

EDGARS

Planning Statement

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

Proposal: Reserved matters application for appearance,
landscaping, layout and scale pursuant to outline
permission 23/01941/F

Prepared for: Bicester Motion

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Authorised by: Bicester Motion

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Edgars on behalf of Bicester Motion (the 'applicant'), in support of a reserved matters application for the '*appearance, landscaping, layout and scale pursuant to outline permission 23/01941/F*' at The Innovation Quarter, Bicester Motion, Buckingham Road, Bicester OX26 5HA (the 'site').
- 1.2 This submission follows the approval of applications 19/02708/OUT and 23/01941/F.
- 1.3 Outline planning permission was approved under application 19/02708/OUT 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*' on the 27th August 2021.
- 1.4 Subsequently, planning permission was approved under Section 73 application 23/01941/F for the '*variation of Condition 3 (plans) of 19/02708/OUT - To vary the approved parameter plans*' on the 12th October 2023.
- 1.5 This application provides the details of the layout, scale, appearance and landscaping (hereafter referred to as the 'reserved matters') as required by condition 2 attached to application 23/01941/F.
- 1.6 Please note, a concurrent application for the discharge of conditions 4 (phasing plan), 5 (Design Code), 6 (finished floor levels), 11 (Construction Travel Management Plan), 12 (turning area details), 13 (car parking), 16 (surface water drainage), 18 (contamination), 19 (scheme of remediation), 23 (Landscape and Ecology Management Plan), 24 (ecology check), 27 (EV charging) and 30 (Energy Strategy) attached to application 23/01941/F has also been submitted (Planning Portal ref. PP-12611626). While not necessary for the purposes of determining this application, this statement refers to the information submitted as part of the discharge of conditions application for information purposes and signposts the reader as necessary.

Application Rationale

- 1.7 The Innovation Quarter is a new knowledge economy area offering over 21,000sqm of state-of-the-art, multi-functional and highly adaptable floorspace to accommodate market-trending businesses in the pioneering mobility industry, located at the heart of the 'Motorsport Valley'.
- 1.8 The purpose of this application is to deliver The Innovation Quarter by demonstrating how, through the application of a very high build quality and comprehensive Landscape Masterplan, it successfully integrates into its highly distinctive and historic setting. As a result of the creative, characteristic and appropriate design approach adopted, it is considered that the proposed development respects the historic military aviation function of the site and harmonises with its unique landscape character while reflecting Bicester Motion's ambitious vision for The Innovation Quarter to become the hub of excellence for the mobility industry, to be an exemplar of constructive conservation and to achieve a low carbon future for the UK's leading destination for the past, present and future of mobility technology.
- 1.9 Having regard to the plans and supporting justification set out in submitted application package, this statement concludes that the proposed development aligns with the parameter plans and principles of the approved documents, it brings major business, industry and employment opportunities to



Bicester through a high quality and appropriately sensitive, yet ambitious and distinctive design solution that complements its context, respects its historic environment and satisfies all relevant technical considerations. As such, the proposed development is considered to accord with the development plan and the wider presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Document Structure

1.10 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 summarises how the proposal accords with the development plan and national policy.

Supporting Information

1.11 This application is accompanied by a Cover Letter which sets out the documents submitted as part of this application. Those 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 runs along the northern side of Skimmingdish Lane and is outlined at **Figure 1**.



Figure 1: The Innovation Quarter 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.
- 2.11 As mentioned in section 1, the site is subject to extant permissions 19/02708/OUT and 23/01941/F 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*' and subsequently for '*variation of Condition 3 (plans) of 19/02708/OUT - To vary the approved parameter plans*'. Please refer to section 4 for more information on the site planning history.
- 2.12 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.
- 2.13 The site is bounded by the Flying Field to the north, a large industrial development to the east, Skimmingdish Lane to the south (with the built up area of Bicester beyond) and the Commands Works / wider Technical Site to the west.



Access

- 2.14 At present, the main site access is via the South Gate onto the A4421 Skimmingdish Lane (also known as 'Gate 8', located 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 applications 19/02708/OUT and 23/01941/F.

Planning Designations

- 2.15 **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.
- 2.16 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.
- 2.17 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.
- 2.18 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).
- 2.19 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).
- 2.20 The site lies within an area of archaeological interest.
- 2.21 **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.
- 2.22 **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 involves the submission of design details for the '*appearance, landscaping, layout and scale pursuant to outline permission 23/01941/F*'.
- 3.2 The rationale of the proposed development is to deliver The Innovation Quarter and to demonstrate how it successfully integrates into its highly distinctive and historic setting. The Innovation Quarter is a new knowledge economy area offering over 21,000sqm of state-of-the-art, multi-functional and highly adaptable floorspace to accommodate market-trending businesses in the pioneering mobility industry at the heart of the 'Motorsport Valley'.
- 3.3 This application is supported by a Design and Access Statement (DAS) prepared by 3D Reid which describes the proposal in terms of its context, evolution and detailed design response. This section summarises the DAS and should be read in conjunction with it. In addition, the design response is steered by the Design Code which is submitted as part of the concurrent discharge of conditions application in order to discharge condition 5.
- 3.4 The reserved matters plans align with the parameters established under application 23/01941/F. In this capacity, the proposed development reflects the approved organic masterplan layout of seven evenly proportioned modular buildings, arrayed in a soft arc, which sensitively integrates with the landscape setting and gently winds around the scheduled monument to the north. The proposed site layout is illustrated at **Figure 2**.



Figure 2: The proposed site layout.

- 3.5 The proposed development is guided by the following key design principles:
- Introducing an organic and gently winding masterplan layout that improves the connection and relationship of the scheme with its historic context, enhances its landscape integration and reduces its impact on proximate heritage assets;



- Sensitively breaking up the built form massing to enable long views between the buildings to the open Flying Field;
- Orientating the buildings to face the scheduled monument and Flying Field, showing appropriate reverence for these historic features;
- Curving the developable area around the scheduled monument and locating the access, servicing and parking area to the rear of the buildings, away from the scheduled monument and the Flying Field;
- Setting the developable area back from the site frontage, behind significant blue and green infrastructure provision (i.e. natural water and vegetation features);
- Adopting a cohesive design approach through the application of the Design Code to ensure the individual buildings and overarching access and landscape proposals work collectively;
- Respecting the historic legacy of the airfield architecture while bringing it into the future with hanger-inspired forms, distinctive geometry and a contemporary high-quality aesthetic;
- Introducing highly sustainable buildings and low-carbon technologies in order to achieve a BREEAM 'Very Good' rating;
- Providing a 2.87-hectare Ecology Enhancement Area; and
- Softening the scheme and integrating it into the landscape with extensive planting, green amenity spaces and a landscape-integrated Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS).

