



SPY BICESTER HERITAGE

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT ADDENDUM
FEBRUARY 2024

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Worlledge Associates

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WORLLEDGE ASSOCIATES



Worlledge Associates is an Oxford-based heritage consultancy, committed to the effective management of the historic environment. Established in 2014 by Nicholas and Alison Worlledge, Nicholas came to private practice with over 35 years' experience working in heritage management for local authorities. This intimate knowledge and understanding of council processes, and planning policy and practice, helps us to work collaboratively with owners and decision-makers to manage change to the historic environment.

Our team of dedicated researchers and specialists believe in the capacity of the historic environment to contribute to society's collective economic, social, and cultural well-being. We aim to identify what is significant about places and spaces in order to support their effective management and sustain their heritage value. We have worked with a wide range of property-owners and developers including universities and colleges, museums and libraries, large country estates, manor houses, farmsteads, cottages, town houses and new housing sites.

INTRODUCTION



Outline planning permission was granted for new employment units on this site in August 2021 (19/02708/OUT). Ongoing review of this development proposal, which explored the opportunities to enhance the relationship with rest of the site, improve site layout and create flexibility and resilience for the future resulted in a further outline application varying some of the previously approved matters. The application was approved in July last year (23/01941/F).

There is now an anchor user identified for the equivalent floor space of three of the units and this requires a double height link to two new slightly wider buildings, much as envisaged in the 2021 outline approval. This full application provides details of the outcome of a further round of design review to address the project brief, but to continue the design principles imbedded in the two current approved applications. Further details are provided in the Design and Access Statement (3D Reid) and Planning Statement (Edgars).

Embedded in the design review remains the heritage led approach. As explained in the previous heritage reports, for Bicester Motion this means seeking to promote leisure,

tourism and business initiatives in a way that sustains what is special about the airbase, whilst creating something new, innovative and inspiring, as the next chapter in the site's history. The vision is to achieve this in a way that adds to people's understanding and enjoyment of a historic place, demonstrating that 'constructive conservation' is about embracing change for the benefit of the historic environment, the economy and for our health and wellbeing.

This addendum report should be read in conjunction with the earlier Heritage Impact Assessment (WA November 2019), which sets out in detail the history of the airfield with analysis of its heritage significance and the contribution that the setting of the affected heritage assets makes to that significance.

This report provides a summary of the airfield's significance before discussing how the changes will impact on significance and setting, in particular identifying where the proposed changes will better preserve or enhancement the character or appearance of the conservation area and the setting of the other designated heritage assets (scheduled ancient monuments and listed buildings).

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE



In brief the significance the site holds can be summarised as follows:

- The architecture and design of buildings and other structures is characterised by continued attempts to innovate and refine;
- High historic integrity with a significant number of surviving buildings and structures. In particular, the alignment of the perimeter track survives from its 1939 construction.
- Interrelationships as planned groups helps to explain how the site operated and the interdependence between buildings and spaces;
- The layout and routes connecting surviving structures, are key to our understanding the military logic that underpinned the base's development;
- It is a 'site of memory' evoking particular emotive and sentimental meanings and serving as spatial coordinates of identity, helping people to recall, recognise and localise their memories;
- Certain purpose-built structures within the site also provide a focus of commemoration and remembrance, for example the watch tower;
- The airbase evidences each period of airfield design;
- The spatial relationship within and between the core areas (Technical Site, Domestic Site, Married Quarters and Flying Field) with views across the flying field to the open countryside beyond;
- It is the most complete airbase to have survived from the pre- 1934 period without modification or adaptation;
- The different parts are unified by military purpose – a historically designed interdependence;
- The art and design of dispersal underpins the layout of buildings;
- There is a strong functional relationship between the siting of buildings and between the flying field and the structures that sit adjacent to it;
- The watch tower design and siting evidence its important functional role;
- The openness of the flying field (defined by the perimeter track).

PROPOSAL



The application proposes a double height link extension between units 401 and 402 (B1 and B2 on 23/01941/F indicative layout) 403 (B3) will not be constructed leaving space for servicing and storage.

It is proposed that the design aesthetic of the new units is maintained to ensure that the development of the IQ quarter delivers the intended sense of visual and functional cohesion. Further detail is provided in the Design and Access Statement (3D Reid).

ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

In assessing the impact of the amendments to the approved proposals on the site's significance (see 'Summary of Heritage Significance') it can be concluded that:

- The architecture and design of buildings and other structures is characterised by continued attempts to innovate and refine. The evidence the existing buildings hold to illustrate this will be unaffected. The proposed new buildings (though slightly widened) and use, will be consistent with the previous approvals and exhibit innovation and excellence, continuing the history of design that characterises the airfield;
- High historic integrity with a significant number of surviving buildings and structures. In particular, the alignment of the perimeter track survives from its 1939 construction. The alignment of the perimeter track will be unaffected, and it will continue to mark the limits of the flying field. The historic integrity of the surviving buildings will be preserved. The alignment of the buildings as proposed, is consistent with the 23/01941/F indicate layout and responds to the alignment of the perimeter track and shape of the flying field, helping to integrate the built form into the topographic framework of the airfield, reflecting the form of the 'waterfront' associated with the edge of the Technical Site;
- Interrelationships as planned groups helps to explain how the site operated and the interdependence between buildings and spaces. The spatial relationship between existing buildings and the functional interrelationship between buildings and spaces will be preserved. There is a symbiotic relationship between the proposed new use and other uses of the airfield that will continue this principle of interdependence that defines the character of the airfield;
- The layout and routes connecting surviving structures, are key to our understanding the military logic that underpinned the base's development. The layout of the airfield and the routes will be preserved. New buildings will be introduced into peripheral areas, but these are areas which lie outside the perimeter track in spaces which have already undergone change (e.g., road realignment, introduction and then loss of panhandle areas, a quarry);
- It is a 'site of memory' evoking particular emotive and sentimental meanings and serving as spatial coordinates of identity, helping people to recall, recognise and localise their memories; These memories will remain with the opportunity for the new development to create new experiences and new memories rooted in the site's history of innovation and experiment. The proposed new buildings, as part of the development of the IQ quarter will add to the opportunities for occupants and visitors to understand and enjoy this history and the memories the site holds. This will be achieved by providing greater opportunities to look over the airfield and engage with the viewing experience over the wide expanse of the grass flying field;
- Certain purpose- built structures within the site also provide a focus of commemoration and remembrance, for example the watch tower. The significance and setting of these structures will be preserved;
- The airbase evidences each period of airfield design. This evidence will not be lost. Clearly new development will change how we experience them but there is the potential for the changes to add to our experience and understanding of the place;
- The spatial relationship within and between the core areas (Technical Site, Domestic Site, Married Quarters and Flying Field) with views across the flying field to the open countryside beyond. The spatial relationship between the core areas will remain and understanding of the underlying design principles unaffected. The proposal will not result in the erosion of the trident layout, the openness of the flying field or the campus qualities of the Technical Site. Views out to the countryside and hills beyond will be maintained but the views will be affected by the new buildings that will form part of the approved IQ development. The views out have already changed over time with the growth of Bicester and will continue to do so as adjacent industrial estates are built out. This is part of the changing setting and context of the airfield. The proposed IQ buildings provide the opportunity to create buildings forms that will have a strong functional and visual connection with the present use of the airfield, helping to filter views of the surrounding more ordinary industrial and other buildings beyond the current perimeter of the site. The approved development of the IQ quarter will help to screen views of the adjacent industrial estate, but nevertheless providing a degree of permeability so that the built form will sit more loosely within the landscape. By locating the proposed new building at the eastern end of the IQ quarter the impact of the link between the two units on the setting of the scheduled ancient monuments is minimised and will help to secure a more significant gap (than approved) further west to allow views out;

- It is the most complete airbase to have survived from the pre-1934 period without modification or adaptation. This is a state that cannot be sustained without a viable future. The key components that give the site its significance will not be eroded – the Technical Site, the flying field, and the perimeter track, but the peripheral areas will be modified. That said, as explained earlier, the area covered by the IQ quarters has already undergone modification – as part of the 1940s expansion and then again when the panhandle areas were abandoned, and the quarry area closed;
- The different parts are unified by military purpose – a historically designed interdependence. These qualities that the site exhibits and the documentary archive that supports our understanding of the military purpose will be preserved;
- The art and design of dispersal underpins the layout of buildings; The underlying design principles that have governed the layout of buildings will be preserved and the physical evidence of that layout preserved. Indeed, the area selected for development – the peripheral areas are those that the MoD promoted for the future development of airfields in general and avoids infilling of the spaces within the Technical Site. The development facilitates a greater sense of permeability with a wide gap proposed adjoining it ;
- There is a strong functional relationship between the siting of buildings and between the flying field and the structures that sit adjacent to it; This relationship will be preserved;
- The watch tower design and siting evidence its important functional role. Understanding and experience of this role and the associations it connotes will be preserved, its isolated setting will be preserved;
- The openness of the flying field (defined by the perimeter track), This openness will be preserved with no development proposed within the perimeter track. The nature of the enclosure will change, and the presence of built forms will change how we experience the site boundaries. It should be remembered that the openness of the flying field is a consequence of its function and

