

**BICESTER HERITAGE
(FORMER RAF BICESTER)**

**ALTERATIONS TO BUILDINGS 81, 97 AND 2NO TANK
STORES, CONSTRUCTION OF NEW BIN STORE AND
CAR PORT**



**DESIGN AND ACCESS
STATEMENT**

January 2019

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INTRODUCTION

The following Design and Access Statement has been prepared to accompany the Planning Application for “*change of use from Sui Generis MOD use to various commercial use of Buildings no 81 and 97 with associated physical alterations in addition to creation of 1 no bin store adjoining Building 146, alteration to 2no former Tank Housings to create additional bin storage and the erection of a new car port behind Building 129*” at Bicester Heritage, Buckingham Road, Bicester, OX26 5HA.

UNDERSTANDING

General Description

RAF Bicester is located to the north of Bicester in Oxfordshire. The site, as a whole, is considered to be a prime example of a military airbase reflecting pre-1930s military aviation and comprises the best-preserved bomber airfield representative of the bomber stations built as part of Sir Hugh Trenchard’s Home Defence Expansion Scheme in the 1920s.

Since acquiring the airbase in 2013, Bicester Heritage have already successfully implemented several phases of works to convert many of the existing buildings into usable workshops for businesses to create a Centre for Motoring and Aviation Excellence.

This application seeks permission to carry out alterations to a few of the remaining untouched buildings around the technical site to make them usable for commercial operation; the application also seeks to create a 3no bin stores located around the site to conceal bins associated with the businesses. A separate LBC application covers the creation of the bin store between Building 146 and 147.

Outline History of RAF Bicester

1918-1919: The airfield at Bicester was originally used as a training station for the Royal Flying Corps. Following closure shortly after opening, it re-opened in 1 October 1918 as home of 44 Training Depot Service, where pilots were prepared for service on the front line in France. The squadron returned in February 1919 and was disbanded; the 44 Training Depot Squadron was also disbanded in January 1920. The station closed in March 1920, following which, the entire camp was demolished.

1924-1934: Under Sir Hugh Trenchard, the country’s defensive structure was reviewed and in 1925, the ‘Air Defence of Great Britain’ strategy was introduced. Work was started on the reconstruction of the abandoned bases at Bicester and Upper Heyford, located 7miles to the west of Bicester. Whilst proposals at Upper Heyford were fully implemented, the development at Bicester was reduced following deceleration of military development and a review of Trenchard’s proposals in 1930; subsequently only two of the six proposed type-C hangers were built.

1934-1939: Following the collapse of the Geneva disarmament talks in 1933, the RAF expansion scheme got underway. RAF Bicester saw extensive alterations to many of the

existing buildings along with the construction of several new types, including Petrol Tanker Sheds, an Ambulance garage, two large type-C aircraft hangers, Watch office and Tower and bomb stores. It is likely that it was during this period that Building 103 was built, to the standardised plans produced by the Air Ministry.

1940-1945: Following the outbreak of World War II, the station's role changed its focus towards training. The outset of the conflict saw the construction of many pillboxes and trenches for close defence of the airfield and the airfield was enlarged. Due to the compact nature of RAF Bicester and lack of concrete runways, it was unsuitable for night flying and occasionally became the subject of unserviceability. Alternative landing grounds at Hinton-in-the-Hedges and Croughton were brought into use. The airbase continued its use for training and in 1943 primarily became used for storing vital equipment necessary for the invasion of north-west Europe.

2013-today: Bicester Heritage purchased the site in 2013. In 2015, following significant restoration works, the site's designation of 'at risk' was removed under the ownership of Bicester Heritage. Bicester Heritage currently operates as a centre of excellence for historic vehicles and is home to over 40 businesses and over 200 skilled workers.

Statutory Listing

- The Technical site, domestic site and airfield are all designated as a conservation area - RAF Bicester.
- A number of the buildings located about Bicester Heritage are listed at Grade II.
- Building 146 and 147 are listed Grade II (English Heritage ref: I393034); the listing entry can be found in Appendix A.
- Buildings 81 and 97 are not listed.
- The tank stores are not listed.

