



Planning Application for Bicester Heritage Hotel Site Proposal

Landscape Character and Visual Impact Assessment

For

Bicester Heritage

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The following Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVIA) is carried out in support of an application for a proposed hotel development at Bicester Heritage (previously RAF Bicester) adjacent to the A4421. Anthony Stiff Associates was appointed in January 2018 to undertake this assessment.

Scope of This Study

- 1.2 The aim of a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) process is to assess the impact of a development proposal on two aspects related to landscape and the public's enjoyment of it. These aspects are firstly the landscape setting itself and second the visual impact of the proposed development on the surrounding areas from which views are possible.

Methodology

- 1.3 The methodology for the LVIA is derived from the Landscape Institute Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition 2013. The methodology also draws from: Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland Swanwick C and LUC 2002. The report is based on a combination of desk based research and field survey work.
- 1.4 The latest guidance in the 3rd edition of the LVIA guidance has not changed the basic method of assessment from the previous guidance (Version 2) but has placed an emphasis less on formulaic methods and more on the judgement of a qualified and experienced professional. While this report does use matrices, these are not based on numeric values. Instead they use descriptive scales to inform the overall judgement and conclusions of the report and to provide a degree of transparency that would otherwise be lacking. The way in which the field data and other data compiled as part of the study are interpreted is defined by the Assessment Methodology contained in Appendix B. This methodology has been developed over a period of time and has been found to be robust, providing transparency and traceability of the findings of the report.
- 1.5 The LVIA process makes a distinction between the landscape effects and visual effects. Landscape effects are those which affect individual components of the landscape, its pattern and composition, or its perceptual qualities such as openness or tranquillity. Visual effects are those experienced by individuals or groups of people who are likely to view the development.
- 1.6 The LVIA process carried out for the study comprised of:
- A baseline study to identify the existing landscape character and likely visual 'receptors'. This was carried out through a process of desk study and field observation. The extent and complexity of the study is proportionate to the scale

and size of the proposed development.

- The identification of the landscape and visual effects likely to result from the development;
- An assessment of the significance of these effects through an assessment of the sensitivity of the landscape and visual receptors, and the likely magnitude of change that the receptors will experience compared to the existing landscape and visual baseline. Assessment Methodology and Criteria are set out in Appendix B.

2 The Existing Landscape Context

Site Location

- 2.1 The site location is shown on Figure 1. The site is part of former RAF Bicester which is continues as an active airfield with associated hangers and ancillary buildings in which several diverse commercial enterprises/organisations have been established. These include; Bicester Gliding Centre, and numerous automotive suppliers, dealers, restorer's and engineering specialists. The area for the new building site itself comprises an area of calcareous grassland to the east of A4421 and on the west side of the airfield. The proposal is for a Hotel, an Aparthotel that is wrapped around a courtyard space, Conference Centre and a large atrium linked to the hotel entrance.
- 2.2 To the south of the proposed hotel location, there are two large Hangar's (Buildings 79 and 108 Hanger Types A & C respectively) and to the north-east the airfield, which dominate the immediate environment. The site itself was the location of earlier airfield buildings likely to have been constructed between 1917 and 1920, which have long since been demolished. The existing site is predominantly laid to grass with a concrete circulation road / taxiway to the east of the site.

Setting

- 2.3 The site is set within a predominantly semi-rural setting with open expanses of grassland and established hedgerows, interspersed by a network of historic hard-standing associated with the historic RAF Bicester and its buildings. There are significant urban and commercial influences from the adjacent buildings and their uses to the south; the northern urban extension of Caversfield, Bicester to the south and adjacent busy roads. The nearest settlements are at Caversfield on the other side of the A4421 (0.1km to the west, which encompasses the previous RAF Bicester Domestic site), the northern edge of Bicester (0.5km to the south) Stratton Audley (1.6km to the north east) Launton (2.3km to the south east). Other than the northern edge of Bicester and associated suburb of Caversfield to the west, there is very little development in the surrounding countryside other than scattered villages and isolated farmsteads and houses. Beyond the extent of the airfield (0.8km to the north east) lies the Stratton Audley Quarries, now disused, which is now in parts designated as a SSSI.

Topography

- 2.4 The site lies in relatively low lying ground at around 83m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). The ground falls away gently over the extend of the airfield to approximately 76m. Land to the north and north east rises towards Stratton Audley providing some views back

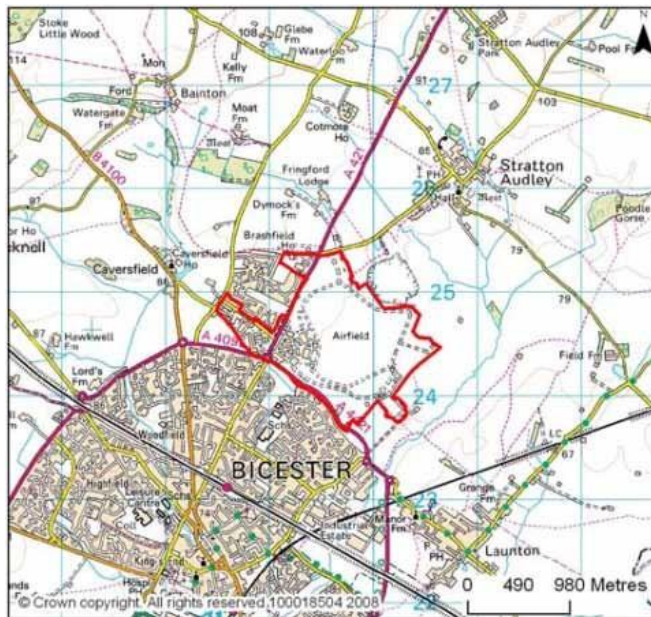
towards the site.

Land Use

- 2.5 The landscape is broadly rural to the north and east, and urban to the south and west. As mentioned previously, the busy roads (particularly to the west and south) dominate the local landscape in terms of landscape and visual impacts and also noise and pollution. The site itself is an established centre for businesses connected with historic cars.

Statutory Designations and Rights of Way (Figure 1)

- 2.6 Figure 1 shows the currently recorded statutory designations and public rights of way for the study area which has been defined as a 3km radius from the site. The whole of RAF Bicester (Technical site and Domestic site) is designated as a conservation area, and as such, a key part of that character and appearance maybe the existing trees, which will require notice to the local planning authority should works to the existing trees be required as part of the proposed development.
- 2.7 The conservation area boundary is shown below.



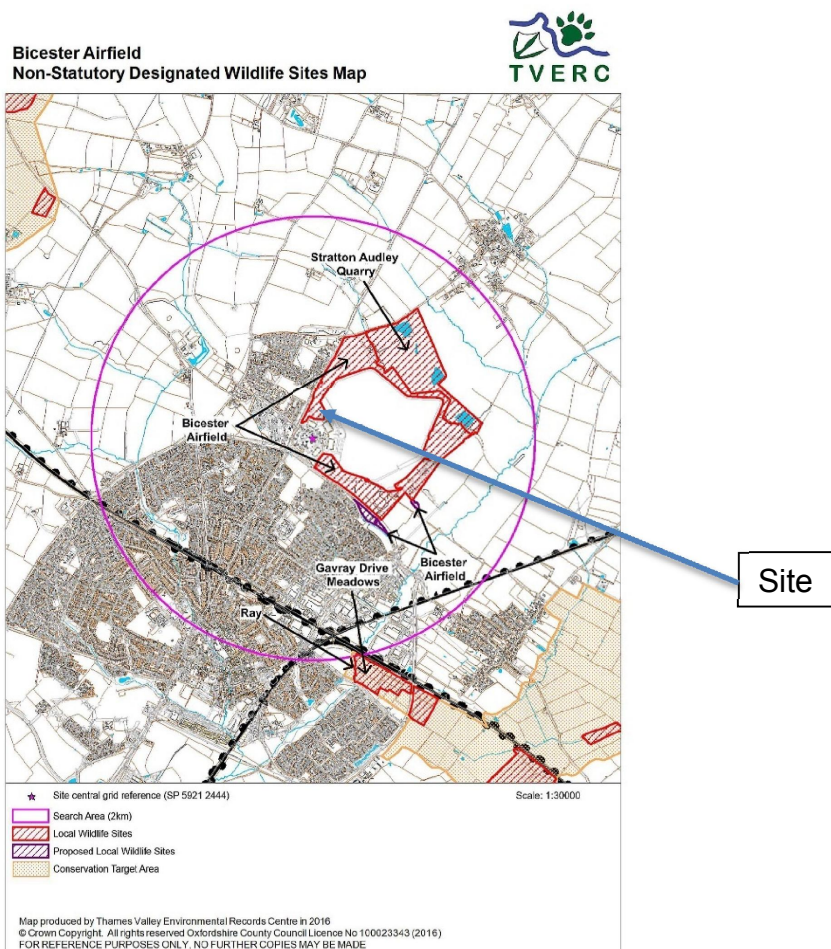
- 2.8 Immediately to the south east of the proposed site, adjacent to existing Hangar Type A lies a hexagonal pill box listed as another schedule ancient monument. To the immediate south of the proposed development site (within a 0.3km radius) there are a further 7 Scheduled Monuments, with one to the north and a further two to the south (within a 0.9km radius) associated with RAF Bicester airfield defence structures and bomb stores. To the north east of the site (0.8km away) lies a designated SSSI site at Stratton Audley Quarries (disused).
- 2.9 There are total of 21 buildings and structures designated as listed buildings, associated