not of any designed aesthetic. Whilst this results in an aesthetic experience that may hold some landscape value (see landscape report), that the proposed new building will have a functional relationship with other activities on the site resonates with the underlying historic design principles that influenced the site's layout. That the airfield is being slowly subsumed by the outward growth of Bicester is a historical inevitability and in doing so having a building as a part of the IQ quarter that offers some level of screen and camouflage to that growth will help to preserve the sense of isolation and undeveloped character of the flying field.

In relation to matters of setting it can be concluded:

- The setting of the hangars will be preserved;
- The setting of the bomb stores, in terms of their distance from the Technical Site will be preserved and thus their functional relationship. The more immediate setting will be changed which will result in a changed experience – not necessarily harmful, but certainly a new experience and one that will be an improvement on the existing state;
- The views out across the flying field from the watch tower and views back towards the watch tower will be preserved;
- A new opportunity to provide a greater degree of permeability and views beyond the flying field exists with the potential for a significantly wider gap between this proposed development and the next unit to the west.
- The views over the airfield from the surrounding public road network will change but these have no historical or functional significance;
- The setting of the defensive posts will be enhanced. This will be achieved through the wider landscape management that can be secured through the development of the IQ quarter. This proposed development is located away from the 'field of fire' and the creation of a wider gap between the units will help to enhance the setting of the monuments, creating more space between the trenches and pill boxes monuments and the proposed development.

NATURE OF IMPACTS

Both Historic England and Council officers concluded with the previous applications for the IQ quarter that the development of the site would result in 'less than substantial harm'. The primary source of this harm derives from the impact on the 'field of fire' of the defensive structures on this part of the airfield.

Historic England's previous advice (28th January 2020) made the following observations about the designed line of sight of the defensive structures and about the changed context:

Most of the various elements of the defensive system were intended to cover the airfield (this being the most likely site for an invasion), rather than being intended to defend the airfield from attack from the surrounding countryside. Because of this the intervisibility of the surviving defensive elements, the other components of the airfield and the flying field itself are critical.

While critical to the understanding of the operation of the seagull/mushroom complex itself, the south-west facing aspect - the direction of fire from the south-west seagull trench - can be considered to be of less significance than the north-east aspect in understanding how the complex fitted in to the overall system.

The proposed development will impact upon the appreciation of the function of the complex, insofar as it will make it harder to understand the operation of the south-west seagull trench because new buildings will effectively block much of the field of fire. It is the case that the setting in this direction has already been compromised to a degree by new buildings, but these are located some distance away across Skimmingdish Lane. There will therefore be harm to the significance of the historic asset.

Not only is there now modern industrial and housing development blocking the 'view', but also historic analysis shows that the alignment of Skimmingdish Lane has changed (affecting our understanding of the historic boundaries) and the panhandle areas that once extended beyond the existing airfield boundary have all been erased. This means that understanding of the south westerly field of fire has been severely compromised. Not only that, but it is also perhaps

worth remembering (though the evidence is now all gone) that the panhandle areas would have been enclosed by 'blast' mounds. Together with barrage balloons it seems unlikely that there would have been any south-west field of view and that perhaps it was never intended, but just the consequence of a standardised defensive structure design that would work in a range of different environments.

When assessing the previous (approved) proposals the Council officers confirm, in giving appropriate weight and importance to the duty to preserve and enhance designated heritage assets and their settings, that the harm that would result from the proposed development was justified and outweighed by the public benefits that would be delivered.

Paragraph 9.3 of the officer's delegated report (23/01941/F dated 12th October 2023) states:

Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposal is considered to cause less than substantial harm to the heritage assets at the site, this is considered to be outweighed by the public benefits derived from the proposal in terms of finding an economically viable use for this part of the site, providing many economic benefits to Bicester and the District and improving the historic relationship between the Scheduled Monument and the wider site to enable the defence structures to be appreciated in a collective manner and securing their long-term future.

