



Historic England

BUILDINGS 108 AND 113 (TYPE C HANGARS)

List Entry Summary

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: BUILDINGS 108 AND 113 (TYPE C HANGARS)

List entry Number: 1392762

Location

BUILDINGS 108 AND 113 (TYPE C HANGARS), A421 (SE)

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County: Oxfordshire

District: Cherwell

District Type: District Authority

Parish: Launton

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 01-Dec-2005

Legacy System Information

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 500286

Asset Groupings

This list entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

List entry Description

Summary of Building

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Reasons for Designation

History

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Details

LAUNTON

1714/0/10019 A421 (SE) 01-DEC-05 Technical Site, RAF Bicester Buildings 108 and 113 (Type C hangars)

GV II Aircraft hangars with annexes housing associated stores, workshops and offices. 1937. By the Air Ministry's Directorate of Works and Buildings, to drawing number 872 and 1581/35. Steel main frame and roof trusses, brickwork in Flemish bond, sheet roofing replacing asbestos slates.

PLAN: Large sheds with full height steel doors at each end, running to external gantries, with a series of single storey lean-to annexes on either long flank, in part rising to two storeys, which housed workshops, rest rooms and squadron offices. The roof a series of transverse ridges with hipped ends, behind a parapet, and with deep apron above doors.

EXTERIOR: At mid height of side walls are 10 large 32-pane fixed steel casements separated by concrete piers, and with continuous sill and lintel bands. Above the windows a high parapet to flush coping. One bay at each end, also in concrete, is slightly brought forward, and with a higher parapet; a tall single light with horizontal bars is centred to the bay. The short ends have full height and width steel doors, with 12-pane lights at the top, under a deep projecting concrete rail carrying the rolling headgear; beyond the opening a light steel lattice beam projects out and is carried by a light steel strutted support, with steel ground-stops for the doors. Above the doors, and contained by the wing walls of the first bays, a deep apron with asbestos-cement slate hanging. The doors originally had sand or gravel fill between inner and outer sheeting at the lower panels, to enhance blast protection. Replacement windows to annexes.

INTERIOR: Plain concrete floor, steel stanchions exposed internally carry deep lattice trusses in steel channel, double to top and bottom chords, set to the ridges of the transverse roofs and shaped to the hipped ends. At right angles to these are cantilevered members, in steel angle, at 15ft (4.6m) centres, meeting at and carrying the internal gutters. The bays adjoining the doors have horizontal wind-bracing members. The roof slopes are underlined in softwood square-edged boarding.

HISTORY: The Technical site at Bicester, separated from the Domestic Site, still has many of the original buildings, mostly of 1926 but with others added during successive phases of the 1930's Expansion Period. In 1937, two Type 'C' hangars were added to the earlier pair of hangars on the site, and the four are grouped symmetrically at the end of the axial avenue, and sharing broad concrete aprons. The C-type shed was the standard hangar type for the post-1934 Expansion Scheme, originally designed in 1934 and of which 155 examples were built. Its dimensions (300ft long, 150ft span and clear height of 35ft), were intended to accommodate 100-ft span heavy bombers, enabling new specifications to be issued to aircraft manufacturers by the Air Ministry. It evolved from the earlier Type A, and first versions had exposed gabled ends to the roofs: after 1935 the hipped version behind parapets, as here, was normal.

example.

Until the onset of perimeter dispersal from the late 1930s all the aircraft of an operational airfield - typically an omni-directional flying field of 1000 yards diameter - would be accommodated in its hangars: their construction took up a considerable part of the construction cost for a new site, the 6 hangars at Upper Heyford taking up 30% of its total budget. As a consequence, military planners shadowed aircraft development through the planning and development of hangar buildings, a fact which underpins the importance of the Bicester group and their relationship to this uniquely important site. Although subjected to some loss of original detail, these form an historically important and prominent part of the site as viewed from the flying field.

Bicester is the best-preserved of the bomber bases constructed as the principal arm of Sir Hugh Trenchard's expansion of the RAF from 1923, which was based on the philosophy of offensive deterrence. It retains, better than any other military airbase in Britain, the layout and fabric relating to both pre-1930s military aviation and the development of Britain's strategic bomber force - and the manner in which its expansion reflected domestic political pressures as well as events on the world stage - in the period up to 1939. It was this policy of offensive deterrence that essentially dominated British air power and the RAF's existence as an independent arm of the military in the inter-war period, and continued to determine its shape and direction in the Second World War and afterwards during the Cold War. The grass flying field still survives with its 1939 boundaries largely intact, bounded by a group of bomb stores built in 1938/9 and airfield defences built in the early stages of the Second World War. For much of the Second World War RAF Bicester functioned as an Operational Training Unit, training Canadians, Australians and New Zealanders as well as British air crews for service in Bomber Command. These OTUs, of which Bicester now forms the premier surviving example, fulfilled the critical requirement of enabling bomber crews - once individual members had trained in flying, bombing, gunnery and navigation - to form and train as units.

For further historical details see Buildings Nos 79 and 137 (Type 'A' Hangars).

Selected Sources

Dobinson, C, Airfield Themes, (1997)

Francis, P, British Military Airfield Architecture From Airships To The Jet Age, (1996)

Francis, P , RAF Bicester, (1996)

National Grid Reference: SP 59348 24543, SP 59375 24386

Map



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