3.6 The modular buildings are 36.2m long by 41.5m wide. They are two-storey in scale with eaves at 8m on the front elevation and 8.8m on the rear elevation, the ridge height is 10.5m in accordance with the Heights and Massing parameter plan. Each building is flanked by 1 or 2 slender single storey plant rooms (11m long by 5m wide and 2.5m high). The amount of plant rooms required would be determined by the future occupier. For the purpose of this application, two plant rooms are shown on the submitted plans. The proposed buildings are shown at **Figure 3**.



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



- 3.7 As mentioned above, the appearance of buildings is inspired by the aviation legacy of the historic airfield. In this capacity, the mixed-use floorspace is encased within a shell structure and reads as a large double-height structure, rather than a more typical two-storey office/industrial building.
- 3.8 At the same time, the elegant and sleek appearance of the buildings signifies Bicester Motion’s ambitious vision for The Innovation Quarter as the hub of excellence for mobility technology; this is reflected by the distinctive geometry, contemporary high-quality aesthetic and modern materials (including a standing seam system, patterned metal sheeting and metal-framed glazing).
- 3.9 The appearance of the building also reflects its sustainable design and construction. For example, the geometry and overhang provides solar shading to regulate heating, while framing views towards the Flying Field. As shown at **figure 4**, the building form also lends itself to the application of solar PV panels. In addition, the materials, energy efficient specifications and internal layout together influence the external appearance while achieving a highly energy efficient build – as demonstrated by the Energy Statement submitted as part of the concurrent discharge of conditions application.

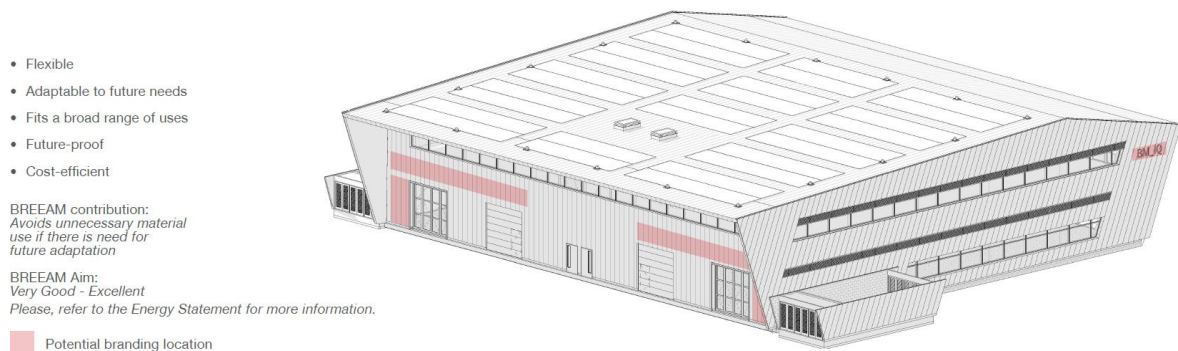


Figure 4: Extract from the DAS visualising the adaptable building strategy.

- 3.10 The internal layout of the buildings is designed to be highly adaptable; each building can be used as a single large unit or subdivided as necessary – as illustrated by the floorplan options. The taller floor to ceiling heights also allow for the flexibility and functionality of the floorspace to be maximised.
- 3.11 The development is set within a comprehensive Landscape Masterplan (contained within the DAS) that is designed by MacGregor Smith. The Masterplan reinforces the vision for The Innovation Quarter by celebrating the site’s historic legacy, reintroducing nature and a multi-functional landscape and creates a green environment to foster creativity. It achieves this through adherence to a series of principles which include defining landscape character areas, routes and connections, SuDS integration, outdoor amenity spaces, heritage features and multi-functional spaces.
- 3.12 The Landscape Masterplan is shown at **figure 5** and it comprises three landscape character areas:
- The Airfield Heritage Grassland which embraces the character of the Flying Field with its sweeping open nature, long views and grassland planting, integrates the Defence Structures of the schedule monument and introduces the Ecology Enhancement Area;
 - Innovation Buildings area which reflects the functionality and industry of the proposed development, integrating it into the landscape and separating the building forms with planting and other landscape features; and the



- Skimmingdish Lane Boundary which draws on the wider natural landscape and softens the proposed development with extensive planting proposals and green and blue SuDS infrastructure features, including the swales and attenuation basins.



Figure 5: Extract from the DAS showing the Landscape Masterplan.

- 3.13 The Landscape Masterplan has been designed in tandem with the Landscape Ecology Management Plan (LEMP), which has been submitted under the concurrent discharge of conditions application as required by condition 23 of application 23/01941/F.
- 3.14 The access to the public highway is to remain as approved under the outline consent. The internal site access arrangements are essentially to remain as per the parameter plans. Changes are proposed to the car and cycle parking provision, insofar as the provision is to be reverted to the level approved under the original outline consent, with that being 348 car parking spaces (of which 88 would have Electric Vehicle charging points) and 224 cycle spaces.
- 3.15 The DAS also sets out the lighting strategy, surface water management plan and development phasing for information purposes only. For the avoidance of doubt, the surface water management and development phasing details align with the plans and reporting submitted under the concurrent discharge of conditions planning application as required by conditions 4 and 16.
- 3.16 Section 1 of the DAS sets out the key changes made to the proposed development following application 23/01941/F. In summary, the building designs have been developed at greater detail and revised to achieve a more elegant and unified appearance. The elevations and roof features have been simplified to minimise visual impact and to allow for more user flexibility.
- 3.17 Of particular note, the parking area has been re-designed as a more coherent layout that runs along the winding access road, rather than a series of parking forecourts that project towards Skimmingdish Lane. This revised layout achieves a betterment in terms of soft landscaping provision.