This proposed development is consistent with the earlier approvals in creating two units linked by a double height element, cranked to maintain the 'waterfront' characteristic sited to create a significant improved sense of permeability at the east end of the IQ quarter. Conscious of Historic England's concerns about the setting of the scheduled monuments the link element has been carefully designed to afford a sense of permeability, reduced in scale so that it appears as a subservient element. Sited furthest away from the monuments this will ensure that any adverse impact is minimised and mitigated by the enhanced gap alongside, closer to the monuments. This would suggest that the heritage (and other public benefits) that would be delivered as a part of the development of the IQ quarter would continue to outweigh the harm, as discussed below.

HERITAGE BENEFITS



National policy requires that there should be compensatory public benefits to justify any harm and the revised NPPF makes clear that even a low level of harm should be given considerable importance and weight in terms of delivering the duty to preserve or enhance designated heritage assets. Public benefits include heritage benefits, and it is clear from the approved proposals that there will be significant heritage benefits that would outweigh any identified harm. Indeed, the local planning authority has accepted that the public benefits that would be delivered outweigh any harm. This proposed development, within the context of the development of the IQ quarter reduces the level of harm and introduces amendments to the layout and siting that provide greater opportunities to enhance our understanding and enjoyment of the historic airfield and how it functioned. The heritage benefits that will be delivered include:

- Sustaining the significance of the adjacent scheduled monuments by improving access, and repurposing and maintaining part of the site that is currently neglected and in poor condition;
- Introducing landscaping to enhance the existing setting of the defensive structures;
- Securing a long-term viable future for the site and its constituent elements;
- Ensuring that the heritage assets are not fragmented any further, focusing on the preservation and enhancement of the historical and visual interdependence;
- Improved access to the site (intellectual and physical);
- Opportunities for interpretation and enhancement of the embodied memories associated with the site;
- Creating new experiences that derive from the site's history of innovation and experiment, with the potential to add new chapters to the history of the place, which in turn will be valued by society;
- 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.

Further detail of the public benefits (including heritage benefits) is discussed in the Planning Statement (Edgars).

CONCLUSION



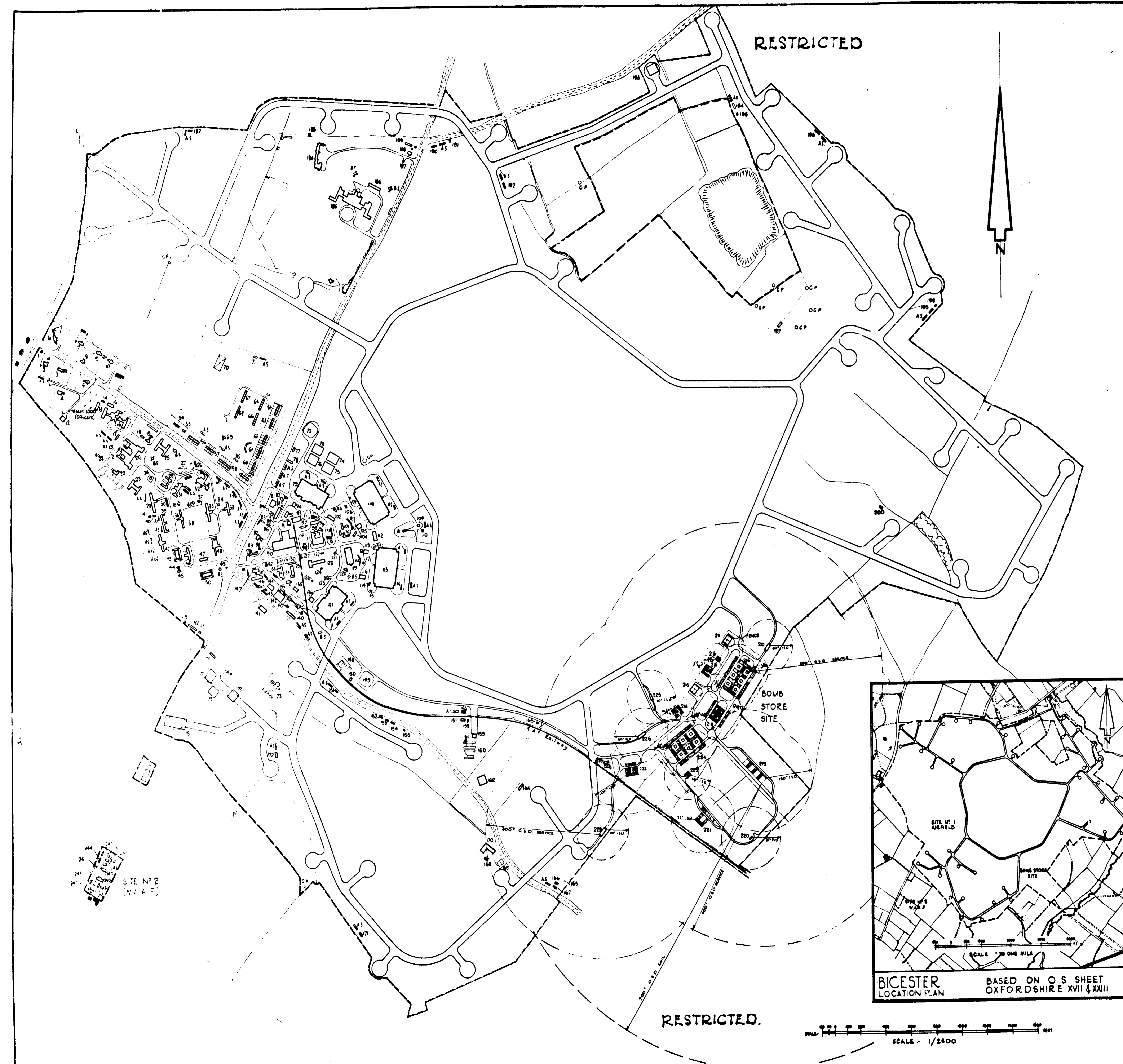
Throughout the design process the importance that the designated heritage assets possess in their own rights and the contribution they make to the sense of place has informed the evolution of the proposals, which are genuinely heritage led. The masterplan and delivery of the long-term strategy for the site will etch a new chapter into the history of the site, carving a new identity, but without erasing the site's history and the meanings that it holds for the local and wider community. This proposed development presents a significant opportunity for a

