2021)
  - National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) (published July 2019)
  - Cherwell Local Plan 2040 (emerging)
  - RAF Bicester Planning Brief and Draft Development Principles (2009)
  - RAF Bicester Conservation Area Appraisal (2008)
- 5.6 The relevant sections and policies of the development plan documents, and relevant material considerations are listed below and detailed further in the Planning Assessment section of this statement.

### National Planning Policy Framework

Table 3: National Planning Policy Framework	
Sections	Paragraph Numbers
2. Achieving sustainable development	8 and 11
4. Decision making	38, 39 and 41
6. Building a strong, competitive economy	81 and 83
8. Promoting healthy and safe communities	92
9. Promoting sustainable transport	105, 110, 111, 112 and 113
11. Making effective use of land	119 and 120



12. Achieving well-designed places	126, 130 and 132
15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment	174 and 180
16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment	189, 194, 199, 202, 203 and 206

### Cherwell Local Plan 2011 – 2031: Part 1

Table 4: Local Plan policies	
Policy	Title
PSD1	Presumption in favour of sustainable development
Bicester 8	RAF Bicester
SLE1	Employment development
SLE3	Supporting tourism growth
SLE4	Improved transport and connections
BSC7	Meeting education needs
ESD1	Mitigating and adapting to climate change
ESD2	Energy Hierarchy and Allowable Solutions
ESD3	Sustainable construction
ESD4	Decentralised energy systems
ESD5	Renewable energy
ESD6	Sustainable Flood Risk Management
ESD7	Sustainable Drainage Systems
ESD10	Protection and enhancement of biodiversity and the natural environment
ESD13	Local landscape protection and enhancement
ESD15	The character of the built and historic environment
ESD17	Green infrastructure
INF1	Infrastructure





## Cherwell Local Plan 1996

Table 5: Saved Local Plan policies	
Policy	Title
TR1	Transport funding
C1	Protection of Sites of Nature Conservation Value
C2	Development affecting Protected Sites
C4	Creation of New Habitats
C5	Protection of ecological value and rural character of specified features of value in the district
C7	Landscape Conservation
C23	Retention of features contributing to character or appearance of a conservation area
C25	Development affecting the site or setting of a scheduled ancient monument
C28	Layout, design and external appearance of new development
ENV12	Development on contaminated land

## Cherwell Local Plan 2040

- 5.7 The Council is currently undertaking a review of the Cherwell Local Plan 2011 – 2031, with a regulation 18 consultation of the draft Cherwell Local Plan 2040 reported to the Council's Executive in January 2023.
- 5.8 Policy Bicester 8, the allocation which the site falls within, is being updated to Core Policy 20: Former RAF Bicester. The draft wording of this policy (from the draft regulation 18 consultation version) is outlined below:

**Core Policy 20: Former RAF Bicester:** *States that conservation-led proposals for the former RAF Bicester site will be encouraged that help to secure a long-lasting, economically viable future for the technical site and flying field.*

*Proposals for heritage tourism uses, leisure, recreation, employment and community uses will be particularly encouraged. The development of hotel and conference facilities will also be supported as part of a wider package of employment uses.*

*All proposals will be required to accord with the latest Conservation Area Appraisal for the site.*



*Any proposals for the former RAF Bicester site should demonstrate how they will 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 biodiversity of the site should be protected and enhanced and habitats and species surveys (including a Great Crested Newt survey) should be undertaken.*

*The continuation of flying use will be supported at the site and opportunities for improving access to the countryside will also be encouraged.*

*Proposals for the restoration and use of Stratton Audley Quarry will be supported for informal outdoor recreation uses provided that the proposals are compatible with the uses of the wider RAF Bicester site and the quarry site's designation as a Local Wildlife Site and partial SSSI.*

*Proposals should be in accordance with the Development Plan taken as a whole.*

### **RAF Bicester Planning Brief and Draft Development Principles (2009)**

- 5.9 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. Having regard to the above and the planning history of the site, the planning brief is of limited weight in the consideration of this application.
- 5.10 In their pre-application written response to pre-application 19/02092/PREAPP, officers 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. Nonetheless, officers invited the outline application to identify the weight that is attributed to the Planning Brief and to address any conflict the proposed development may have with the Planning Brief. The technical/in principle conflict was resolved in application 19/02708/OUT and is not revisited by this submission.