with the RAF Bicester Technical Site in which the proposed development sits. Located directly to the south of the proposed development site, Buildings Nos 79 and 137 (Type A Hangars) a Grade II listed building, whose setting is potentially affected by the proposals located, however it is screened by mature planting along the north east boundary.

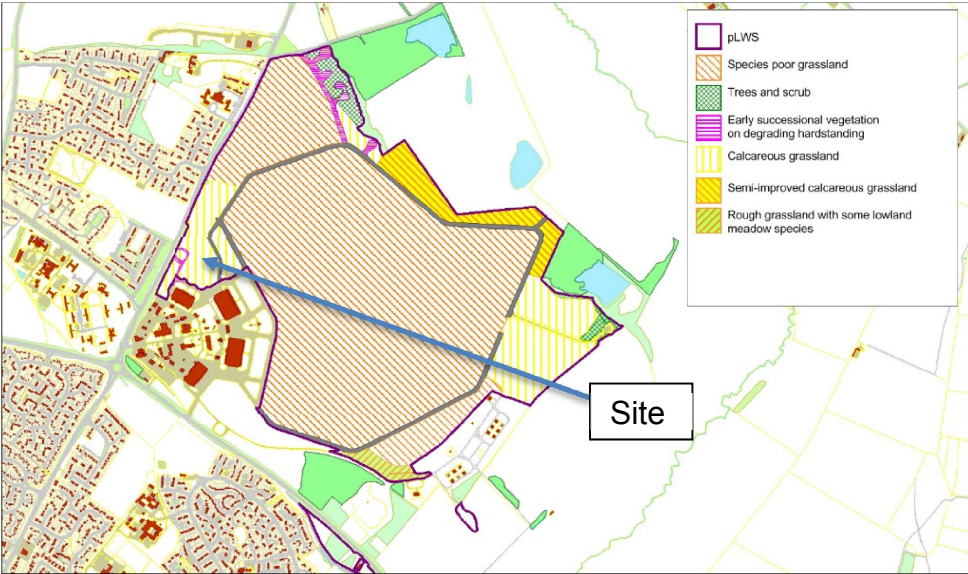
- 2.10 There is an extensive network of public rights of way (PRoWs) (Shown on Figure 1) within the countryside around the site, however no PRoWs run within the site or the adjoining Bicester Airfield. To the north east of the site footpath 371/7/10 and 371/7/20 circulates the part of the disused Stratton Audley quarry site before returning to Stratton Audley.

Non-statutory designations:

- 2.11 The application site is within Bicester Airfield Local Wildlife Site (LWS) which is a county important site, designated for presence of Habitats of Principal Importance Lowland Calcareous Grassland and also Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land.



52X10 Bicester Airfield



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3 Landscape Planning Context

National Planning Policy Framework

- 3.1 Paragraph 109 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. Of the methods listed to achieve this the following is the most relevant to this LVIA:
- 3.2 Paragraph 113 of the NPPF requires that local planning authorities should set criteria-based policies for any development on or affecting protected landscaped areas. It states:
- 3.3 *‘Local planning authorities should set criteria-based policies against which proposals for any development on or affecting protected wildlife or geodiversity sites or landscape areas will be judged. Distinctions should be made between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites, so that protection is commensurate with their status and gives appropriate weight to their importance and the contribution that they make to wider ecological networks’.*
- 3.4 Paragraph 126 of the NPPF requires that the local planning authorities should set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. It states:
- 3.5 *‘Local planning authorities should take into account; the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation... the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.’*
- 3.6 The site lies within the Bicester Heritage Conservation Area and is adjacent to several Scheduled Monuments and Listed Buildings. There are no other statutory designations that apply to this site or the surrounding landscape and therefore it receives no special protection in this regard. The landscape to the north of the site is noted in the published landscape assessment (Supplementary Planning Guidance – Cherwell District Landscape Assessment 1995) as being an ‘Area of High Landscape Importance’ which is a local designation.
- 3.7 The following table sets out the relevant Cherwell District Council Local Plan policies which are relevant to landscape issues. The table below sets out how the development proposals accord with these policies. The site lies within the Launton Parish but there

is no Neighbourhood Plan as yet for this area.