new business to build upon the site's history of technological innovation and creativity and the history of aviation. The design and floorplan of the proposed building will not impose on the site the site's definitive character, the buildings' form and function have been manipulated and adjusted so that the development will sit comfortably as a part of the wider re-purposing of this part of the airfield, delivering the sense of subservience to the main hangars that was always a key design principle.

RESTRICTED

SCHEDULE OF BUILDINGS

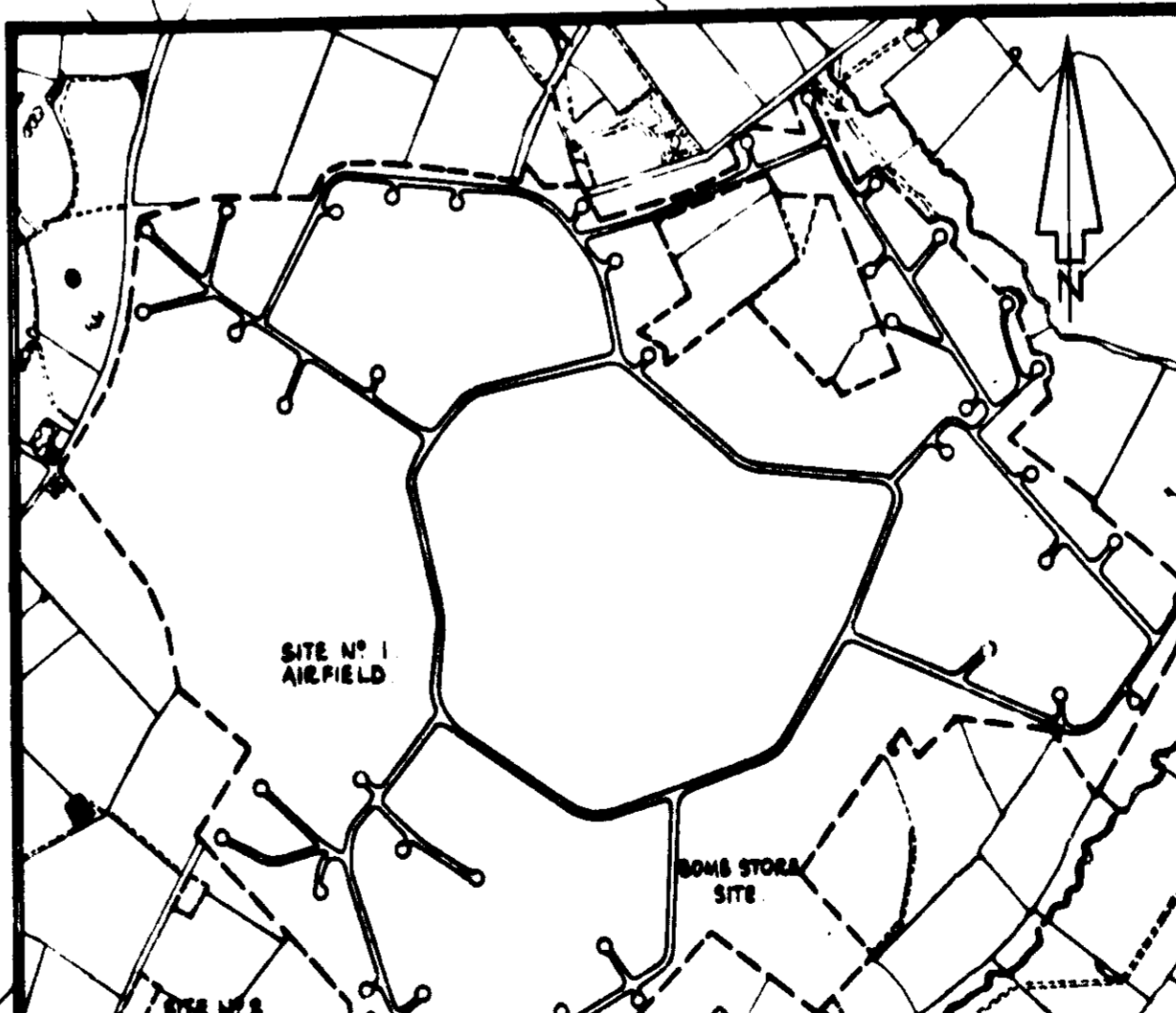
CONT TYPE IN SECTN



NO.	DESCRIPTION	AREA	LOCAL ACTN	LOCAL ACTN	LOCAL ACTN	LOCAL ACTN	LOCAL ACTN	LOCAL ACTN	LOCAL ACTN	LOCAL ACTN	LOCAL ACTN	LOCAL ACTN	LOCAL ACTN	LOCAL ACTN	LOCAL ACTN
1	W.F. BUILDINGS	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
2	OFFICE BUILDINGS	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
3	LABORATORIES	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
4	WORKSHOPS	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
5	BARRACKS	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
6	CAV. CHAMBER	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
7	W.C. TEST HUT	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
8	M.C. RANGE 4 BAY	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
9	BEPHRAU STORE (8BAY)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
10	PRACTICE BOMB STORE	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