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

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

- 5.12 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.



## 6 Planning Assessment

6.1 Having regard to the established planning context and the nature of the proposed development, the following key matters are of relevance to the planning assessment and are addressed in turn:

- Parameters – heights, scale, massing and design
- Historic environment
- Natural environment
- Ecology
- Other matters

### **Parameters – Heights, Scale, Massing and Design**

- 6.2 Policy ESD 15 expects development to complement and enhance the character of its context through sensitive siting, layout and high-quality design. All development is required to meet high standards and should respect the historic environment including conservation areas and listed buildings.
- 6.3 Policy Bicester 8 reinforces this requirement and clarifies that development at former RAF Bicester is to be conservation-led, meaning that it is what is appropriate for the site in terms of heritage related issues that must be at the forefront at all times.
- 6.4 Saved Policy C28 similarly requires all development to ensure that standards of layout, design and external appearance are sympathetic to the character of the context.
- 6.5 The above policies are supported by NPPF sections 12, 15 and 16 which, in broad terms, seek to foster good design that is visually attractive, sympathetic to the local character and optimises the potential of the site in a manner that conserves and enhances the natural and historic environment. (Please note that the heritage and landscape impacts of the development are addressed under the respective subsections).
- 6.6 In accordance with the requirements of the above policies, the submitted DAS Addendum prepared by 3D Reid, as well as this Planning Statement and the accompanying heritage and landscape reporting (summarised in the following subsections), collectively demonstrate how the proposed development has been informed by a detailed analysis of the site context and the approved plans to form the conservation-led principles that underpin the revised scheme.
- 6.7 The developable site area and the layout, heights, scale, massing and design of the proposal has been established through the aforementioned analysis. The end product of this process is a series of carefully considered parameter plans which will guide the subsequent Reserved Matters stage. The parameter plans are addressed in turn and with regard to the officer assessment of the approved outline scheme where appropriate.
- 6.8 **Indicative Layout Plan and Proposed Developable Areas:** These parameter plans demonstrate how the proposed development can be sensitively incorporated into the landscape in a manner that better conserves the unique historic site context, local distinctiveness, openness and views of this part of the Flying Field and the wider Bicester Motion site.



- 6.9 As explained at section 3, the revised layout represents a more organic masterplan approach comprising seven evenly proportioned modular buildings arrayed in a gently winding arc. This layout is considered to better respond to the site context than the linear and regimented layout approved. It achieves this by more appropriately reflecting the alignment of the Perimeter Track and the associated dispersal tracks to maximise views and create visual connections while curving the built form away from the site frontage to the south and the scheduled monument to the north. In this capacity, the proposal facilitates landscape and functionality enhancements while better physically and visually preserving the proximate heritage assets.
- 6.10 In addition to the above, the landscape enhancements include softening the visual presence of the development from the street scene by setting the built form slightly further into the site behind stronger boundary planting than approved. Notably, the revised site access is now softened by its greener setting. Furthermore, the revised layout represents a more effective use of land than the proposed development. Indeed, the area of built form and hardstanding has been reduced over 10% from approximately 3-hectares to less than 2.7-hectares.
- 6.11 In terms of functionality enhancements, the reconfiguration of the six linked buildings of varying shape, size and height to seven evenly proportioned modular buildings provides more attractive building proportions and a more practical site functionality that better meet the needs of future tenants.
- 6.12 Overall, the indicative layout and developable area plans illustrate how the proposed development would improve the connection and relationship of the Innovation Quarter with its historic context. The plans also show how the proposal appropriately incorporates access and parking provision, in addition to servicing, utilities and sustainable drainage.
- 6.13 The Committee Report of application 19/02708/OUT only comments on the approved layout and developable area in combination with the other parameter plans where officers express that “*The parameter plans, as submitted, are considered to be appropriate*”. Given the above-mentioned enhancements that the revised design delivers, it is considered that the indicative site layout and developable areas are also acceptable, if not more supportable than those permitted.
- 6.14 **Proposed Land Use:** As mentioned in section 3, the proposed land uses and quantum of said uses shall remain as approved (albeit updated to reflect the proposed building reconfiguration and the September 2020 update to the Use Classes Order). In this capacity, the proposed development comprises 10,103sqm of employment space (Class B2/B8/E/F1) evenly distributed over the 7 modular buildings proposed with buildings B1-B5 in an office and industrial use and buildings B6-B7 (the two closest to the neighbouring industrial site) in an office, industrial, storage and distribution use) – this reflects the approved land use plan which also located the mixed B1/B2/B8 use adjacent to the neighbouring industrial site.
- 6.15 Given the above, the Proposed Land Use plan is considered to be acceptable. The Committee Report did not comment on the land use plan of the original application in detail, other than to say that “*Given the proposal shows the potential for a series of buildings on the site ...a cohesive design approach is going to be essential to ensure the buildings work collectively whilst potentially allowing some individuality or variation*”. This cohesive design approach is safeguarded by the design conditions of the extant consent and these can be carried over to the S73 scheme as necessary. For the avoidance of doubt, the wording of the relevant design conditions remains appropriate.