4 Planning History

- 4.1 The planning records of relevance to this application include those relating to the Innovation Quarter (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
23/01941/F	Variation of Condition 3 (plans) of 19/02708/OUT - To vary the approved parameter plans.	Approved	12/10/2023
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.	Approved	27/08/2021

- 4.2 Application 19/02708/OUT was considered at Planning Committee on the 16th July 2020 and Members resolved that authority be delegated to the Assistant Director of Planning and Development to grant permission, subject to conditions. The key comments of the Committee Report are not repeated here as they are largely updated by the officer assessment of application 23/01941/F.
- 4.3 Application 23/01941/F was determined under delegated powers. The key comments of the Delegated Report that are pertinent to the consideration of this application are set out below:
- **Principle of development:** *“The principle of development has been established under application 19/02708/OUT.”*
 - **Parameters – heights, scale, massing and design:** *“The changes seek a more fluid approach to the layout by altering the developable areas to allow for the buildings to be positioned in a curve rather than a linear approach. The changes would also allow for the parking and servicing to be located to the south of the buildings away from the edge of the flying field.”*
 - *“...the proposed changes do offer the potential to improve the visual appearance of the development when viewed from the airfield.”*
 - *“...the proposed buildings will still sit at a lower height than the neighbouring commercial units and a lower height than the larger aircraft hangars situated within the historic Technical Site.”*
 - *“...a cohesive design approach is 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.”*



- **Heritage:** *“The proposed amendments do not significantly alter the potential relationship between the proposed development and the wider former RAF Bicester site. The principle and indicative scale of the development has been previously accepted.”*
- *“Concerns have been raised by Historic England regarding the relationship between the Schedule Monuments (mainly the sea gull trenches – defence features) and the indicative layout of the proposed development. In particular concerns relate to impact on the ‘field of vision’ from the seagull trenches.”*
- *“The parameter plans set out maximum areas for development, which have the flexibility to be adjusted with particular consideration to the Scheduled Monument, but which also show scope to provide gaps between some of the buildings to protect key views. Furthermore, the architectural style of the buildings can be carefully considered to ensure they are understood as a new yet complementary addition to the site rather than confusing the historic context; in this location the site would be capable of adopting a modern architectural style that takes references from the historic architecture rather than trying to replicate it.”*
- *“The proposal offers the opportunity to ensure appropriate landscape management is agreed for the land surrounding the Scheduled Monument. This would better reveal the structures and their relationship with other structures around the site, therefore improving the understanding of the defence structures as a whole.”*
- *“Furthermore, the development of this area of the site has the potential to provide access to the Scheduled Monument for staff/visitors at the site.”*
- *“It was previously concluded that the proposal also offers other significant public benefits from an economic point of view. The proposal will provide business uses creating jobs and supporting the local economy. The site owners have a track record of supporting high quality apprenticeship schemes on the site and this proposal includes educational facilities to support further schemes.”*
- *“When considering the revised proposal against the test set out in paragraph 202 of the NPPF, it is considered that the public benefits of the scheme would outweigh the ‘less than substantial harm’ caused by the proposal.”*
- **Landscape:** *“In terms of landscape and visual impact, the proposed amendments do not significantly alter the scheme.”*
- *The Council’s Landscape Officer has raised no objection to the amended proposal in terms of landscape and visual impact.”*
- *“It is considered that the development can be designed to sit sensitively within its setting and design can be used to mitigate landscape impacts.”*
- **Ecology:** *“The amended scheme would not alter the approach to ecology at the site. When reserved matters are submitted, the applicant will still be required to demonstrate that the required biodiversity net gain can be provided.”*



- **Transport:** *“The proposed amendments do not alter the position/size of the proposed access which is the only ‘matter’ considered in detail on the original outline planning permission.”*
- *“The amended indicative layout plan shows a form of development that would accommodate parking and internal access roads to the south of the buildings... This alteration is acceptable in principle.”*

“The Local Highway Authority has raised an objection to the application because the supporting documents show an increased level of parking provision could be accommodated on the site and suggests a reduced provision of cycle parking... I would not consider the Local Highway Authority’s objection to warrant a reason for refusal because these matters would be addressed at the reserved matters stage.”

[The level of car and cycle parking has been revised to the provision made under application 19/02708/OUT which was supported by the LHA.]

- **Residential amenity:** *“As previously concluded the type of development proposed is not expected to result in harmful levels of noise and would have a similar relationship with residential properties as the existing commercial development on Skimmingdish Lane. The proposed amendments would not alter the proposal in a way that resulted in a harmful impact on residential amenity.”*
- **Other matters (flooding and drainage):** *“The amendments [now approved] would not alter the approach to drainage on the site and the Lead Local Flood Authority have raised no objections to the proposal. The previously imposed conditions relating to flood risk and drainage will be re-imposed on this consent.”*
- **Other matters (environmental protection):** *“The previous application was submitted with a Phase 1 Contaminated Land and Ground Condition report which concluded the application site is of low risk from contaminants and it is unlikely that ground conditions or potential pollutant sources would have a significant impact on industrial or commercial development and the associated receptors identified. The amendments [now approved] do not alter the nature of the development proposed and therefore... Previously imposed conditions relating to potentially contaminated land will be reimposed on this consent.”*
- **Other matters (Energy efficiency/sustainability):** *“Application 19/20708/OUT considered energy efficiency... It was concluded that these matters would be dealt with at the reserved matters stage when full design details were being considered. Energy efficiency measures will need to be carefully balanced against heritage considerations at the design stage.”*
- **Planning obligations:** *“Application 19/02708/OUT was subject to a Section 106 agreement with respect of highways obligations... the legal agreement would be linked to this consent and a further legal agreement is not required”.*



Reference	Description	Decision	Date
21/01224/OUT (Experience Quarter)	<i>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).</i>	Approved	31/03/2023
18/01333/F (Command Works)	<i>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</i>	Approved	03/09/2019
18/01253/F (Hotel)	<i>Erection of hotel and conference facility with associated access, parking, and landscaping.</i>	Approved	11/03/2019

- 4.4 The above site history represents the four major developments that have been permitted on the wider Bicester Motion site; the Hotel, Command Works, the Innovation Quarter and the Experience Quarter. In addition, the historic 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.
- 4.5 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 September 2023, 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); and
 - 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 September 2023).
 - National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) (published July 2019).
 - Cherwell Local Plan 2040 (emerging).
 - RAF Bicester Planning Brief and Draft Development Principles (2009); and
 - 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	Paragraphs
2. Achieving sustainable development	8 and 11
4. Decision making	38
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
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 the most recent stage of consultation being a consultation draft (regulation 18) that ran between the 22nd September to 3rd November 2023.
- 5.8 Policy Bicester 8, the allocation which the site falls within, is proposed to be updated to Core Policy 75: Former RAF Bicester. The draft wording of this policy (from the consultation draft (regulation 18) September 2023 version) is copied below:

Core Policy 75: Former RAF Bicester: *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 and the 2009 Planning Brief.