3.8 Summary of Local Planning Policy Relevant to Landscape

The Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031	How the proposal complies with policy
<p>Policy ESD 7: Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) All development will be required to use sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) for the management of surface water run-off. Where site specific Flood Risk Assessments are required in association with development proposals, they should be used to determine how SuDS can be used on particular sites and to design appropriate systems. In considering SuDS solutions, the need to protect ground water quality must be taken into account, especially where infiltration techniques are proposed. Where possible, SuDS should seek to reduce flood risk, reduce pollution and provide landscape and wildlife benefits. SuDS will require the approval of Oxfordshire County Council as LLFA and SuDS Approval Body, and proposals must include an agreement on the future management, maintenance and replacement of the SuDS features.</p>	<p>An appropriate SuDS drainage system will be a condition of any new development.</p>
<p>Policy ESD 10: Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment Protection and enhancement of biodiversity and the natural environment will be achieved by the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In considering proposals for development, a net gain in biodiversity will be sought by protecting, managing, enhancing and extending existing resources, and by creating new resources • The protection of trees will be encouraged, with an aim to increase the number of trees in the District • The reuse of soils will be sought if significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or as a last resort, compensated for, then development will not be permitted. • Development which would result in damage to or loss of a site of international value will be subject to the Habitats Regulations Assessment process and will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that there will be no likely significant effects on the international site or that effects can be mitigated • Development which would result in damage to or loss of a site of biodiversity or geological value of national importance will not be permitted unless the benefits of the development clearly outweigh the harm it would cause to the site and the wider national network of SSSIs, and the loss can be mitigated to achieve a net gain in biodiversity/geodiversity • Development which would result in damage to or loss of a site of biodiversity or geological value of regional or local importance including habitats of species of principal importance for biodiversity will not be permitted unless the benefits of the development clearly outweigh the harm it would cause to the site, and the loss can be mitigated to achieve a net gain in biodiversity/geodiversity 	<p>Local Plan Policy ESD10 mentions damage to or loss of sites of biodiversity value of regional or local importance. Given the intensively managed nature and poor condition of the majority of the grassland within the site, there is scope for appropriate compensation and enhancement measures to result in a net increase in the biodiversity value of Bicester Airfield LWS, rather than damage or loss, despite the proposed construction work. (From BSG Ecology 29/1/18)</p> <p>The 2017 survey included the area which was outside the application boundary in 2016, and no protected or notable species were identified in 2017 that had not already been identified in the 2016 surveys. These surveys indicate that, apart from breeding birds in the hedgerow, the hotel site does not support protected or notable species (including plants).</p> <p>There are ample opportunities for ecological improvements which will offset the loss of the poorer grassland which makes up the majority of the site; these include the long-term</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development proposals will be expected to incorporate features to encourage biodiversity, and retain and where possible enhance existing features of nature conservation value within the site. Existing ecological networks should be identified and maintained to avoid habitat fragmentation, and ecological corridors should form an essential component of green infrastructure provision in association with new development to ensure habitat connectivity • Relevant habitat and species surveys and associated reports will be required to accompany planning applications which may affect a site, habitat or species of known or potential ecological value • Air quality assessments will also be required for development proposals that would be likely to have a significantly adverse impact on biodiversity by generating an increase in air pollution • Planning conditions/obligations will be used to secure net gains in biodiversity by helping to deliver Biodiversity Action Plan targets and/or meeting the aims of Conservation Target Areas. Developments for which these are the principal aims will be viewed favourably • A monitoring and management plan will be required for biodiversity features on site to ensure their long term suitable management. 	<p>conservation management of strategic areas of species-poor grassland outside the development footprint but within the airfield. In this way the proposed development will be able to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the LWS, as per Policy Bicester 8. The ecological consultant will put together a comprehensive Ecology Strategy for the development, detailing the proposed approach, which will involve full consultation with the CDC Ecology Adviser.</p> <p>All lighting to comply with 'Artificial lighting and wildlife - Interim Guidance: Recommendations to help minimise the impact artificial lighting' (BCT, 2014) on bats.</p>
<p>Policy ESD 13: Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement 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, including the planting of woodlands, trees and hedgerows. Development will be expected to respect and enhance local landscape character, securing appropriate mitigation where damage to local landscape character cannot be avoided. Proposals will not be permitted if they would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cause undue visual intrusion into the open countryside • Cause undue harm to important natural landscape features and topography • Be inconsistent with local character • Impact on areas judged to have a high level of tranquillity • Harm the setting of settlements, buildings, structures or other landmark features, or • Harm the historic value of the landscape. • Development proposals should have regard to the information and advice contained in the Council's Countryside Design Summary Supplementary Planning Guidance, and the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS) and be accompanied by a landscape assessment where appropriate. 	<p>There will be a large degree of change perceived from within the airfield and from nearby housing and the road to the west and north though it will be possible to mitigate the impact from the road and from the housing over time with screen planting.</p> <p>There will be some visual impact on the local countryside to the north and north east of the site. These views are however more remote and are mitigated by distance and many views are partially screened by intervening layers of vegetation.</p> <p>The landscape has no statutory designations but is noted in SPG as An Area of High Landscape Importance.</p> <p>The site is generally well contained to the south with significant public views being only possible from the adjacent Buckingham Road.</p>

<p>Policy ESD 15: The Character of the Built and Historic Environment</p> <p>Successful design is founded upon an understanding and respect for an area's unique built, natural and cultural context. New development will be expected to complement and enhance the character of its context through sensitive siting, layout and high quality design. All new development will be required to meet high design standards. 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. New development proposals should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be designed to deliver high quality safe, attractive, durable and healthy places to live and work in. Development of all scales should be designed to improve the quality and appearance of an area and the way it functions. Deliver buildings, places and spaces that can adapt to changing social, technological, economic and environmental conditions • Support the efficient use of land and infrastructure, through appropriate land uses, mix and density/development intensity • Contribute positively to an area's character and identity by creating or reinforcing local distinctiveness and respecting local topography and landscape features, including skylines, valley floors, significant trees, • historic boundaries, landmarks, features or views, in particular within designated landscapes, within the Cherwell Valley and within conservation areas and their setting • Conserve, sustain and enhance designated and non designated 'heritage assets' (as defined in the NPPF) including buildings, features, archaeology, conservation areas and their settings, and ensure new development is sensitively sited and integrated in accordance with advice in the NPPF and NPPG. Proposals for development that affect non-designated heritage assets will be considered taking account of the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset as set out in the NPPF and NPPG. Regeneration proposals that make sensitive use of heritage assets, particularly where these bring redundant or under used buildings or areas, especially any on English Heritage's At Risk Register, into appropriate use will be encouraged • Include information on heritage assets sufficient to assess the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. Where archaeological potential is identified this should include an appropriate desk based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation. • Respect the traditional pattern of routes, spaces, blocks, plots, enclosures and the form, scale and massing of buildings. Development should be designed to integrate with existing streets and public spaces, and buildings configured to create clearly defined active public frontages • Reflect or, in a contemporary design response, re-interpret local • distinctiveness, including elements of construction, elevational detailing, windows and doors, building and surfacing materials, mass, scale and colour palette 	<p>The Heritage Statement reports that:</p> <p>Form</p> <p>It is important that the scale of the proposed development should be consistent with the scale of the hangars so that the hotel and conference centre can perform an effective visual role on the 'waterfront'. Subservience is the role of the service buildings behind, not the principal buildings lining the airfield. The location for the proposed development, which officers have accepted, means that the new building should not be designed to appear 'subservient'.</p> <p>SUMMARY OF HERITAGE IMPACTS ON SIGNIFICANCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The evidential value the site holds will not be undermined • The proposals will help to facilitate the preservation and rediscover of such evidence, which will represent and enhancement • Because the development is proposed to be sited on the edge of the airfield – the 'waterfront' the aesthetic value of the group of service and technical buildings within the site and their interrelationship will be preserved; • The setting of the hangars adjacent to the proposed development will change but the contribution they make and their relationship to the airfield will be preserved. Thus the contribution the existing hangars make to the appearance of the Technical Site, understanding of its layout and functional relationship to the airfield would be preserved. • With the access proposed direct off the public highway the need for any highway improvements or other changes to the existing avenues will be avoided. • The historic interest lies in the survival of the existing military buildings, other structures and the trident layout. The proposed
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote permeable, accessible and easily understandable places by creating spaces that connect with each other, are easy to move through and have recognisable landmark features • Demonstrate a holistic approach to the design of the public realm to create high quality and multi-functional streets and places that promotes pedestrian movement and integrates different modes of transport, parking and servicing. The principles set out in The Manual for Streets should be followed • Consider the amenity of both existing and future development, including matters of privacy, outlook, natural lighting, ventilation, and indoor and outdoor space • Limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation • Be compatible with up to date urban design principles, including Building for Life, and achieve Secured by Design accreditation • Consider sustainable design and layout at the master planning stage of design, where building orientation and the impact of microclimate can be considered within the layout • Incorporate energy efficient design and sustainable construction techniques, whilst ensuring that the aesthetic implications of green technology are appropriate to the context (also see Policies ESD 1 - 5 on climate change and renewable energy) • Integrate and enhance green infrastructure and incorporate biodiversity enhancement features where possible (see Policy ESD 10: Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment and Policy ESD 17 Green Infrastructure). Well designed landscape schemes should be an integral part of development proposals to support improvements to biodiversity, the micro climate, and air pollution and provide attractive places that improve people's health and sense of vitality • Use locally sourced sustainable materials where possible. • The Council will provide more detailed design and historic environment policies in the Local Plan Part 2. • The design of all new development will need to be informed by an analysis of the context, together with an explanation and justification of the principles that have informed the design rationale. This should be demonstrated in the Design and Access Statement that accompanies the planning application. The Council expects all the issues within this policy to be positively addressed through the explanation and justification in the Design & Access Statement. Further guidance can be found on the Council's website. 	<p>development will not have any direct impact on existing buildings or structures. Indeed, an accepted benefit of the proposed development is that it will facilitate the ongoing regeneration and repair of existing buildings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The existing trident layout holds significance and this layout will not be affected. The new buildings will add to the existing buildings lining the airfield (or 'waterfront') without detracting from the understanding and experience of the functional and visual role the hangars play. • The communal value of the site lies in its 'place memory' preserved through the survival and continued use of the military buildings on the site. The proposed development will help to ensure that the site and its constituent buildings have a sustainable future, thus preserving those collective memories. The proposals do not involve the demolition of any of the existing buildings. • The proposed hotel and conference centre will make the heritage assets more publicly available. The new uses associated with Bicester Heritage will help to create new memories that will add to the site's communal value.
<p>Policy ESD 17: Green Infrastructure</p> <p>The District's green infrastructure network will be maintained and enhanced through the following measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pursuing opportunities for joint working to maintain and improve the green infrastructure network, whilst protecting sites of importance for nature conservation 	<p>The proposals will support the policy to enhance green infrastructure as part of the landscape proposals for the site by the retention and management of the existing</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting and enhancing existing sites and features forming part of the green infrastructure network and improving sustainable connectivity between sites in accordance with policies on supporting a modal shift in transport (Policy SLE 4: Improved Transport and Connections), open space, sport and recreation (Policy BSC 10: Open Space, Outdoor Sport • and Recreation Provision), adapting to climate change (Policy ESD 1: Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change), SuDS (Policy ESD 7: • Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)), biodiversity and the natural environment (Policy ESD 10: Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment), Conservation Target Areas (Policy ESD 11: Conservation Target Areas), heritage assets (Policy ESD 15) and the Oxford Canal (Policy ESD 16) • Ensuring that green infrastructure network considerations are integral to the planning of new development. Proposals should maximise the opportunity to maintain and extend green infrastructure links to form a multi-functional network of open space, providing opportunities for walking and cycling, and connecting the towns to the urban fringe and the wider countryside beyond • All strategic development sites (Section C: 'Policies for Cherwell's Places') will be required to incorporate green infrastructure provision and proposals should include details for future management and maintenance. 	<p>boundary vegetation and the introduction of new native and structural amenity trees and native hedgerows within the site and other planting that add beneficial habitats for birds and insects.</p> <p>A SuDs strategy will be integral to the development proposals.</p>
<p>Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1 161 Section C - Policies for Cherwell's Places Policy Bicester 8: Former RAF Bicester The Council will encourage conservation-led proposals to secure a long-lasting, economically viable future for the Former RAF Bicester technical site and flying field. It will support heritage tourism uses, leisure, recreation, employment and community uses. 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 approved Planning Brief for the site and take into account the Bicester Masterplan. They 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. 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 gliding use will be supported. Opportunities for improving access to the countryside will be encouraged. The Council's SFRA should be considered. Proposals should be considered against Policy ESD 15.</p>	<p>The proposal seeks to maximise the benefits that are promoted within this policy as set out in the various supporting documents that relate to this application. The proposal will also preserve and enhance the historic setting of the site, facilitating the continuing restoration of the site facilities and maintaining a viable commercial use for the site.</p>