6.16 **Proposed Open Space / Landscape:** As mentioned above, a greater proportion of the site is now proposed for soft landscaping and the resulting greener site character is illustrated by **Figure 4**.



**Figure 4:** Extract of the indicative landscape and environment as illustrated in the DAS Addendum.

6.17 The revised open space and landscaping proposals include the provision of an enhanced green buffer along the site frontage and buffers separating the seven buildings. The proposed green areas help to reduce the perception of the built form massing while enhancing views of the Flying Field. The revised layout and landscaping also enlarges the approved ecology area from 2.85 to 2.87-hectares. Resultantly, the Open Space / Landscape Parameter Plan is considered to be acceptable.

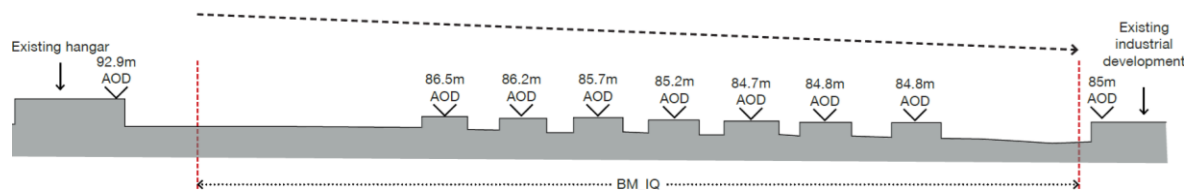
6.18 **Proposed Heights and Massing:** The seven buildings proposed are evenly proportioned modular structures that are limited to 10.5m in height and they are set between the large hangers of the Technical Site to the west (which are up to 20m tall and are sited on higher ground) and the 13-16m tall industrial buildings of the adjoining compound to the east. The proposed heights and massing of the development within its context is illustrated at **Figures 5 and 6**.







**Figure 5:** Proposed Existing and Proposed Heights and Massing Parameter Plan.



**Figure 6:** The Scale / Form / Massing section from the DAS Addendum.

- 6.19 In assessing the proposed building heights and massing, officers stated in the Committee Report that *“The heights would not exceed those of the neighbouring buildings and the gradual change in heights would help to set the buildings within the context of the site”*.
- 6.20 While the approved building heights range from 9-11.5m, it is important to note that only the peripheral buildings were 9m and 11.5m tall, the buildings between are all 10.5m in height. As such, the difference in building heights is not significant and, as shown by **Figure 6**, the proposed building heights remain subservient to the neighbouring structures and therefore remain appropriate to the site context in this respect.
- 6.21 Furthermore, the revised siting, orientation and forms of the proposed buildings helps to visually lessen their massing. For example, the proposed building reconfiguration breaks down the built form massing from the six approved buildings of increasing size to seven generally smaller evenly proportioned buildings. Moreover, the revised orientation (resulting from the more organic soft arcing layout) varies the building profiles presented to the Flying Field and the street scene. Collectively, these measures achieve a comparative, if not slightly improved scale and massing.
- 6.22 In broad terms, the proposed development provides the opportunity to moderate the scale of the approved development and the larger existing development forming its surroundings. In this respect, it presents an opportunity to provide a sympathetic transition between the adjacent commercial units in third-party ownership and the existing Technical Site and Command Works (the Heritage Quarter).
- 6.23 The Committee Report of the approved development also states that *“The parameter plans would allow for potential gaps between buildings, which would be imperative to meet the suggestions made by Historic England... Whilst the plans do not identify the locations or width of any gaps, the design will need to take a conservation-led approach to ensure any impact on heritage is minimised. The parameter plans, as currently set out, would not prevent this approach from occurring”*.
- 6.24 As shown at **Figure 6**, the proposed development maintains these gaps and, as noted above, the revised buildings no longer feature link structures. As such, it is considered that the revised parameter plans continue to enable a conservation-led approach which would ensure any impact on heritage assets is minimised by maintaining significant visual breaks between each building.
- 6.25 **Summary:** The proposed development is considered to embody a high quality standard of design. It is appropriate in terms of layout, scale, massing and design and thusly respects the character of the site and its surroundings in accordance with Policies ESD 15 and Bicester 8, Saved Policy 28 and NPPF sections 12, 15 and 16 (the latter two of which are addressed in the following sections).





