

<b>Application number(s):</b>	23/01941/F
<b>Application site:</b>	Bicester Heritage Buckingham Road Bicester
<b>Proposal:</b>	Variation of Condition 3 (plans) of 19/02708/OUT - To vary the approved parameter plans

<input type="checkbox"/>	Listed Building	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Conservation Area	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Setting of a Listed Building
<input type="checkbox"/>	Grade I	<input type="checkbox"/>	Grade II*	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Grade II

### Policies

#### **Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (2015)**

- Policy ESD15** New development proposals should: Conserve, sustain and enhance designated and non-designated 'heritage assets' including buildings, features, archaeology, conservation areas and their settings, and ensure new development is sensitively sited and integrated, furthermore development should respect the traditional pattern of the form, scale, and massing of buildings.

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

- C18** Works to a listed building should preserve the building, its setting, and any features of special architectural or historic interest. Alterations or extensions to a listed building should be minor and sympathetic.
- C23** Presumption in favour of retaining positive features within a Conservation Area.
- C28** The layout, design and materials proposed within a new development should respect the existing local character. 'control will be exercised over all new development to ensure that standards of layout, design and external appearance are sympathetic to the character of the urban or rural context of that development.

#### **NPPF – Chapter 16**

- Paragraph 199.** When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.
- Paragraph 200.** Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:
- grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;
  - assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II\* listed buildings, grade I and II\* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly Exceptional.

**Paragraph 201.** Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:  
a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and  
b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and  
c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and  
d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

**Paragraph 202.** Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

**Paragraph 203.** 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 directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

#### Other Relevant Policies and guidance

#### Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

**Section 16.** In considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

**Section 72.** With respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

#### Significance (50 words)

The site lies within the RAF Bicester conservation area within the southeastern part of the airfield (The Flying Field character zone). RAF Bicester is recognised as a rare survival of a 1930s military airbase which evidences Hugh Trenchards 1930's military offensive strategy in its layout, building design, use and functional interrelationships between the buildings. The survival of RAF Bicester owes much to its limited use during and after the war. The flying field retains the form and extent of runways that would have existed at the outbreak of war in 1939 and this is special because the grass runways survive and were never 'upgraded' to concrete. The airfield is protected principally for its 1920's origins, however the WWII additions are also important as they tell the story of the airfield as a whole and its development. The application site contains mushroom pillboxes and a seagull trench that form part of the Scheduled Monument.

Because of its location the application site is also considered to be within the setting of a number of Listed buildings, these include the hangers and other buildings that make up the historic technical site.

The significance of the RAF Bicester Conservation Area is that it is a rare survival of a 1930's military airbase with the remains of a 1920's airfield. However within the conservation area individual

elements contribute to the overall significance but also have significance in their own right. The historic technical site contains a number of Listed Buildings and structures that are significant because of their role in the operation of the airfield. The flying field is significant because it is key to the function and legibility of the site, and it also physically retains its pre 1939 form. Lastly the defensive structures and other associated structures around the flying field are of significance due to the fabric that remains and their illustration of historical airfield defences. The interrelationships between these elements probably makes the strongest contribution to significance.

#### **Appraisal (250 words)**

The Listed Buildings of the technical site, the Scheduled Monuments, and the flying field together all make up the character of the conservation area.

The previously approved outline application was for development to the southeast of the conservation area within the Flying Field character zone on land that is adjacent to Skimmindish Lane and the existing large industrial/storage buildings that sit outside of the conservation area. This application proposes changes to the previous indicative layout which includes an increase in the number of buildings.

As with the approved scheme the location on the southeast edge of the conservation area is considered to result in a limited impact on the technical site with its Listed hangers and other buildings. Therefore it is considered that there would be limited harm to the technical site character area and the historic assets located within it as a result of the development within their setting.

The impact to the Scheduled Monument is still a point of concern. As previously stated, assessing the impact of development on a Scheduled Monument falls primarily within the remit of Historic England. However because of its significance and contribution to the RAF Bicester conservation area development that potentially affects the Scheduled Monument should in this instance also be considered as impacts to the conservation area. These defensive structures that form part of the Scheduled Monument were designed to have high visibility outwards and therefore the land around them was open in nature. As with the previous indicative layout it is considered that this new layout which still locates buildings close to the mushroom pillboxes and seagull trenches, will inevitably result in some harm due to the changes to their setting.

It is however accepted that development here has been approved previously and overall the benefits have been weighed against the harm in terms of principle. The new layout is considered to have some benefits over the previous layout. The parking has been moved to a more discrete location further from the Scheduled Monument and bomb stores and the proposed changes to create a less linear layout are considered to be acceptable. However the addition of extra buildings and moving them closer together has reduced the open nature and therefore there are concerns that the visibility through from the scheduled monument and its appreciation in an open setting will be further reduced or lost, resulting in a greater impact than that from the previous scheme. Historic England have raised this concern in their response, and this is agreed with.

In addition the previous layout included the retention of the pan handle in the southeast corner, this will be lost as part of this proposal. This is regrettable and it is suggested that the applicant seek to retain this and work it into the final landscaping scheme.

Creating more space and gaps between the buildings and planting and screening will be crucial to how the development sits within the landscape. These aspects will need to be carefully considered if the proposals progress to reserved matters to reduce harm.

**Level of harm**

No Harm

Less than Substantial Harm

Substantial Harm

**Public Benefit (NPPG)**

Yes

No

**Comments**

Due to the impact to the Scheduled Monument through development within its setting the proposal is considered to result in less than substantial harm to the RAF Bicester Conservation Area. The NPPF paragraph 202 states that harm should be weighed against the public benefit, and it is acknowledged that the wider benefit of the restoration and the continued viable use of the RAF Bicester site may outweigh the harm.

**Recommendation**

No objections

Concerns

Engage in preapp

**Suggested Conditions**

Conditions as per previous Permission.

**Conservation Officer:** Emma Harrison

**Date:** 11/10/2023