Summary

- 3.9 In term of Policy ESD13 Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement, the proposals will have a local impact on nearby landscape receptors and on footpath users, but these impacts will be mitigated over time with proposed new structural tree planting.

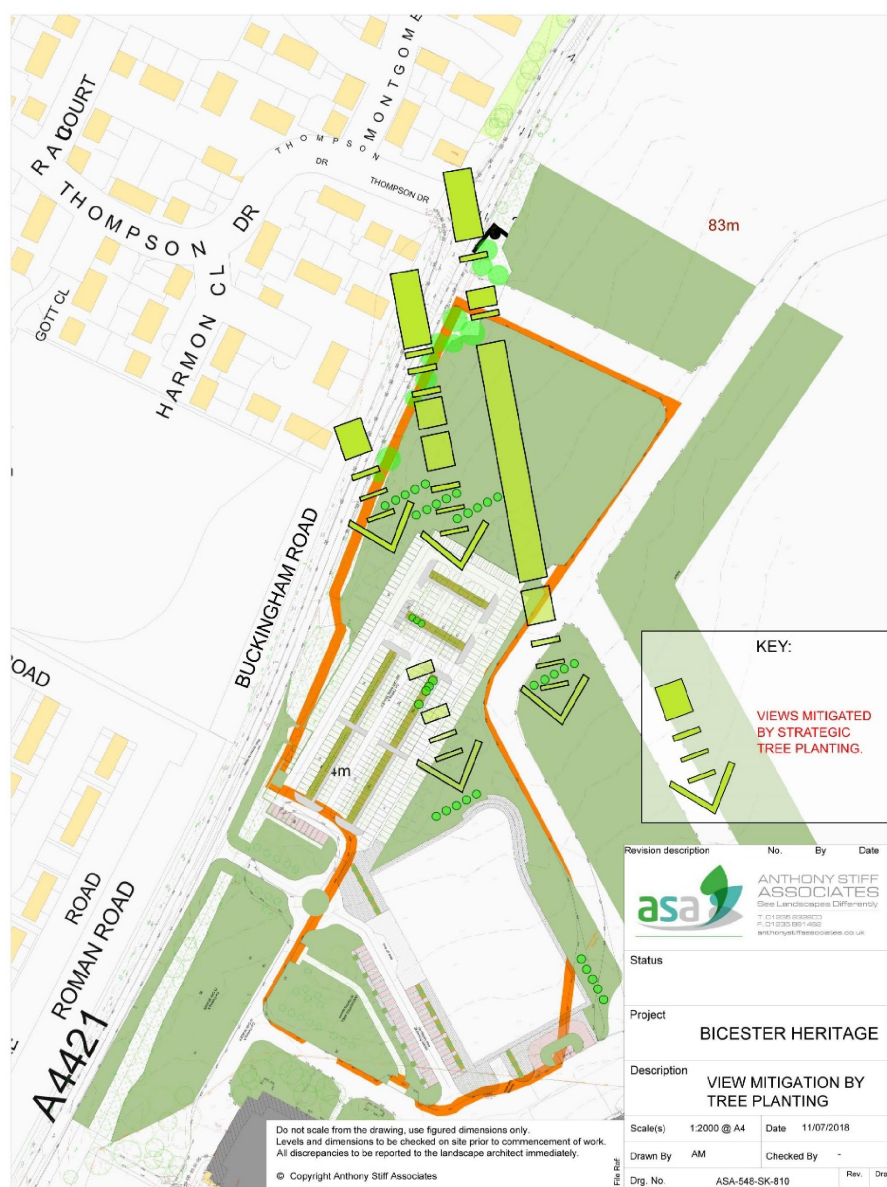
4 Proposed Development

Description of Development

- 4.1 The proposal is for a new hotel and Aparthotel to complement Bicester Heritage's vision of making the former RAF site into a long term and sustainable business and focussing on the enjoyment of historic vehicles. The aim is to create a unifying idea responding directly to the site's rich and unique story, inspired by its aviation and motoring history and the existing period buildings.
- 4.2 The general layout and site arrangements can be seen in ASA-548-SK-808. The hotel building sits within an area near to the western perimeter of the airfield. The building is orientated at an angle with the main façade facing south east. The narrower north west elevation faces the main road at an oblique angle but directly towards houses that back on to the Buckingham Road off Thompson Drive (visible in VP 2 and VP3D). The building will lie close to two existing hangers (Hanger Types A and C) to the south.
- 4.3 The car parking is located in 3 areas within the site. There is an area of parking close to the hotel entrance which can also be used for displaying cars on event days. Car parking is off the access road which comes directly off the Buckingham Road and divides at a roundabout within the site to access the car park and hotel frontage. A large expanse of car parking is to the north of the hotel and is part hidden by gentle grass mounding up to 1.5m high which will blend the car parking into the longer views from within the site. A further area of overspill parking is formed of grasscrete and will be of a generally green appearance all year round. Disabled parking is provided to the north of the hotel entrance.

Mitigation (See Landscape Proposals Plan (ASA-548-SK-808))

- 4.4 A comprehensive scheme for landscape mitigation forms part of the planning application for this site and will comprise a robust edge of existing mature planting around and within the site. Some loss of existing landscape fabric will be required to facilitate the new development access with a gap of approximately 17m wide. Proposed new native hedging will be included to mitigate this loss, plus the planting of 127 structural and ornamental trees.
- 4.5 Rows of trees have been placed to break up and screen views of the façade of the new building as one moves along Buckingham Road, to include views from nearby houses. The uniform rows are at an angle to the road but placed perpendicular and parallel to the hotel. The rows are offset relative to each other to increase the screening effect but without creating large scale planting features within the site which would be out of character with the open airfield landscape.



