

Case Officer: Rebekah Morgan

Recommendation: Approve

Applicant: Bicester Heritage

Proposal: Change of Use of Building 89 from Sui Generis MOD Use to offices (B1)

Expiry Date: 26 July 2019

Extension of Time:

1. APPLICATION SITE AND LOCALITY

- 1.1. The application site comprises the former RAF Bicester Airfield which is located to the north of Bicester on the outskirts of the town centre. The site is now occupied by Bicester Heritage, a company specialising in historic motoring and aviation. The site occupied by Bicester Heritage comprises the main technical site area (where the majority of the buildings are located) and the flying field which extends to the north and east of the main technical site area. For the purposes of this application, the site area and redline just relates to a single building (and access) and does not include any other part of the site.
- 1.2. The whole of the site (including the flying field) is designated as a conservation area and the majority of the buildings within the main technical area are listed (grade 2). There are also a number of Scheduled Monuments located on the edges of the flying field and within the main technical area. Vehicular and pedestrian access to the site is gained just north of the roundabout on Buckingham Road. There are residential properties located to the west and south-west of the site.
- 1.3. This application relates to Building 89 which is located immediately adjacent to the main access to the technical site. The building was the Guard and Fire House when in active military use. The building is a rectangular building housing a guardhouse and office with bell turret centred over the unenclosed veranda to the front. There are cells and a walled exercise yard to the rear. It is built from dark red brick and pointing of grey mortar.
- 1.4. The following constraints relate to the site:
 - The site is located within the Conservation Area of RAF Bicester;
 - The building is a Grade II listed building;
 - The majority of other buildings on the site are either Grade 2 listed or locally listed;
 - There are a number of Scheduled Monuments located within the main technical site area;
 - There is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within 2 km of the site (the quarry to the north);
 - There is a proposed District Wildlife Site to the south of the site on the opposite side of Skimmingdish Lane;
 - Much of the adjoining airfield is allocated as a Local Wildlife Site;
 - The site is bordered to the south by the A4421 Skimmingdish Lane and to the west by the Buckingham Road;
 - There are residential properties to the south, south-west and west of the site (opposite sides of the road);

- The site is allocated in the Cherwell Local Plan for 'Tourism Development' (Policy Bicester 8) and there is a site adjacent which is allocated for 'New Employment Development' (Policy Bicester 11).

2. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 2.1. The application seeks a Change of Use from Sui Generis (MOD use) to Office Use (B1). There are no internal or external alterations proposed to the building.

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1. There is planning history relating to the wider Bicester Heritage site, with many of the original buildings having been converted and re-used. There is no specific planning history relating to Building 89.

4. PRE-APPLICATION DISCUSSIONS

- 4.1. No pre-application discussions have taken place with regard to this proposal.

5. RESPONSE TO PUBLICITY

- 5.1. This application has been publicised by way of a site notice displayed near the site, by advertisement in the local newspaper, and by letters sent to all properties immediately adjoining the application site that the Council has been able to identify from its records. The final date for comments was **12 July 2019**, although comments received after this date and before finalising this report have also been taken into account.

- 5.2. No comments have been raised by third parties.

6. RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

- 6.1. Below is a summary of the consultation responses received at the time of writing this report. Responses are available to view in full on the Council's website, via the online Planning Register.

PARISH/TOWN COUNCIL AND NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUMS

- 6.2. LAUNTON PARISH COUNCIL: **No objections** or comments.

STATUTORY CONSULTEES

- 6.3. OCC HIGHWAYS: **No objections**.

7. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

- 7.1. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 7.2. The Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 - Part 1 was formally adopted by Cherwell District Council on 20th July 2015 and provides the strategic planning policy framework for the District to 2031. The Local Plan 2011-2031 – Part 1 replaced a number of the 'saved' policies of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 1996 though many of its policies are retained and remain part of the development plan. The relevant planning policies of Cherwell District's statutory Development Plan are set out below:

CHERWELL LOCAL PLAN 2011 - 2031 PART 1 (CLP 2031 Part 1)

- PSD1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- SLE1 – Employment Development
- ESD15 - The Character of the Built and Historic Environment
- Bicester 8 – Former RAF Bicester

CHERWELL LOCAL PLAN 1996 SAVED POLICIES (CLP 1996)

- C28 – Layout, design and external appearance of new development

7.3. Other Material Planning Considerations

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
- RAF Bicester Conservation Area Appraisal

8. APPRAISAL

8.1. The key issues for consideration in this case are:

- Principle of development
- Design, impact on the character of the area and impact on heritage assets
- Residential amenity
- Highway safety

Principle of development

8.2. The application is seeking a Change of Use of the building to B1 (Offices) to accommodate a new business on the site. There are a number of other business uses on site including the offices for Bicester Heritage, themselves.

8.3. The former RAF technical site has been redeveloped over the past few years with the majority of the old buildings on the site having been refurbished to a high standard and brought back into viable, commercial uses linked to the historic motor car industry.

8.4. Policy Bicester 8 of the Cherwell Local Plan 2031 is a site specific policy and states '*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, leisure, recreation, employment and community uses*'.

8.5. This proposal is 'conservation-led' in terms of bringing a former building back into use. The building is Grade II listed, however the re-use can occur without any internal or external works to the building.

8.6. Overall, the proposal is considered to be compatible with Policy Bicester 8 of the Cherwell Local Plan 2031 and would complement the other uses on the site and the future policy aspirations for the site. Therefore, the principle of the development is considered to be acceptable.

Design, impact on the character of the area and impact on heritage assets

8.7. The property is a Grade II Listed building and located within the RAF Bicester Conservation Area. The proposal is for a Change of Use only and does not involve

alterations to the appearance of the building. Therefore, the proposal would not have a detrimental impact on the character of the area or the heritage assets, including the Listed Building, the setting of neighbouring Listed Buildings or the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

- 8.8. In this respect the proposal therefore accords with government guidance contained within the NPPF, Policy ESD15 of the Cherwell Local Plan 2031 and saved Policy C28 of the Cherwell Local Plan 1996.

Residential amenity

- 8.9. The building, which is the subject of this application, is located within the technical site on the opposite side of Buckingham Road to the nearest residential properties. Due to the type of proposed use, the proposal would not cause harm to residential amenity and the proposal therefore complies with Policy ESD15 of the Cherwell Local Plan Part 1.

Highway safety

- 8.10. The site has adequate vehicular access and sufficient parking within the technical site to accommodate any additional car use associated with the proposed change of use. Furthermore, the site is within walking distance of existing bus stops providing public transport links to the site from the town centre and beyond.
- 8.11. OCC Highways commented that '*the proposals are unlikely to have any adverse impact upon the local highway network from a traffic and safety point of view*'.
- 8.12. The proposal would not have a detrimental impact on highway safety and is therefore considered to be acceptable in this regard.

9. PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION

- 9.1. The NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Paragraph 8 requires that the three dimensions to sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) are not undertaken in isolation, but are sought jointly and simultaneously.
- 9.2. The proposal would bring a historic building back into use having a positive impact on the historic environment of the site and provides an economically viable use for the building. The use is considered to be sustainable as it re-uses an existing building and workers/customers have the option to access the site via public transport. There are no proposed alterations to the Listed Building; therefore the proposal would not have a detrimental impact on the historic environment. The proposed use compliments other uses on the site and meets the overall policy aspirations for the site.
- 9.3. The proposal is considered to comply with Government Guidance contained within the NPPF, Policies PSD1, SLE1, ESD15 and Bicester 8 of the Cherwell Local Plan 2031 and saved Policy C28 of the Cherwell Local Plan 1996. Therefore the proposal is recommended for approval, subject to appropriate planning conditions.

Case Officer: Rebekah Morgan

DATE: 17/07/2019

Checked By: Alex Keen

DATE: 26/07/2019
