

Heritage Advice

Buildings 130 and 131 Technical Workshops at Bicester Heritage - Reference 18/00827/F

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14.6.2018

Historic Context

The Technical site at Bicester retains many of the original buildings, mostly of 1926 date, but with others added during successive phases of the 1930s Expansion Period as Britain re-armed in the face of the growing threat from Nazi Germany. In 1927 the RAF Motor Transport Section was based in the Motor Transport Sheds and Yard, of which Buildings 130 & 131 formed the west and south buildings. Including Building 129, following alterations, the three building ranges enclose a courtyard area.

The workshops' construction is of a steel framework with gables clad in brickwork. The original timber doors were replaced by steel roller-shutters by the RAF under their Expansion Scheme. The roof-cladding was diamond-shaped asbestos tiles which were replaced with diamond cement fibre slate tiles, under the new development by Bicester Heritage. Further small extensions to the sheds were undertaken by the RAF for a Motor Transport office, and oil and paint stores annexes were added.

Under the RAF Expansion Period Scheme A, a taller Special Repair Bay Shed was formed (Building 131) with clerestory glazing over the workshop doors to allow more natural light into the special workshop area.

Proposal

Sports-Purpose Ltd at Bicester Heritage are seeking Listed Building Consent for changes to the roof to the west elevation of Building 131, and a new opening in an internal wall in Building 130 as part of their tenant fitting out works. The buildings are to be used for storing, repair & display of classic sports cars.

Specifically, in Building 131 a new stainless steel flue is proposed to be installed in the existing pitched slate roof with minor adaption of the roof covering disturbed by the new chimney.

In Building 130 it is proposed to form a new 2400 x 2400mm high opening in the brick separating wall, with decoration and details being made good to match as detailed in the HPA for the site. The buildings are in the former airfield Conservation Area.

Advice

The proposed works will have little impact upon the significance of the two buildings. Whilst the flue will be visible to the rear elevation, this should be balanced against the successful use of the building by the current tenants. It will not be visible from within the courtyard area where most activity takes place. The roofing is later and is not harmed by the modification to insert the flue.

The proposal to remove the central section of the internal brick-wall will enable a better use of the workshop space. This large expanse of walling is of single brick thickness and rises to the building

ridge, but is otherwise unremarkable. Originally, it separated the workshop's bays. The proposed opening will allow for better modern use of the workshops, but will not prevent an understanding of the earlier internal arrangements.

The proposed alterations allow for the continuing use of the workshops, which are supported in the interests of continuing, successful uses for these historic buildings.