Drawing above shows how the strategic tree planting will filter views over time.

- 4.6 Within the site more ornamental planting will enhance the immediate environment of the hotel site and trees will be used with car parking area to break up the scale of these spaces and to provide some shade.

5 Landscape Assessment

- 5.1 The description of the landscape and its importance is informed by published sources including the National (Joint) Landscape Character description and the 'OWLS' Landscape Study, plus from a field visit and photographic survey for this report. At a local level, the Cherwell District commissioned the Cherwell Landscape Character Assessment in 1995 which remains as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

National (Joint) Character Area

- 5.2 The National (Joint) Character Areas were first developed in the mid 1990's by Natural England and divide England into 159 Character Areas. This study places the site in *The Cotswolds* (NCA 107). The link for this JCA is:
<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk>.
- 5.3 The NCAs provide a broad brush description of the landscape. At a more local level, which is more focussed on the landscape characteristics of the specific area in question, a regional study and Cherwell-specific study are available as reference documents to assist in the definitions of the baseline landscape. Selected extracts to describe key features include:
- 5.4 ■ *Low-lying clay-based flood plains encircle the Midvale Ridge. Superficial deposits, including alluvium and gravel terraces, spread over 40 per cent of the area, creating gently undulating topography. The Upper Jurassic and Cretaceous clays and the wet valley bottoms give rise to enclosed pasture, contrasting with the more settled, open, arable lands of the gravel.*
- 5.5 ■ *The large river system of the River Thames drains the Vales, their headwaters flowing off the Cotswolds to the north or emitting from the spring line along the Chilterns and Downs escarpments. Where mineral extraction takes place, pits naturally fill with water, and limestone gravels from the Cotswolds give rise to marl formation. There are a high number of nationally important geological sites.*
- 5.6 ■ *Woodland cover is low at only about 3 per cent, but hedges, hedgerow trees and field trees are frequent. Watercourses are often marked by lines of willows and, particularly in the Aylesbury Vale and Cotswold Water Park, native black poplar.*
- 5.7 ■ *Wet ground conditions and heavy clay soils discourage cultivation in many places, giving rise to livestock farming. Fields are regular and hedged, except near the Cotswolds, where there can be stone walls. The Vale of White Horse is made distinct by large arable fields, and there are relict orchards on the Greensand.*
- 5.8 ■ *In the river corridors, grazed pasture dominates, with limited areas of historic wetland habitats including wet woodland, fen, reedbed and flood meadow. There are two areas of flood meadow designated for their importance at a European level as*

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). There are also rich and extensive ditch systems.

- 5.9 ■ *Brick and tile from local clays, timber and thatch are traditional building materials across the area, combined with limestone near the Cotswolds and occasional clunch and wickert near the Chilterns.*
- 5.10 ■ *Settlement is sparse on flood plains, apart from at river crossings, where there can be large towns, such as Abingdon. Aylesbury and Bicester are major urban centres, and the outer suburbs of Oxford and Swindon spread into this NCA. Market towns and villages are strung along the spring lines of the Chilterns and Downs. Major routes include mainline rail, canals, a network of roads including the M40 and M4 and The Ridgeway and Thames Path National Trails.*

Site Baseline

- 5.11 This area is characterised by large expanse of open grassland comprising the main part of the airfield. The former RAF buildings lie in a cluster to the west of the site. Immediately to the north west of the site is an area of RAF housing and other buildings, and to the north east of this lies an area of residential development.
- 5.12 The main town of Bicester lies to the south and west of the airfield.
- 5.13 To the north east of the airfield the land is an undeveloped area of scrub and ponds which is a site of wildlife value. Beyond this the ground increases in elevation and is in arable use. Land to the east is also in arable use.

Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS)

- 5.14 'OWLS' is the current landscape character assessment for Oxfordshire. Its main purpose is to investigate the landscape character and biodiversity resource of the county and to use the results of the survey work to help safeguard, maintain and enhance this resource.

Clay Vale (Landscape Type)

This landscape type extends from the vale landscapes adjacent to the northern part of the River Cherwell to the Upper Thames area south and east of Bicester and the site. It also occupies a large part of the Vale of White Horse to the north-east of Wantage and borders part of the River Thame and its tributaries. This is a low-lying vale landscape associated with small pasture fields, many watercourses and hedgerow trees and well

defined nucleated villages

Key Characteristics

- *A flat, low-lying landform.*
- *Mixed land uses, dominated by pastureland, with small to medium-sized*
- *hedged fields.*
- *Many mature oak, ash and willow hedgerow trees.*
- *Dense, tree-lined streams and ditches dominated by pollarded willows and*
- *poplars.*
- *Small to medium-sized nucleated villages.*

Wooded Estatelands

- 5.15 The airfield is described within this landscape type. The descriptions below relate to the landscape to the north of the site rather than the site itself.

Key Characteristics

- *Rolling topography with localised steep slopes.*
- *Large blocks of ancient woodland and mixed plantations of variable sizes.*
- *Large parklands and mansion houses.*
- *A regularly-shaped field pattern dominated by arable fields.*
- *Small villages with strong vernacular character.*

- 5.16 Two of the guidelines noted within the OWLS document are relevant to the site:

- *Minimise the visual impact of intrusive land uses such as quarries, landfill sites, airfields and large-scale development, such as new barns and industrial units, with the judicious planting of tree and shrub species characteristic of the area. This will help to screen the development and integrate it more successfully with its surrounding countryside.*
- *Maintain the nucleated pattern of settlements and promote the use of building materials and a scale of development and that is appropriate to this landscape type.*

Cherwell Landscape Character Assessment 1995

- 5.17 At a local (District) level, the Cherwell Council commissioned a district landscape assessment in 1995. This study (the CDLA) is now over 20 years old but remains on the Council's web site as supplementary planning guidance (SPG). Some reference is made to this study below but this report also refers above to the OWLS Study which is

also cited as SPG.

Otmoor Lowlands (Character Area) (This equates to the OWLS Clay Vale Landscape)

- 5.18 *At the south of the district is the distinctive, low lying are associated with the River Ray flood plain which forms the large character are of the Otmoor Lowlands. This flat, open farmland has a distinctive atmosphere, particularly where the traditional wet meadows and pastures and their important flora and fauna exist.....A number of isolated low hills dominate the skyline, and the south of the area is contained by the low ridges of the Oxford Heights. **Military development has had considerable influence upon settlement and land use within the area.***

Landscape Type: 'Transitional' (within the Landscape Character Area)

- 5.19 *Transitional landscape: This is one of several landscape types that have specific uses (in this case a military airfield) that also therefore have a specific and overwhelming influence on their landscape character.*

Oxfordshire Estate Farmlands (to the north of the airfield on rising ground) (This equates to the OWLS Wooded Estate lands)

- 5.20 *This is a rolling arable landscape with a strong field pattern of copses and trees, with a patchwork of arable and pasture, defined by well maintained hedges and is an 'Area of High Landscape Value'.*

Sub-Landscape types here are defined within the CRC Report as being:

- R1a (land to the north east of the airfield): Elevated or low lying arable farmland with weak structure
 - R2a (to the north of the airfield): arable landscape with weak field pattern and isolated trees
 - R2b (to the north east of the airfield beyond Landscape Type R1a): Rolling arable landscape with strong field pattern, copses and hedgerow trees.
- 5.21 The Cherwell Landscape Character Assessment sets out a strategy for landscape intervention. This includes the following categories:
- Conservation
 - Repair
 - Restoration
 - Reconstruction
- 5.22 The site lies within an area identified as being within the 'Reconstruction' category defined as:
- 5.23 *'These landscapes are those where the landscape has been so modified by human*

activity that they no longer bear any resemblance to their former character. They included quarries and airfields which occur in significant numbers throughout the study area'.