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.

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 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:

- Principle of development
- Design (layout, scale, appearance and landscaping)
- Heritage
- Landscape
- Ecology
- Other matters, including:
 - Impact on gliding
 - Residential amenity
 - Transport
 - Flooding and drainage
 - Environmental protection
 - Energy efficiency/sustainability
 - Planning obligations

Principle of Development

6.2 The principle of providing a mix of business, industrial and storage uses with an education component (Classes B1 / now E(g), B2, B8 and D1 / now F1(a)) in the form of several mixed-use units has been established by the granting of outline planning permission under application 19/02708/OUT. This consent also established parameters for the reserved matters, albeit these parameters were revised under the application 23/01941/F which established updated parameters in respect to the following design elements:

- Layout
- Developable area
- Land uses
- Open space / landscaping
- Heights and massing

6.3 It should also be noted that a phasing plan has been submitted as required by condition 4 under the concurrent application for the discharge of all pre-commencement planning conditions attached to the outline planning consent (including those listed at paragraph 1.6).

6.4 As such, this application seeks to demonstrate that the submitted layout, scale, appearance and landscaping (reserved matters) proposals for the Innovation Quarter are consistent with the parameters and principles established by the outline permission. In this regard, the submitted proposals reflect the type and quantity of development approved at outline and the proposed design solution complies with the abovementioned parameters and is therefore considered acceptable.

6.5 Having regard to the above, 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. As such, the proposal continues to accord with Policy Bicester 8.



Design

- 6.6 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.
- 6.7 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.
- 6.8 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.
- 6.9 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).
- 6.10 In accordance with the requirements of the above policies, the application package, specifically the DAS and this statement, demonstrates how the proposed development has been informed by a detailed analysis of the site context in order to form the conservation and landscape-led principles (including those listed at paragraph 3.5) that underpin the reserved matters design solution. The reserved matters (layout, scale, appearance and landscaping) are addressed in turn below.
- 6.11 **Layout:** In terms of compliance with the parameter plans, the proposed site layout either accords with the approved parameter plans or, in the case of the parking and soft landscape provision, represents an improvement. In this capacity, the buildings are situated within the approved developable area of the corresponding plan and are sited and oriented as illustrated on the approved Indicative Layout Plan.
- 6.12 As mentioned at paragraph 3.17, the parking provision has been reconfigured and now closely follows the access road, allowing for more soft landscaping along the site frontage. This represents a clear enhancement as the proposed development would be better softened and the site frontage landscaping would be unbroken (which is beneficial in terms of ecology). Otherwise, the proposed site layout accords with the approved Open Space / Landscape plan. For the avoidance of doubt, the land uses remain as per the approved Land Uses plan.
- 6.13 Given the above, the reserved matters layout delivers on the benefits over the original consent as highlighted by Officers in the Delegated Report of application 23/01941/F. This includes introducing a *“more fluid approach to the layout”* that would *“allow for the parking and servicing to be located to the south of the buildings away from the edge of the Flying Field”*. These benefits are further built upon by the scale, appearance and landscaping proposals.
- 6.14 Turning to the detailed design justification, the proposed layout represents an organic masterplan comprising seven evenly spaced and proportioned modular buildings arrayed in a gently winding arc which faces towards the Flying Field, winds around the scheduled monument to the north and curves away from the site frontage to the south.



- 6.15 This layout loosely reflects the alignment of the Perimeter Track and dispersal tracks and harmonises with the curving historic railway line route forming the northern site periphery. The soft arc masterplan, together with the gaps between the buildings also maximises long views over the Flying Field, has appropriate reverence for the scheduled monument and Flying Field and improves the connection and relationship of the scheme with its historic context.
- 6.16 In addition, the proposed layout facilitates significant blue and green infrastructure provision along the site frontage in the form of an unbroken landscape buffer. This buffer features attenuation basins, swales, wet woodland and other tree planting, plus species rich grassland. Collectively, this infrastructure softens the proposed layout and integrates it into the landscape.
- 6.17 Overall, the proposed layout accords with the parameter plans, improves the connection and relationship of the scheme with its historic context, enhances its landscape integration and reduces its impact on proximate heritage assets and is therefore considered acceptable.
- 6.18 **Scale:** The proposed development accords with the 10.5m building height limit set by the approved Heights and Massing parameter plan. In this respect, the built form will continue to sit at a notably lower height than the neighbouring commercial units and aircraft hangers within the Technical Site.
- 6.19 Through the detailed design process, the building heights have been further downscaled and this is illustrated by the iterative approach in the DAS, copied at **figure 6**. The front elevation eaves are lowered to 8m and the rear elevation eaves are lowered to 8.8m. Resultantly, the modular buildings now present a reduced scale towards the Flying Field and Skimmingdish Lane. In addition, the geometric building forms also break up the massing of the development.