11	HUT	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
12	LATRINE TO G.P. HUT	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
13	G.P. HUT	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
14	WATER TOWER	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
15	WATER PUMP	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
16	WATER TANK	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
17	WATER TOWER	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
18	WATER TOWER	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
19	WATER TOWER	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
20	WATER TOWER	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

CONSTRUCTION APPROPRIATIONS

TEMPORARY BRICK	T.B.	BLACK SLATE	B.S.
PERMANENT BRICK	P.B.	ROOFING SLATE	R.S.
CONCRETE	C.	WIRE MESH	W.M.
CANVAS	C.A.	SUN POST	S.P.
COKE IRON	C.I.		
WIRE	W.		
STEEL	S.		
WOOD	W.D.		
LAING	L.		
WOOD PACKING CASE	W.P.C.		
NUTTING	N.		



BICESTER LOCATION PLAN BASED ON O.S. SHEET OXFORDSHIRE XVII & XXIII

RESTRICTED

SCALE - 1/2500

BICESTER RECORD SITE PLAN OF ALL SITES.

BASED ON WORKS AREA DRG. BR/1549/44

HALF SCALE REPRODUCTION OF A.M. DRG. NO. 235/45

AMENDMENTS:

DOWN GRADED

THIS IS A SECRET DRAWING UNDER NO. 1000000. IT IS NOT TO BE SEEN BY UNAUTHORISED PERSONS. IT MUST BE KEPT UNDER LOCK AND KEY WHEN NOT IN USE. ITS SAFE CUSTODY IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PERSON TO WHOM IT IS ISSUED.

SECRET NO. D.C. OF W.

2645/45

AIR MINISTRY