- 5.24 This was the conclusion in 1995, and from the point of view of the underlying landscape remains true today in terms of the continued dominance of the airfield and its associated former military buildings. The key characteristics of the local landscape have been significantly eroded, but positive characteristics remain in terms of the historic attributes of the site and its evolution into a sustainable business. A new contemporary hotel with an associated landscape scheme will be a positive influence on this landscape providing 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.
- 5.25 As the CRC Report states: These landscapes would benefit from the introduction of a new character and strong sense of place. The report states further that: *These landscapes have a high capacity to accommodate change as they have lost their intrinsic character.* This statement is perhaps worded too strongly in the context of today's situation where the character of the former airfield and its associated buildings and structures are appreciated for what they were and are and are being used within an appropriate context that celebrates this character. However there is still a considerable capacity to absorb appropriate change within this site.

Landscape Effects: Sensitivity (derived from considering the landscape value and its susceptibility to change)

- 5.26 Overall the value of the landscape (local to the site) is relatively high due to the national importance of historic features on the site and their settings. Depending on the local view the prominence of the adjacent busy Buckingham Road (the A4421) is a visual detractor and there are large existing hangers (Grade II Listed) on the site. These can be viewed either as a positive attribute to the historic landscape or a negative influence on the urban edge of Bicester. Overall it is considered that the structures are set within an appropriate setting and that they form a local landmark and feature which is valued and helps provide a sense of place and history on this edge of the town. The landscape is rare due its good state of preservation being intact with so many original features and buildings.
- 5.27 Hence for the site itself the value of the landscape and its setting is relatively high. The susceptibility of the site to change is stated in the published landscape assessment to be relatively low. However, the susceptibility to absorb change is determined by gauging how vulnerable (and rare) the landscape is and how it is able to accommodate change taking account of any mitigation measures that are proposed as part of the development. The judgement of this factor is made using a balance of positive and negative features

within the landscape, and takes account of physical characteristics of the land as well as human perceptions and how rare or irreplaceable the landscape is. The assessment describes the landscape character within the influence of the site in terms of the presence or absent of various landscape elements and the judgement takes account of the overall contribution these elements make in defining the key characteristics of the landscape.

- 5.28 In recognition of the historic value (and rarity) of the site, the site's structures and buildings it is considered that the ability to absorb change must be caveated by the fact that any change should be appropriate, should not erode the historic character of the site and indeed should provide an overall positive influence on the site for the future.
- 5.29 The site is therefore of relatively high sensitivity due primarily to the historic landscape attributes including, as it does, nine scheduled monuments and numerous Grade II listed buildings on the adjacent Bicester Heritage land.
- 5.30 For receptors within the highway landscape adjoining the site sensitivity is considered to be less than for the site itself. The landscape is less valuable and is dominated by moving traffic. For the nearby residential landscape the road is also a dominant factor and a detractor in landscape terms and it lies between the housing and the site. Visual impact is examined in the Visual Impact section.
- 5.31 For the landscape receptors to the north of the site (Oxfordshire Estate Farmlands), the rural landscape does not benefit from any statutory landscape designation or protection, though it is recognised within the CDLA landscape report as being an Area of High Landscape Importance. The landscape is therefore locally valued and is relatively susceptible to change.
- 5.32 The overall Sensitivity is judged by considering the aggregate effects of the importance/value of the landscape and its susceptibility to change.
- 5.33 Overall the **Sensitivity** of the site is **Medium/High** (this combines the factors of Importance/Value [Medium/High] and susceptibility to change [also Medium/High]).
- 5.34 For landscape receptors within the Oxfordshire Estate Farmlands, the Sensitivity would also be **Medium/High** (this combines the factors of Importance/Value [Medium] and susceptibility to change [also Medium/High]).
- 5.35 The methodology detailing the criteria for the assessment is contained in Appendix B.

Landscape Effects: Magnitude of Change

- 5.36 The magnitude of change is a combination of the impact of the development on the key features of the landscape and also the area over which these changes are evident.
- 5.37 As described in Section 4, the proposal will comprise a new 4 storey hotel and 'Aparthotel' with parking, plus conference centre. The building layout, position, mass,

scale and form have been the subject of extensive pre-app discussions and design iterations that have informed the design. The key aspects were considered to be the relationship of the new building with the existing large Hangers (Buildings 106 and 79). The overall length of the main hotel is now no longer than the nearby Type C Hanger and no higher, and it is in a similar simple form.

- 5.38 The mass and scale are therefore similar to the hangers which means that the hotel does not compete with these listed structures. At the same time the size of the hotel is large enough to fit in within the existing neighbouring buildings and also allows enough space between buildings such that they each sit within their own surrounds within the airfield perimeter context. The hotel is located within the 'waterfront' development which includes large scale buildings on the perimeter of the airfield.
- 5.39 The magnitude of change is considered taking account of the mitigation proposals that have been described above.
- 5.40 Lighting associated with the new site will be a factor in assessing the magnitude and impact on the surrounding landscape and on visual receptors. Details of the lighting are not known at this stage but it anticipated that there will be a general level of external lighting that will be evident in terms of operational and security lighting as well as other car parking lighting and a general level of light coming from the windows of the hotel itself.
- 5.41 It is impossible to 'screen' this large new building, however the landscape proposals include planting strategic of rows of trees that will cumulatively be effective in breaking up the mass from medium and longer distance views (See Mitigation Section at paragraph 4.5. The existing hangers have rows of trees associated with them which are effective in achieving this effect. (VP1, VP2.1, VP3A).
- 5.42 At completion, the planting will be limited in its effect, but as the planting becomes established the new trees will become progressively more successful in achieving the end vision of breaking up the mass of the building in a similar way to the appearance of the existing hangers.
- 5.43 The magnitude of change within the context of the local landscape is considered to be High taking account of the above factors of local context. The highest magnitude of change will be perceived from within the site itself, however this potential negative impact must be balanced against the positive response that the new development will have as part of the evolving use of the site. The new hotel would become part of the 'waterfront' development on the perimeter of the airfield and would be therefore located within an appropriate context alongside similarly proportioned large hanger buildings. Smaller buildings are located behind these waterfront structures. The Heritage Statement states that although the view from within the airfield would be changed, this

change would not be harmful (to the landscape). It notes that this would also apply from views from the air.

- 5.44 A **Medium to High** magnitude of change will be apparent in local views from the Buckingham Road and adjacent residential landscape fronting onto this road. Opposite the site from properties in Turnpike Road the impact would be significantly moderated or screened completely by intervening mature hedges. Views are considered within the visual impacts section below. The perception of change as a result of the new building would depend upon the maintenance regime for the intervening hedges and how high they are pruned to if at all.
- 5.45 Beyond the airfield boundary the influence on the landscape will diminish with distance, although there will be impacts on the Oxfordshire Estate Farmland landscape to the north east on rising ground. This is a landscape (VP5) that is identified as an Area of High Landscape Importance in the CDLA Landscape Report. In practice the perceived magnitude of change would diminish with distance and with intervening screening features to an acceptable level.
- 5.46 As can be seen from VPs 5, 6 and 7 field hedges are often maintained clipped and low, however other fragments of woodland strips of taller vegetation does have the effect of screening out views towards the airfield. (These are winter views and therefore represent the worst-case scenario).
- 5.47 The new hotel would progressively take up a smaller proportion of the view as distance from the site increases. This effect is captured within the visual impact section of the assessment. Similarly, winter views generally provide a worst-case scenario when leaves are absent and screening elements are more permeable. It is probable that such views and impacts on the landscape would be seen as a negative impact where the introduction of a large new building would be seen as increasing development within an extensive open area. Existing buildings are a mix of dark and light colours and impacts are moderated by existing mature screening trees. The new building is a mix of brick and metal colours which will not be out of place in the context of the existing hangers and ancillary buildings behind the 'waterfront'. The Magnitude of Change from remote landscape receptors such as those above is considered to be **Low**.
- 5.48 The extent of the change is also taken into account when considering the aggregate magnitude of change. Within, and local to, the airfield this extent must be considered to be low. In the case with longer distance views being possible from the landscape to the north east and east at a distance of between 3km and just over 4km away, the **extent of the change** is considered to be **Medium**.
- 5.49 There would be a small loss of landscape fabric to facilitate the new access to the site off the Buckingham Road which comprises a gap of approximately 17m which would be

mitigated with new planting of 122m of hedge. The existing site is currently open grassland and there would be some loss of calcareous grassland which is dealt with separately within comments by the appointed Ecologist.