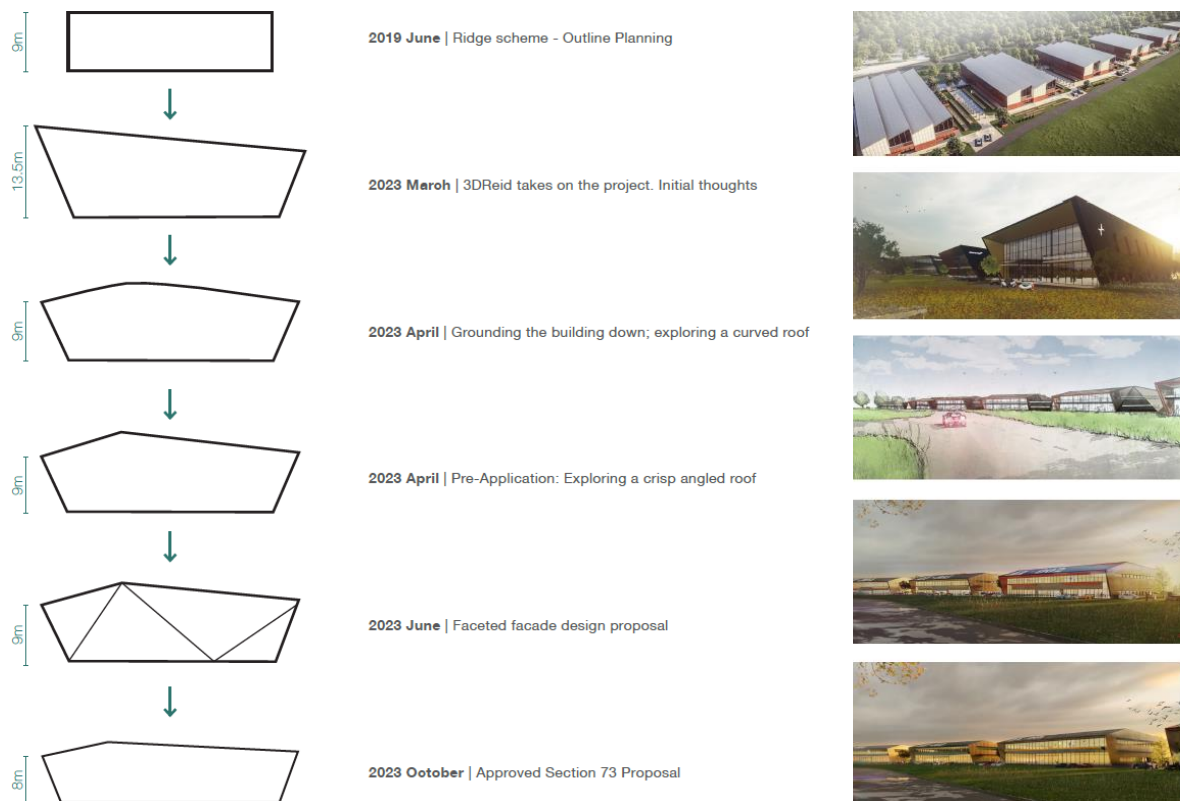


Figure 6: Extracts of the DAS showing the downscaling of the buildings.



6.20 As such, the proposed built form scale accords with the approved parameter plans and has been further downscaled to better respond to its context and break up its massing.

6.21 **Appearance:** No parameter plans have been established for the appearance of the buildings. Nonetheless, visualisations of the modular buildings were provided in the DAS Addendum submitted at outline and the proposed appearance of the buildings aligns with these visualisations.

6.22 In order to ensure a cohesive design approach at the reserved matters stage, Officers recommended that the buildings be guided by a Design Code. This code has been submitted as part of the concurrent discharge of conditions application and, as recommended by Officers, has been applied to the proposed development. Resultantly, the individual buildings and overarching aspects of the reserved matters share a common architectural language and thus work collectively in this regard.

6.23 As explained in section 3, this architectural language is the product of three components:

- Having reverence for and taking inspiration from the military aviation forms and function of the historic airfield;
- Reflecting the ambitious vision of The Innovation Quarter as the hub of excellence for the past, present and future of mobility technology; and
- Reflecting the sustainable design and construction of the buildings, their adaptability and the wider low-carbon future for the site.

6.24 In this capacity, the proposed modular buildings are inspired by hanger forms; the buildings are rectilinear and substantive, encased within a shell structure and read as double-height structures with overhangs and an open frontage (rather than traditional business/employment buildings). The future vision for The Innovation Quarter is reflected in the elegant and sleek appearance of the buildings which is the result of the distinctive geometry, contemporary high-quality aesthetic and modern materials palette proposed (shown at **figure 7**). In addition, the sustainable design and construction is also reflected in the contemporary design features and materials palette.

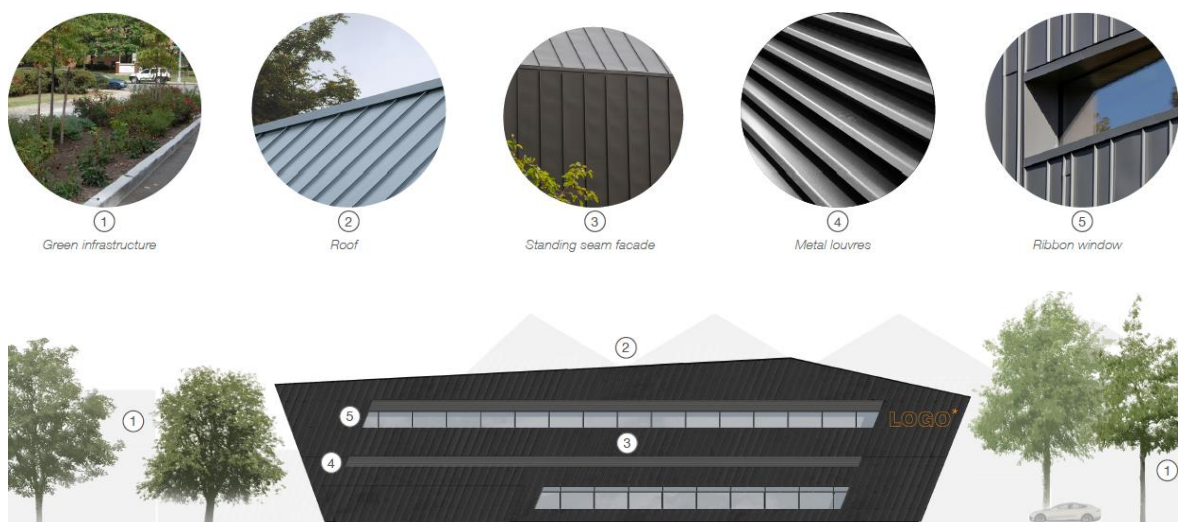


Figure 7: Extract from the DAS showing the side elevation with the proposed materials palette.



- 6.25 In the Delegated Report of application 23/01941/F, Officers acknowledged that the approved parameter plans “do offer the potential to improve the visual appearance of the development when viewed from the airfield” and it is considered that, as a result of the above, the proposed built form appearance realises this potential. Moreover, by virtue of adhering to the Design Code, the proposed built form appearance also reflects a cohesive design approach and is therefore acceptable.
- 6.26 **Landscaping:** The proposed Landscape Masterplan accords with the approved Open Space / Landscape parameter plan, with the key difference being the aforementioned re-configuration of the parking area, which allows for a greater landscape buffer along the site frontage.
- 6.27 As set out section 3, the Masterplan celebrates the site’s historic legacy, reintroduces nature and a multi-functional landscape and creates a green environment to foster creativity. The Masterplan is informed by six principles relating to character areas, connections, SuDS, amenity spaces, heritage and multi-functional spaces and it comprises three character areas; the Airfield Heritage Grassland, the Innovation Buildings / The Yards and Skimmingdish Lane Boundary.
- 6.28 The Landscape Masterplan includes extensive planting proposals, in addition to blue and green drainage infrastructure (see **figure 8**). The tree specimens have also been specifically selected with regard to their environment and function (see **figure 9**).