## Historic Environment

- 6.26 Policy ESD 15 requires that development complement and enhance the character of its context through sensitive siting, layout and high quality design. Where development is in 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 further states that development should conserve, sustain and enhance designated and non-designated heritage assets including buildings, features, archaeology, conservation areas and their setting.
- 6.27 This policy broadly reflects the provisions of Saved Policies C23 and C25.
- 6.28 Additionally, 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. 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.
- 6.29 As set out in section 2, the site lies within the RAF Bicester Conservation Area and contains a scheduled monument which covers the Mushroom Pillboxes and Seagull Trenches Defence Structures (these features are treated as non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs)). The site is also within visual proximity of several buildings that make a positive contribution and Defence Structures to the northeast and the grade II listed Type A and C Hangers on the periphery of the Technical Site.
- 6.30 As such, this application is accompanied by an addendum to the Heritage Report submitted in respect of application 19/02708/OUT. This section summarises the key findings of the addendum.
- 6.31 In overall terms, the proposed development is considered to have a broadly similar (if not slightly lesser) impact on the significance and setting of the heritage assets as the approved outline scheme. In the Committee Report of application 19/02708/OUT, officers concluded at paragraph 9.85 that *"The proposed addition of new buildings in the southeast corner of the airfield is considered to cause less than substantial to the designated heritage assets; these being a Scheduled Monument, a range of Listed Buildings and the RAF Bicester Conservation Area"*.
- 6.32 In respect of the current application, the HIA Addendum similarly concludes that *"...it is considered that the level of harm that would result from the IQ proposals would be less than substantial"*. However, notwithstanding this conclusion, the addendum assesses that the opportunity to review the approved scheme has resulted in a revised proposal that has been designed to lessen any level of heritage harm in order to better conserve and enhance the site and its setting. Notably, the addendum highlights the following design improvements:
- The realignment of the buildings better responds to the alignment of the Perimeter Track and shape of the Flying Field and thereby better integrates the proposed built form into the topographic framework of the airfield;
  - The revised layout better reflects the principle of interdependence between buildings and spaces that characterises the airfield;



- The revised layout and indicative building forms provide greater opportunities to observe the airfield and experience its history in this respect;
- The revised layout introduces a degree of permeability so that the built form sits more comfortably within the landscape and responds to the principals of built form dispersal; and
- The revised scheme comparatively enhance the setting and creating more space between the scheduled monuments and the proposed development.

6.33 With regard to NPPF paragraph 202 which requires that any level of less than substantial harm be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, the addendum summarises the public benefits as follows:

- Sustaining the significance of the adjacent scheduled monuments by improving access, and repurposing and maintaining part of the site that is currently neglected and in poor condition;
- Introducing landscaping to enhance the existing setting of the defensive structures;
- Securing a long-term viable future for the site and its constituent elements;
- Ensuring that the heritage assets are not fragmented any further, focusing on the preservation and enhancement of the historical and visual interdependence;
- Improved access to the site (intellectual and physical);
- Opportunities for interpretation and enhancement of the embodied 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
- Making provision and long-term commitment and financial investment to ensure that present and future generations can learn from and enjoy this component of our historic environment.

6.34 As outlined during the establishing consent, the other 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;
- 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.

6.35 The public benefits of the proposed development are considered to demonstrably outweigh the now reduced level of less than substantial harm to heritage assets, in accordance with paragraph 202 of the NPPF.

6.36 Having regard to the above, the proposal is therefore considered to conserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Former RAF Bicester Conservation Area and the significance and setting of its listed buildings, scheduled monuments and other important buildings and features. As such, the proposal conserves and enhances the historic environment in accordance with Policies Bicester 8 and ESD 15, Saved Policies C23 and C25 and NPPF section 16.