- 5.50 The overall **Magnitude of Change** for the new development is considered to range from **Medium to Medium/Low**.

Significance of Impact (on the Landscape)

- 5.51 Combining the Sensitivity of the landscape and the Magnitude of Change the **Significance** of effect on the transitional airfield landscape character on the edge of Bicester is judged to be **Moderate/Major**. In terms of the impacts on the local landscape this effect is considered to be an adverse impact. However, this conclusion must be balanced by the larger picture considering the site's future and the continuing use of the airfield within an appropriate use and context. Also key to the assessment is the impact on the historic landscape which has been analysed in detail within the Heritage Impact Statement and has found there to be no significant harm resulting from this proposal. The proposal will help secure the preservation of the valued features of the former airbase and will benefit their restoration. The communal 'place memory' of the site will be preserved through the continued use of the site and its buildings and the new development will make the site more accessible to the public which will add to this 'place memory' with new memories being facilitated.
- 5.52 The **Significance of Impact** on the Oxfordshire Estate Farmlands landscape is considered to be **Moderate adverse**.
- 5.53 Within the methodology in Appendix B the following definitions would be applied and the overall result would be a combination of these descriptions: '
- 5.54 Overall the impact on the airfield and local landscape is considered to be between Moderate and Moderate-Major, though this may reduce as the new surrounding landscape has matured.
- *Major adverse: The proposed development would result in material changes to the landscape of the site, to its landform, scale and pattern which cannot be effectively mitigated. The integrity of the site is compromised and the value substantially undermined.* In this case, because of the reasons stated above in terms of the special context of the site and the conclusions of the Heritage Statement, the integrity of the site is not compromised and the value of the site is not undermined.
 - *Moderate adverse: The proposed development would be out of scale with the landscape and/or result in the partial loss of characteristics of the site.*

6 Visual Assessment

Introduction

- 6.1 The visual impact assessment is a separate exercise to the landscape impact assessment. It consists of assessing the impact on views into and out of the site of the proposed development. The impact takes into account the location of the viewpoint, its sensitivity, the importance of the view and the magnitude of change to the view that the development represents.
- 6.2 The importance of the view is a balance of how visible the site is and by whom it is viewed. Also important is whether the views are short or long term and if any negative changes can be mitigated.

Methodology

- 6.3 Potential viewpoints have been determined from a site visit. In practical terms the site is well screened from most views from the south due to existing buildings, limited local views from the west and north, with only more remote views being possible from receptors to the north east and east.
- 6.4 Private viewpoints have not been accessible and all viewpoints (apart from within the site itself) have been taken from public points of access. From a desk-top study of published maps the likely visual receptors have been determined and these were then verified on site as being appropriate. No photographs have been taken from private property and the impacts from private property can only be estimated from the knowledge of the site and distance from it.
- 6.5 A representative selection of viewpoints is presented here with the locations chosen where there is likely to be an impact with respect to the sensitivity of the users and the magnitude of the change experienced. Other views are included for context and to sometimes demonstrate the lack of view available towards the development.
- 6.6 Refer to Figure 2 for the viewpoint (VP) locations and photos from the viewpoints are contained in Appendix A (Viewpoints). All photos are taken with a 50mm equivalent focal length lens approximating to the human eye.
- 6.7 Mitigation is assumed to be in place on completion of the development for the purpose of assessment of impacts. Winter views are generally considered to be worse than summer views when leaves on the trees and hedges make screening vegetation more effective. This has been taken into account within the assessment.

Sensitivity of Receptors

- 6.8 In this analysis and in common with best practice public viewpoints and public routes and paths are considered the most sensitive locations as the users are moving slowly and most likely using and valuing the view as recreation. Residences with permanent

views can also be in this category. Less sensitive receptors include outdoor sports facilities and outdoor spaces associated with places of work as users are not generally enjoying views as their prime activity. Road and transport corridors are considered lower sensitivity as the landscape experience is transitory and the user's focus is mainly on the activity of driving.

Survey Dates

- 6.9 The site visit was made during clear conditions in the winter month of January 2018 and this therefore represents the worst case scenario in terms of the effectiveness of screening vegetation.

Overall Visibility

- 6.10 The study area for this assessment has been defined as a 3km radius from the site. In practical terms, views beyond this are unlikely to have a significant visual impact due to the distance away from the receptor, the intervening features and the small proportion or angle of view that the new hotel would take up in the overall panorama. Several views have been included in this assessment that are greater than 3km, from rising ground where distant views are possible. These views are included to demonstrate that the views from these points are not significant for the reasons described. In general, the zone of visual influence for significant views is quite close to the site. The furthest receptor from the site identified in this report is VP7 at Goddington. Table 6.1 below provides a summary of the predicted visual impacts.
- 6.11 Local to the site, visual impacts on nearby residences have been identified. The houses shown in VP3D will experience a permanent medium to high change in the view with the new hotel being reasonably dominant depending on the aspect of individual houses and windows. However new tree planting within the site will be effective in the medium to long term in mitigating the visual impact.
- 6.12 Viewpoints considered to have any significant impact are generally those within a 1km radius of the site. All the more remote views that were identified from the site visit were in excess of this and in fact beyond the radius of the defined study area. Receptors between 1km and the viewpoints identified were at lower elevations and intervening vegetation makes it difficult or impossible to experience views of the site and its buildings. Up or beyond the 3km study area, the remoteness of the views mean that the airfield becomes more integrated into the wider landscape structure and becomes difficult to pick out. VP9 is the most open view from an elevated position (approximately 105m AOD). This view does demonstrate, however, that even at this distance the hotel could be seen, though it would take up a very small proportion of the view. Beyond this distance views are generally screened from the site by intervening topography and vegetation and are at a distance where the buildings within the site will comprise an insignificant proportion of any view and will be assimilated within the general view with

other competing elements.

- 6.13 VP1 is a panorama taken from the former airfield watchtower. It shows the view towards the proposed hotel site and pans around to show the wider airfield context including the rising ground from which other views are taken back towards the site. Part of the south east elevation of the hotel would be visible in this view. The view is sensitive and the degree of change is significant, but in the context of the ongoing and future use of the site the impacts are not necessarily adverse. The hotel maintains the building line of the hanger to the south, which itself screens out the majority of the hotel from this view. And the proposed building will be in scale with the large hangers also in the view. The new hotel will bring a modern and contemporary element to the site that will contribute positively to the site's sustainable future and will provide an opportunity for more people to access, recognise and appreciate the value of the retained heritage.
- 6.14 VP2 is from the Pillbox (Scheduled Monument) located just to the south east of the hotel site. The hotel would be in full view in this location.
- 6.15 VP3 is taken from the site boundary adjacent to the Buckingham Road where there is an opening in the boundary screening for access to the airfield. Views here are from the houses opposite and from the road and are directly to the south towards the hotel. The hotel would be a dominant component of the view from this location (VP3A). Views would be towards the narrower north west elevation of the building and would be mitigated by the existing boundary screening to the site plus new structural planting comprising rows of trees, angled to maximise the screening effect in this view. Views would be possible from the road and by road users travelling south west towards Bicester. Road users are normally considered to be less sensitive receptors as they are travelling at speed and will only have fleeting views. Views from this direction are also possible from the housing on the north side of the Buckingham Road. These receptors are of higher sensitivity having permanent views of the development.
- 6.16 There is no screening hedgerow in this location (VP3B) which means that several houses (VP3D) would experience open views towards the hotel. The mitigation described above would be effective in reducing the visual impact from this view.
- 6.17 VP4 taken from minor road leading to Stratton Audley. Glimpsed views are possible through gaps in the roadside hedge 500m from the site. There are nearby public rights of way, but there are no views possible from these.
- 6.18 VP5 is taken from a public right of way 3km from the site. The view is from elevated ground and views are mostly obscured by intervening vegetation, although some glimpses are possible of the tops of the existing hangers. There will be similar glimpses of the upper parts of the hotel.
- 6.19 VP6 is 3.2km away taken from minor road east of the A4421. The topography is raised

in the foreground and the site is viewed through a veil of tree canopies making it difficult to pick out although the white wall of a hanger is visible and other hangers can also just be made out. The upper parts of the hotel would also be seen.