Figure 8: Extract from the DAS showing the proposed planting strategy and SuDS features.



Figure 9: Extract from the DAS showing the proposed tree types by character area.

- 6.29 The landscaping proposed for the Airfield Heritage Gateway involves the creation of the Ecology Enhancement Area through the retention and enhancement of the existing grassland. The existing Defence Structures would be linked by mown footpaths. In this capacity, the proposal respects the sweeping open nature, long views and grassland character of the scheduled monument area and the Flying Field.
- 6.30 The landscaping for the Innovation Buildings / The Yards area involves introducing amenity lawns and street trees in the gaps between the buildings and immediately adjoining the side elevations bookending the development. This landscaping helps to soften and separate the built form.
- 6.31 The landscaping for the Skimmingdish Lane Boundary area adopts a more natural landscape; it reinforces the existing planting along the site frontage with woodland planting and accommodates the blue and green SuDS infrastructure (including the attenuation basins and swales), which is interplanted by more water-suited specimens. The landscaping for this area forms a significant and natural landscape buffer which has been dramatically enhanced since the original 2019 consent.
- 6.32 Overall, the proposed landscaping softens the scheme, integrates it into the landscape and achieves a net gain in biodiversity through the provision of the 2.87-hectare Ecology Enhancement Area, extensive planting, green amenity spaces and a landscape-integrated Sustainable Drainage System.



6.33 **Summary:** Having regard to the organic masterplan layout, appropriate built form scale, the distinctive, yet characteristic built form appearance and the substantive landscaping proposed, the reserved matters proposals are considered to embody a high quality standard of design. Resultantly, the proposed development is considered to respect 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).

Heritage

6.34 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.

6.35 This policy broadly reflects the provisions of Saved Policies C23 and C25.

6.36 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.

6.37 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.

6.38 The Heritage Impact Assessment Addendum Report submitted in support of application 23/01941/F provides a Statement of Significance assessing the above-mentioned assets and remains relevant. Having regard to the similarity of the proposed development and the parameter plans and indicative visualisations, the assessment provided in that report and the subsequently submitted Comment on Historic England Advice note (which responded to the concerns raised by Historic England) is considered pertinent to the assessment of this application. Both documents are submitted for reference.

6.39 The report concludes that "*...the level of harm that would result from the IQ proposals would be less than substantial*" and it is acknowledged that the reserved matters proposals would also result in less than substantial harm. The report also notes that the revised parameter plans, which this reserved matters application accords with, included a range of design improvements that would lessen any level of heritage harm in order to better conserve and enhance the site and its setting.

6.40 The Conservation Officer similarly acknowledged that the revised scheme delivered some benefits over the original consent. The Officer's comments are recorded in the Delegated Report and state that "*...the new layout is considered to have some benefits over the previous layout*", with these benefits considered to include relocating the parking away from the scheduled monument and the [now approved] change to a less linear layout.



- 6.41 On the other hand, the Conservation Officer raised some concerns regarding the reconfiguration of the built form into more buildings separated by slightly smaller gaps than the original scheme, stating that the proposal “*reduced the open nature [of the site] 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*”. This reflected the comments made by Historic England who also raised concerns that one of the proposed buildings would be within the field of fire of the south-facing trench.
- 6.42 These issues were addressed in the Comment on Historic England Advice note, which is summarised below:
- The understanding of the south-facing trench and its field of fire have already been severely compromised by later C20 development. It is also likely that views would have been obscured by blast mounds and other military paraphernalia.
 - Nonetheless, the proposed development does maintain the potential appreciation of the south-facing trench. This is reflected by the adjusted alignment of the organic masterplan layout which gently winds around the schedule monument and thereby gives greater emphasis to the omni-directional design of the Defensive Structures.
 - In this respect, the proposal actively seeks to include the Defensive Structures as a positive component of the development, to use the juxtaposition between old and new build form to tell a powerful story that enhances the setting of the structures – This is consistent with the Historic England advice in ‘Historic Military Aviation Sites’ (2016).
 - Creating a gap between the units to suggest the historic line of fire would be unconvincing and would appear very artificial as a field of fire as well as being difficult to interpret. Additionally, creating a bespoke field of fire gap could unnecessarily compromise the cohesive design approach and coherent site layout, thereby potentially compromising the high quality of the design solution.
 - It is considered that the proposal capitalises on the sculptural qualities and history of the pillboxes and trenches, such that they would become key points of interest within the foreground of the development with a re-focused view out over the airfield. This will ensure future users have the opportunity to understand and enjoy the structures and the historic function they were designed to perform.
- 6.43 The Conservation Officer also noted that the pan handle area in the southeast corner of the site would be lost as part of the outline scheme parameter plans and suggested it be retained. Resultantly, the reserved matters scheme now retains the pan handle area and, as shown by the Landscape Masterplan, integrates this historic feature into development.
- 6.44 Officers further noted that “*planting and screening will be crucial to how the development sits within the landscape*”. Having regard to the extensive planting proposals as detailed in the Landscape Masterplan, it is considered that the proposed development introduces appropriately characteristic planting and substantive screening that successfully integrates the development into the landscape.
- 6.45 The Conservation Officer concluded that “*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”.

6.46 The Planning Officer conducted the heritage balance within the Delegated Report and concluded that “...*the public benefits of the scheme would outweigh the ‘less than substantial harm’ caused by the proposal.*” These heritage and wider public benefits include:

- **Heritage benefits:** 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 extensive landscaping enhancements to improve the 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;
- Improving access to the site (intellectual and physical);
- Improving 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.
- **Wider public benefits:** Contributing to the delivery of the Council’s objectives including sustainable economic growth as identified in this document;
- Helping to achieve a long-term commercially successful future for the wider site;
- Delivering substantial economic benefits to the town of Bicester and wider district;
- Providing public access to an otherwise closed and inaccessible site enabling understanding of this historic area;
- Revitalising an underutilised Previously Developed Site;
- Delivering a net gain in biodiversity; and
- Moving Bicester Motion towards a low carbon future.



- 6.47 As this reserved matters application is consistent with the approved parameter plans, it is therefore considered to deliver the same heritage and wider public benefits. Given that the level of harm is likely to be the same if not slightly less than the harm identified at the outline stage (due to the downscaling of the buildings, the high quality of the design solution and the above-mentioned revisions made to address the concerns of the Conservation Officer), it therefore follows that the less than substantial harm identified would be outweighed by these extensive benefits.
- 6.48 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.