### Natural Environment

6.37 Policy ESD 13 states that opportunities will be sought to secure the enhancement of the character and appearance of the landscape, particularly in urban fringe locations, through the restoration, management or enhancement of existing landscapes, features or habitats and, where appropriate, the creation of new ones. Development will be expected to respect and enhance local landscape character. Policy C7 broadly reflects part of Policy ESD 13 which states that development will not normally be permitted where it would cause demonstrable harm to the local landscape.

6.38 As confirmed in the Committee Report of application 19/02708/OUT “*There are no statutory landscape designations at the site, but careful consideration needs to be given to the character of the Conservation Area and the historic landscape*”.

6.39 As such, this application is accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), prepared by ASA Landscape Architects. This section summarises the LIVA, which comes to the following conclusions:

- The key characteristics of the local landscape have been significantly eroded through, over time, the established development of the airfield and bomber base, the local roads and urban edge of Bicester, but positive characteristics remain in terms of the historic attributes of the site and the evolution of the site into a sustainable business.
- The granting of permission for a new contemporary hotel recognises the positive influence that appropriate new development will have on this landscape, providing, as it will be, a stimulus for the continuing use of the site as a commercial going concern while at the same time preserving its place in history and the community. The completion of the Command Works further underlines the recognition that this site has opportunities for development of an appropriate form, scale and massing in close proximity to the historic Technical Site and its listed buildings and scheduled monuments.
- The landscape would benefit significantly from the introduction of a new character and strong sense of place. There is a considerable capacity to absorb appropriate change within this site. The character of the former airfield and its associated buildings and structures can still be appreciated for what they were and still are, while being used within an appropriate context that celebrates this character.



- The challenges and opportunities have led to the development of the concept form, massing and scale of the IQ development in the location within land parcel 3f. The landscape and heritage specialists have explored, with the architects, options in terms of orientation, massing and layout, numbers of buildings and building heights.
- The buildings form a cohesive grouping, with consistent heights, footprints and design. The building as 10.5m high, below the height of buildings on the Technical Site and also below those of the nearby Bakel Factory. The sinuous layout sets the buildings back from the road and is sympathetic to the form of this part of the site.

6.40 Overall, the LVIA concludes that the proposed development will have localised impacts on one peripheral area of the site. When set within the context of the wider site, the indicative layout demonstrates that the proposed Innovation Quarter buildings would not dominate the rest of the site or change the underlying open character of the flying field and setting of the Technical Site. Any impacts will be mitigated over time as new planting establishes and matures.

6.41 With respect to the Committee Report of application 19/02708/OUT, officers acknowledged that “[the site] *does have some capacity to absorb some change, this is reflected in its allocation under Policy Bicester 8... The location of the application site would mean that any development could be clearly read as an addition to the site without overwhelming or detracting from the historic character of the site. The proposed uses and the scale of the buildings proposed, are not considered to be inappropriate*”. They concluded that the original scheme demonstrated how “*the development can be designed to sit sensitively within its setting and design can be used to mitigate landscape impacts*” and recommended conditions requiring further landscape assessments and the submission of a design code at the Reserved Matters stage.

6.42 It is considered that the revised scheme similarly demonstrates that the Innovation Quarter can be sensitively integrated within its setting and can be designed to mitigate landscape impacts. Indeed, due to the positive nature of the design changes (as explained in the above sections), it is considered that the proposed development would better integrate with the Flying Field and would have a more sensitive presence as viewed from the street scene. For the avoidance of doubt, the wording of the relevant design and landscape conditions remains appropriate.

6.43 Having regard to the above, the proposed development is considered to respect and enhance the local landscape and especially the openness and views of the airfield, including its landmark features. As such, the proposed development complies with Policy ESD 13, Saved Policy C7 and NPPF section 15.

## Ecology

6.44 Policy ESD 10 (Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment) outlines that the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and the natural environment will be achieved by a variety of criteria.

6.45 Policy Bicester 8 requires the protection and enhancement of biodiversity of the allocation site. Appropriate mitigation where necessary is identified such that it will offset any negative impacts and where possible provide for the ecological enhancement of the application site.