- 6.20 VP7 4.2km from the site is taken from a PRoW to the north east of the site. It is just possible to pick out with white wall of a hanger visible and other hangers can also just be made out. The upper parts of the hotel would also be seen.
- 6.21 VP8 is 4.2km from the site to the east on a minor road and from elevated ground. The view is remote however the extent of the airfield can clearly be made out in this view together with the large buildings. The hotel would clearly be in this view with no intervening screening. Although in clear view the hotel would take up a small proportion of the view and would not be a dominant feature. The viewing receptor in this instance is a road user (less sensitive) and not on a PRoW.
- 6.22 VP 9 is 3.8m away on a minor road and at the end of long distance right of way. The receptor is at a lower level compared to VP8 and the view is largely obscured by

vegetation with only the barest glimpses of the hanger roofs possible.

6.23 In summary the visual receptors and the assessed impacts are as follows:

VP	Distance from site (m)	Sensitivity of receptor	Importance of view	Aggregate Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Extent of Change	Aggregate Magnitude of Change	Significance of Impact
1	190m Listed Building	High	High	High	High	Low	High /Medium	Major
2	25m Scheduled Monument	High	High	High	High	Low	High /Medium	Major
3a	47m Residential	Medium /High	Medium	High /Medium	High	Low	Medium	Moderate /Major
3b	45m Road	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Low	Medium/Low	Minor
3c	45m Road As for 3b	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Low	Medium/Low	Minor
3d	45m Residential as for 3a	Medium /High	Medium/ Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	Moderate
4	500m End of a PRow	Medium /High	Medium	Medium /High	Medium	Low	Medium/Low	Moderate
5	3km PRow	Medium /High	Medium	Medium /High	Medium /Low	Medium	Medium /Low	Moderate /Minor
6	3.26km Road	Low	Medium /Low	Low	Low	Medium	Medium /Low	Moderate /Minor
7	4.2km PRow	Medium /High	Medium	Medium /High	Low	Medium	Medium /Low	Moderate /Minor
8	4.2 Road	Low	Medium /Low	Low	Low	Medium	Medium /Low	Moderate /Minor
9	3.8 PRow	Medium /High	Medium	Medium /High	Low	Medium	Medium /Low	Moderate /Minor

7 Construction, Residual and Cumulative Effects

Construction Effects

- 7.1 The nature of the development will require a period to construct the new access and to erect the new building and this will cause a period of temporary disruption and disturbance to the road.
- 7.2 It is anticipated that working hours will be limited in accordance with good practice and control of other factors such as noise and dust will also be controlled. The development programme is as yet unknown.
- 7.3 Temporary landscape and visual impacts would be relevant to those local receptors on north of and local to the site.
- 7.4 The existing road receives heavy use and traffic is extremely busy on the local junctions and roads. Any increase in site traffic will be a relatively minor impact in terms of effects on landscape or visual receptors in this context.

Residual Effects

- 7.5 Residual effects are those that are apparent once the development is complete and in use. These will include the visual and landscape effects described above in terms of how the development is perceived long term by the various receptors. This relates closely to the quality of the design, the mitigation, the detailing and colour of the buildings and the appearance of the site.
- 7.6 The new development will be screened from the south by existing buildings on the site. To the north mature boundary vegetation will be supplemented by new planting within the site to provide strategic long-term tree screening. The new planting will take time to establish and to become effective. The hotel is large and the new planting will only start to become effective after 5 - 10 years. The hotel will be finished externally with a range of cladding solutions that will reflect the materials found on the existing buildings. Building articulation will provide interest a relief to the facade and elevations. The predominant cladding colour is a mix of brick and metal.
- 7.7 The new development will sit within an established context of similar sized buildings and it will therefore represent an incremental impact on the landscape and on visual receptors rather than a totally new development.
- 7.8 The strategy for mitigation and for providing a landscape framework of robust planting on the site boundary as is portrayed on the Landscape Proposal Plan. This planting is specified with semi-mature trees which would have some impact at completion in terms of screening. The rate of growth will vary depending on the species but one can assume that from completion the new planting would begin to soften the appearance of the building. It would take approximately 5-10 years for this screening to become fully

effective as the trees thicken out.

Cumulative effects

- 7.9 The cumulative effects of any development in landscape and visual terms are important as the impact on the long term integrity and sustainability of the landscape depends on the retention of its inherent qualities. The gradual erosion of these qualities due to the increasing numbers or frequency of developments, or indeed the expansion of existing developments can influence the quality and character of a landscape. The landscape has an established use and the expansion of this use to include an hotel is an appropriate evolution of the site to facilitate the long-term success and sustainability of Bicester Heritage and the site's assets.
- 7.10 As to other developments within the wider area we have not undertaken a search of other planning applications and have no knowledge of other possible developments in the area. Should other applications for development come forward within the site or elsewhere, then these would have to be taken on their own merits.

8 Conclusions

- 8.1 The key characteristics of the underlying local landscape have been significantly eroded through the extensive development of the airfield and ancillary areas and the urban influence of Bicester and the road network. However, positive characteristics remain in terms of the historic attributes of the site and its evolution into a sustainable business. A new contemporary hotel with an associated landscape scheme will be a positive influence on this landscape providing 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.
- 8.2 The landscape would benefit 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 are, while being used within an appropriate context that celebrates this character.
- 8.3 In term of Policy ESD13 Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement, the proposals will have a local impact on nearby landscape receptors and on footpath users, but these impacts will be mitigated over time with proposed new structural tree planting. The proposals have been assessed within a Heritage Impact Assessment which have concluded that the proposed development will help to ensure that the site and its constituent buildings have a sustainable future, thus preserving those collective memories. The proposals do not involve the demolition of any of the existing buildings. The proposed hotel and conference centre will make the heritage assets more publicly available. The new uses associated with Bicester Heritage will help to create new memories that will add to the site's communal value.
- 8.4 In terms of the natural environment, there are ample opportunities for ecological improvements which will offset the loss of the poorer grassland which makes up the majority of the site; these include the long-term conservation management of strategic areas of species-poor grassland outside the development footprint but within the airfield. In this way the proposed development will be able to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the LWS, as per Policy Bicester 8.

Landscape Impacts

- 8.5 In terms of the impacts on the local landscape the effect is considered to be a Moderate/Major adverse impact. However, this conclusion must be balanced by the larger picture considering the site's future and the continuing use of the airfield within an appropriate use and context. Also key to the assessment is the impact on the historic landscape which has been analysed in detail within the Heritage Impact Statement and

has found there to be no significant harm resulting from this proposal. The proposal will help secure the preservation of the valued features of the former airbase and will benefit their restoration. The communal 'place memory' of the site will be preserved through the continued use of the site and its buildings and the new development will make the site more accessible to the public which will add to this 'place memory' with new memories being facilitated.

Visual Impacts

- 8.6 The impacts on the wider landscape are gradually reduced as the distance increases and so from the elevated landscape to the north east and east the impact is Moderate.
- 8.7 In visual terms receptors considered to have any significant impact are generally those within a 1km radius of the site. The more remote views that were identified from the site visit were in excess of this and in fact beyond the radius of the defined study area.
- 8.8 Local views from the Buckingham Road and some houses near to the road would experience a significant adverse impact in the view, however this would be mitigated in the medium to longer term by the establishment of strategic rows of tree planting within the site that would break up the mass of the building and help to screen the views.
- 8.9 Within the site itself views are sensitive, being within the setting to the Conservation Area and including numerous listed buildings and scheduled monuments. There will be a major change to some views, for example from the former Control Tower. However, the hotel is not out of scale with the other 'waterfront' hangers and is orientated on the same building line as one of the hangers. The new building will not compete visually with these historic structures and the materials used for the new hotel will be sensitive to those already used within the site. In the round, taking account of the existing and future uses and context of the site, the visual impact is considered to be acceptable. In time the new planting around the new hotel will provide a maturity and setting to the building and it is considered that the hotel will be assimilated successfully into this historic site.

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