Landscape

- 6.49 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.
- 6.50 Application 23/01941/F was accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) prepared by ASA Landscape Architects. The LVIA came 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.
- 6.51 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.
- 6.52 The Cherwell District Council Landscape Officer commented that *“the description of the positive changes that result from this revised design are convincing. The overall methodology, the base line study and the conclusions in respect of landscape and visual impacts and effects are acceptable.”*
- 6.53 The proposed design is consistent with the parameter plans, and is overall an improvement due to the decreased overall height of the buildings, as demonstrated by **figure 10** below.



Figure 10: Visual showing the reduced height and massing of the proposed buildings (from page 19 of the accompanying Design and Access Statement).

- 6.54 As outlined within paragraph 3.6 of this report, the buildings are two-storey in scale with eaves at 8m on the front elevation and 8.8m on the rear elevation, with the ridge height being 10.5m in accordance with the Heights and Massing parameter plan.
- 6.55 As such, the conclusions made within the LVIA submitted in support of application 23/01941/F remain valid for the purposes of this reserved matters application. When set within the context of the wider site, the 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.
- 6.56 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

- 6.57 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.
- 6.58 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.
- 6.59 Application 19/02708/OUT demonstrated that a biodiversity net gain could be achieved on the wider Bicester Motion site, with the following being stated:
- “The [Innovation Quarter] specific calculator indicated that those proposals would result in net loss, with a score of -6.2. However, an indicative site-wide calculator (including for the [Innovation Quarter] site) indicates that any losses may be mitigated within the masterplan as a whole, with a small positive score of +8.93 achievable.”*
- 6.60 The subsequent S73 application (ref. 23/01941/F) was supported by an Ecology Briefing Note which provided an ecological assessment of the revised scheme. The note concluded 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.
- 6.61 The Delegated Report of application 23/01941/F commented that *“the amended scheme would not alter the approach to ecology at the site. When reserved matters are submitted, the applicant will still be required to demonstrate that the required biodiversity net gain can be provided.”*
- 6.62 On the basis that it was concluded that, and agreed by the associated Delegated Report, that the revised parameter plans, which this reserved matters application is consistent with, would not alter the approach to ecology at the site, it is therefore considered that the proposed development would deliver a net gain in biodiversity as concluded by application 19/02708/OUT.
- 6.63 Whilst it is acknowledged that green roofs are not being included as part of the design of the buildings, it is considered that a biodiversity net gain is still achieved – this is reflected in the delegated report of 19/02708/OUT which states *“it is accepted if green roofs were included, they could give a greater score.”* This demonstrates that whilst the inclusion of green roofs would result in a great biodiversity net gain, their inclusion is not necessary to demonstrate a net gain.



6.64 As such, it is considered that the proposed development is consistent with policies ESD 10 and Bicester 8 of the adopted Local Plan. It should be noted that the concurrent discharge of conditions application (Planning Portal ref. PP-12611626) includes the Landscape and Ecology Management Plan for the Innovation Quarter, which provides further details on how the site will be managed for the next 25 years.

Other Matters

6.65 **Impact on gliding:** As the land uses, scale and siting of the proposed development remains broadly similar to the original outline scheme, it is considered that the proposal would not result in any significant additional impact upon gliding activities.

6.66 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*”.

6.67 As such, it is considered that the proposed development would not have an impact upon the gliding / aviation activities occurring at Bicester Motion in accordance with Policy Bicester 8.

6.68 **Residential amenity:** Given the proposed land uses, siting and scale of development remains as approved and having regard to the site context (specifically the significant separation of the proposed units from any residential development), it is considered that the assessment of application 23/01941/F, as set out in the Delegated Report, adequately assesses the likely impact of the reserved matters proposals:

“As previously concluded the type of development proposed is not expected to result in harmful levels of noise and would have a similar relationship with residential properties as the existing commercial development on Skimmingdish Lane. The proposed amendments would not alter the proposal in a way that resulted in a harmful impact on residential amenity”

6.69 As such, the proposed development is considered to comply with Policy ESD 15 and section 12 of the NPPF as the development would not result in any detrimental impacts to residential amenity.

6.70 **Transport:** The access point to the public highway shall remain as approved under application 19/02708/OUT (as the site access was approved in detail). The internal site access arrangements comply with the parameter plans approved under application 23/01941/F.

6.71 Condition 12 attached to application 23/01941/F requires that full specification details (including the construction, layout, surface finish and drainage) of turning areas be submitted and approved. This information is submitted under the concurrent discharge of conditions planning application and demonstrates that The Innovation Quarter makes adequate provision for the two-way movement and turning of motor vehicles, including HGVs, refuse vehicles and fire tenders. Given the reserved matters proposals fully align with the access arrangements submitted to discharge condition 12, it is considered that the proposed internal access arrangements are acceptable.

6.72 The Local Highway Authority objected to the increased level of car parking and reduced provision of cycle parking of 23/01941/F in comparison to 19/02708/OUT. In order to address this objection, the car and cycle parking provision has been revised to the levels approved under application



19/02708/OUT, that being 348 car parking spaces (of which 88 (25%) will have Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points) and 224 cycle parking spaces.