- 6.46 As set out in section 2, the Stratton Audley Quarry SSSI lies approximately 1km north of the site and the site itself forms part of the Bicester Airfield Local Wildlife Site and an area of NERC ACT S41 Habitat.
- 6.47 As such, this application is accompanied by an Ecology Briefing Note, prepared by Ecology Solution, which provides an ecological assessment of the revised scheme. This section summarises the key findings of the note.
- 6.48 The note explains that the S73 proposal adheres to the ecological principles set out within the Ecological Assessment (inclusive of the Ecological Mitigation & Enhancement Plan submitted as part of the ecological information). Crucially, this includes the continued retention (and minor expansion) of a 2.85ha dedicated ecology area, amongst other semi-natural habitat provision, and a commitment for long-term, biodiversity led management. For clarity, **Table 6** below compares the ecological provision of the approved and proposed plans (source: Table 1 in the Ecology Briefing Note).

<b>Table 6: Comparison in post-development habitat provision between the approved development and S73 proposal.</b>			
<b>Habitat Type / Grouping</b>	<b>Approved development</b>	<b>S73 Proposal</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Combined built form and hardstanding	3.01ha	2.66ha	Reduction in built form reflects a reduction in hardstanding, and an increase in unmetalled surfacing (e.g. ecology car parks).
Semi-natural habitats (Grassland, Scrub, Woodland)	6.18ha	6.19ha	Net quantum of semi-natural habitat provision to remain effectively unchanged (minor increase in S73 proposals). Inclusive of SuDS,
Ephemeral / Perennial	0.82ha	1.16ha	Increase in S73 application reflects increased extent of unmetalled surfacing (e.g. ecology car parks) relative to hardstanding.
Total Site Area	10.01ha	10.01ha	

- 6.49 Additionally, a revised Ecological Mitigation & Enhancement Plan has been submitted as part of this application which retains the full suite of mitigation and enhancement identified previously.
- 6.50 The notes concludes that:
- The S73 proposal seeks to secure a comparable scale of development, albeit with a minor reduction in built form (inclusive of hardstanding) relative to semi-natural habitat provision;



- The ecological implications of the S73 proposal are assessed as positive but non-significant, noting the minor increases in habitat provision; and
- On the basis of the ecological safeguards previously secured through the Ecological Assessment (November 2019) and ecological planning conditions associated with the consented scheme (all of which remain relevant and should remain), it is therefore considered the S73 proposal remains equally appropriate in ecology terms. The application can therefore be safely granted, in accordance with relevant planning policy and legislation.

6.51 On a related matter, condition 22 of application 19/02708/OUT requires that:

*22. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the recommendations set out in the Ecological Assessment carried out by Ecology Solution dated November 2019.*

6.52 For the avoidance of doubt and with regard to the above, the proposed development is capable of being carried out in accordance with the recommendations of the November 2019 Ecological Appraisal. As such, there is no need to vary this condition in order to allow the design revisions. Resultantly, the proposed development remains compliant with Policy ESD10 and NPPF section 15.

#### **Other Matters**

6.53 **Proposed development:** As set out in section 3, the proposed development would make the same provision of employment floorspace and would maintain the land uses approved under application 19/02708/OUT while delivering an overall enhancement in terms of design and ecology. In this capacity, the proposal continues to support heritage, employment and community uses and thereby continues to secure a long-lasting economically viable future for the Bicester Motion site in a manner that complies with the other relevant plan policies (notably ESD10 and ESD15). As such, the proposal continues to accord with Policy Bicester 8.

6.54 **Impact on gliding:** As the scale and siting of the proposed development remains broadly similar to the approved development, it is considered that the proposal would not result in any significant additional impact upon gliding activities. It therefore follows that the conclusions of the 19/02708/OUT Committee Report that “...*the independent advice is clear that gliding activities and general aviation could continue on site if this development is permitted*” remains applicable and that “... *with regard to gliding/aviation, the proposals are considered to fully accord with Policy Bicester 8*”.

6.55 **Transport:** Notwithstanding the proposed changes to the site layout, including the siting of internal routes and parking provision, the access point to the public highway shall remain as approved. In addition, as the floorspace provision and land uses shall remain as approved, it is considered that the transport impacts in terms of accessibility, strategic transport and traffic generation would remain consistent with the approved development. As such, the proposal remains compliant with Policy SLE 4 and NPPF section 9.

6.56 **Residential amenity:** Given the quantum of development and land use proposed remains as approved, it therefore follows that the conclusions of the 19/02708/OUT Committee Report that “*The type of employment development proposed is similar to the employment site (Link 9) immediately adjacent to the application site. The proposal would have no greater impact than the existing situation*”





*with employment uses in this area... it is not considered that this development would cause any detrimental impact to residential amenity* remain applicable. As such, the proposal remains compliant with Policy ESD 15 and NPPF section 12.

- 6.57 **Flood risk and drainage:** The proposed development would not have any significant implications in terms of flooding and drainage in comparison to the approved development. The revised design is capable of integrating a surface water drainage scheme based upon the principles established in the approved Flood Risk and Drainage Assessment (dated November 2019). As such, the proposal remains compliant with Policy ESD 6 and NPPF section 14.
- 6.58 **Environmental impacts:** The proposed development would not have any significant implications in terms of environmental impacts in comparison to the approved development and, as such, the officer assessment in the Committee Report remains applicable. Resultantly, the proposal remains compliant with Saved Policy ENV12 and NPPF section 15.
- 6.59 **Energy efficiency:** The approach to sustainability is set out in the accompanying DAS Addendum which demonstrates how the outline proposals incorporate positive low carbon design principles. In terms of assessment, Committee Report of application 19/02708/OUT confirms that *"...as the application is submitted in outline with all matters reserved except for access, and given the heritage constraints of the site, it is acceptable for this matter to be dealt with at the reserved matters stage when full design details are considered"*. The proposal would not have any significant implications in comparison to the approved scheme and, as such, this assessment remains applicable.
- 6.60 **Planning obligations:** The revised scheme would not have any implications in terms of the planning obligations agreed under application 19/02708/OUT.



## 7 Conclusion

- 7.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Bicester Motion, in support of an application for the '*variation of condition 3 (approved plans and documents) of application 19/02708/OUT to allow for design changes*' at the Innovation Quarter, Bicester Motion, Buckingham Road, Bicester OX26 5HA.
- 7.2 In summary, this application seeks to improve the design of the approved outline scheme whilst retaining its broad principles and characteristics. The proposed organic masterplan approach is considered to improve the connection and relationship of the Innovation Quarter with its historic site context, enhance its integration with the landscape, reduce its impact upon the proximate heritage assets and deliver more attractive building proportions and practical layout functionality that better meet the needs of future tenants.
- 7.1 Having regard to the above heritage and planning assessments, this statement concludes that the proposal complies with both the development plan and relevant material considerations in respect to the following matters:
- **Parameters:** By virtue of the organic masterplan approach and its overarching enhancements (listed at paragraph 7.2), the proposed development is considered to embody a high quality standard of design. It is appropriate in terms of layout, scale, massing and design and thusly respects the character of the site and its surroundings in accordance with Policies ESD 15 and Bicester 8, Saved Policy 28 and NPPF sections 12, 15 and 16 (the latter two of which are addressed in the following sections).
  - **Historic environment:** The proposal is considered to generate a lower level of less than substantial harm in comparison to the approved development. It achieves this while maintaining all of its significant heritage and wider benefits (which justified the original development), while enhancing the design. As such, the proposal is considered to conserve and enhance the significance, setting, character and appearance of all identified heritage assets and the wider historic environment in accordance with Policies Bicester 8 and ESD 15, Saved Policies C23 and C25 and NPPF section 16.
  - **Natural environment:** The proposal would generate some localised landscape impacts, however these would be comparable to, if not lesser than those of the approved development. As such, the proposal is considered to respect and enhance the local landscape and especially the openness and views of the airfield, including its landmark features in accordance with Policy ESD 13, Saved Policy C7 and NPPF section 15.
  - **Ecology:** The proposal continues to safeguard protected species and habitats while facilitating a net gain in biodiversity. It is capable of being carried out in accordance with the recommendations of the November 2019 Ecological Appraisal. As such, it complies with Policy ESD 10 and NPPF section 15.
  - **Other matters:** The proposal is not considered to have any significant implications in respect of the principle of development, gliding, transport, residential amenity, flooding and drainage, environmental health, energy efficiency or planning obligations.



- 7.2 Having regard to the above, the proposal accords with the development plan, as well as the relevant material considerations. As such, the proposal is considered to comply with the presumption in favour of sustainable development and it is therefore respectfully requested that planning permission be granted without delay.



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