- 6.73 Conditions 13 and 27 attached to application 23/01941/F require that a vehicle parking plan and Electric Vehicle charging point details be submitted and approved. This information is submitted under the concurrent application and the reserved matters proposals fully align with the parking arrangements submitted to discharge these conditions 13 and 27.
- 6.74 In addition, as the floorspace provision and land uses shall remain as approved under 19/02708/OUT, 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 section 9 of the NPPF.
- 6.75 **Flooding and drainage:** The reserved matters scheme aligns with the technical drawings and maintenance and management plan submitted as part of the concurrent discharge of conditions application to satisfy condition 16 (surface water drainage). For information purposes, the drainage strategy has been slightly revised since the original outline consent. This is due to the original surface water disposal method (infiltration from the attenuation basins into the ground) requiring revision due to a shallow groundwater table.
- 6.76 The revised strategy involves a below ground surface drainage system that connects all new rainwater pipes, channels, and gullies at ground floor level and discharges firstly through permeable paving, into conveyance pipework which runs along the periphery of the car park into a series of attenuation basins. The run-off is then be discharged into the adjacent existing watercourse at the suitable Qbar rate.
- 6.77 The site is split into two areas to account for levels and increased SuDS methods. Permeable paving will be specified to all areas around the buildings as well as the car parks and bays. Open graded crushed rock will act as storage, while also conveying to the various basins, south of the site. Pipework will be kept at a minimal with only conveyance pipes used to discharge the run-off towards the basins. It will be a gravity system without the need for pumping.
- 6.78 In summary, the drainage report concludes that the new strategy disposes to the next hierarchical approach, in accordance with the SuDS hierarchy.
- 6.79 On the basis that the proposed drainage strategy submitted to discharge condition 16 is considered acceptable and as reserved matters details align with and therefore are able to accommodate the submitted drainage strategy, the proposed development is considered to be acceptable in terms of flooding and drainage. As such, the proposal complies with Policy ESD 6 and section 14 of the NPPF.
- 6.80 **Environmental protection:** The Delegated Report of application ref. 23/01941/F commented that:
- “The previous application was submitted with a Phase 1 Contaminated Land and Ground Condition report which concluded the application site is of low risk from contaminants and it is unlikely that ground conditions or potential pollutant sources would have a significant impact on industrial or commercial development and the associated receptors identified. The amendments [now approved] do not alter the nature of the development proposed and therefore... Previously imposed conditions relating to potentially contaminated land will be reimposed on this consent.”*



- 6.81 On the basis that this reserved matters application would not alter the nature of the proposed development, it is considered that the aforementioned Phase 1 Contaminated Land and Ground Condition Report is still applicable. The proposed development would not have any significant implications in terms of environmental impacts in comparison to the development as described at the outline phase, and resultantly the proposal remains compliant with saved policy ENV12 and section 15 of the NPPF.
- 6.82 It should be noted that Phase 2 Site Investigation and a Scheme of Remediation are being submitted as part of the concurrent discharge of conditions application in order to discharge the condition 18 and 19 attached to application 23/01941/F.
- 6.83 **Energy efficiency/sustainability:** The Committee Report of application ref. 23/01941/F states that: *“Application 19/20708/OUT considered energy efficiency and the requirements of Policies ESD 1-5 of the CLP 2015. It was concluded that these matters would be dealt with at the reserved matters stage when full design details were being considered. Energy efficiency measures will need to be carefully balanced against heritage considerations at the design stage.”*
- 6.84 A shell only building fabric Energy Strategy has been submitted as part of the concurrent discharge of conditions application in order to partially discharge condition 30. It addresses the energy strategy for the project and demonstrates how the scheme is compliant with local and regional planning policy.
- 6.85 The Energy Strategy demonstrates that the scheme is policy compliant, by achieving a BREEAM score of ‘Very Good’ and demonstrating that the buildings have been designed from inception to reduce carbon emissions and provide a comfortable, sustainable environment for the users.
- 6.86 On the basis that the proposed energy strategy submitted to discharge condition 30 is considered acceptable and as reserved matters details align with and therefore are able to accommodate the submitted energy strategy, the proposed development is considered to be acceptable in terms of ensuring sustainable development. As such, the proposal complies with policies ESD1 and ESD3 of the Local Plan.
- 6.87 **Planning obligations:** The revised scheme would not have any implications in terms of the planning obligations agreed under application 19/02708/OUT (which also apply to 23/01941/F, as noted in the Delegated Report of 23/01941/F).



7 Conclusion

- 7.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Edgars on behalf of Bicester Motion in support of a reserved matters application for the '*appearance, landscaping, layout and scale pursuant to outline permission 23/01941/F*' at The Innovation Quarter, Bicester Motion, Buckingham Road, Bicester OX26 5HA.
- 7.2 The Innovation Quarter is a new knowledge economy area offering over 21,000sqm of state-of-the-art, multi-functional and highly adaptable floorspace to accommodate market-trending businesses in the pioneering mobility industry, located at the heart of the 'Motorsport Valley'.
- 7.3 This submission builds upon the approval of applications 19/02708/OUT and 23/01941/F and seeks to deliver The Innovation Quarter in the form of seven very high quality modular buildings and a comprehensive Landscape Masterplan that successfully integrates the scheme into its highly distinctive and historic setting.
- 7.4 As a result of the creative, characteristic and appropriate design approach adopted, it is considered that the proposed development respects the historic military aviation function of the site and harmonises with its unique landscape character while reflecting Bicester Motion's ambitious vision for The Innovation Quarter to become the hub of excellence for the mobility industry, to be an exemplar of constructive conservation and to achieve a low carbon future for the UK's leading destination for the past, present and future of mobility technology.
- 7.5 The proposed development would deliver the following significant heritage and wider public benefits:
- **Heritage benefits:** 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 extensive landscaping enhancements to improve the 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;
 - Improving access to the site (intellectual and physical);
 - Improving 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.



- **Wider public benefits:** Contributing to the delivery of the Council's objectives including sustainable economic growth as identified in this document;
- Helping to achieve a long-term commercially successful future for the wider site;
- Delivering substantial economic benefits to the town of Bicester and wider district;
- Providing public access to an otherwise closed and inaccessible site enabling understanding of this historic area;
- Revitalising an underutilised Previously Developed Site;
- Delivering a net gain in biodiversity; and
- Moving Bicester Motion towards a low carbon future.

7.6 Overall and in light of the above, this statement concludes that:

- **Principle of development:** The principle of development has been established and the reserved matters proposals accord with the approved parameter plans.
- **Design:** The organic masterplan layout, appropriate built form scale, the distinctive, yet characteristic built form appearance and the substantive Landscape Masterplan proposals are considered to embody a high quality standard of design that 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.
- **Heritage:** The proposal is considered to generate a lower level of less than substantial harm. However, the level of harm has been reduced in comparison to the outline scheme by downscaling the buildings, proposing a very high quality build and introducing the Landscape Masterplan which notably softens the built form, integrates it into the landscape and preserves the panhandle area as recommended by the Conservation Officer. This reduced level of less than substantial harm is considered to be entirely outweighed by the significant heritage and wider benefits set out above. 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.
- **Landscape:** The proposal would generate some localised landscape impacts, however these would be comparable to, if not lesser than those of the outline consent (for the same reasons as those mentioned above in respect of heritage). 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 would 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 / is considered to be acceptable in respect of impact on gliding, residential amenity, transport, flooding and drainage, environmental protection, energy efficiency/sustainability and/or planning obligations

7.7 Having regard to the above, it is considered that the proposed development accords with the development plan and the other relevant material considerations. It is therefore respectfully requested that the application be considered favourably.



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