Ecological

Environmental report: the importance of biodiversity is highlighted by current legislation, particularly with regard to protected species and their habitats. The site and landscape at Bicester Heritage contain areas that could form suitable habitats for wild animals, birds, bats and reptiles.

Walkover surveys of Buildings 81 and 97 have been carried out by Ecology Solutions Ltd in November 2018. The surveys found no evidence that the building was currently being used by bats and that the opportunities for bats were low.

The ecological reports (appended) conclude that the proposed works will have no affect on the any roosting bats and will therefore not require further surveys or a Natural England license.

Planning policies

The proposal aligns with the following policies adopted by Cherwell District Council.

Relevant Local policies identified in the Non-statutory Cherwell Local Plan 2011:

- EN40
- EN44
- EN45A
- EN48
- EN49A
- EN51

Relevant policies listed within the Adopted Local Plan 2011-2031:

- Policy Bicester 8: Former RAF Bicester
- Paragraphs C.89 - C.93

Relevant Planning History

Having reviewed the online records held by Cherwell District Council, the most relevant planning history to the development proposal is outlined in the table in Appendix C.

The approved permissions that have been implemented have been delivered to a high standard. It is noted that the site has an extensive planning history since disposal from military use and ownership took effect.

Consultation

Bicester Heritage is in frequent dialogue with officers from Cherwell District Council (CDC) regarding development at the site and this has established a positive relationship with the council.

Discussions prior to the submission of this application have taken place with officers during 2018. All were generally supportive of the opportunity to find a suitable reuse of the various structures and buildings, subject to the proposed level of intervention required.

DESIGN

This application is in regard to the following works:

- The conversion and alteration of Buildings 81 and 97 (neither listed) to create vehicle access to enable a relevant future business use. To avoid further deterioration of the structure by preserving it through use.
- The alteration of 2 no derelict Tank stores to create bin storage.
- The addition of a new brick enclosure adjacent to Building 146 (listed Grade II) to create bin storage and alteration to an existing door and window to create access to an accessible WC.
- The construction of a new car port and area of hardstanding in the orchard car park.

Building 81 (Reservoir)

Proposal: change of use from Sui Generis MOD for use as a workshop and/or

showroom/ and/or light industrial unit (B1(c) and/or B2 and/or sui generis motor sales showroom. To enable this use the following alterations are required: creation of 4no roller doors for access for vehicles and 2no timber doors for pedestrians; new grasscrete/ turfstone hardstanding and access route; installation of 4no new rooflights to the flat roof; installation of new internal lighting and heating, internal and exterior decoration, external repairs, lighting and signage all in accordance with the HPA.

Building 81, built c. 1924, is part of a group of buildings including the water tower (building 82) and the power house (building 84). It is currently unused due to its constraints from its former use as a reservoir. Internally, the reservoir is divided into two tanks.

In order to create a viable future for the building and preserve it, it is proposed to make alterations to enable business function to be facilitated which provides a logical future for the building. It is proposed to install 4no flat roof lights within the roof structure of the reservoir to provide daylight internally; the rooflights will be concealed by a parapet wall and will therefore not be visible from the ground.

The 4no large openings in the elevations are proposed to provide access for vehicles in to the interior; the openings will be 2.6m wide and be fitted with roller shutters to match elsewhere across the technical site. 2no doors are proposed in the south-east elevation to provide pedestrian access; the openings are to be fitted with painted timber doors to match elsewhere. New bulk head lighting and signage will be fitted in accordance with the HPA.

The existing road adjacent to building 82 is to be extended, using a grasscrete/turfstone (or similar) block paving system, across the grass area leading to up to and around building 81, to provide access to both sets of double doors, on both sides; a short concrete ramp is required in front of the new doors to provide level access internally. Reinforced grass paving has been successfully used elsewhere around the technical site and is visually low-key, which will minimise the visual impact on the building's setting.

Building 97 (Inflammable Store)

Proposal: change of use from Sui Generis MOD for use as a workshop and/or showroom/ and/or light industrial unit (B1(c) and/or B2 and/or sui generis motor sales showroom. To enable this use the following alterations are required: the widening of 2no existing openings to create access for vehicles, 2no pairs of steel doors to be replaced with timber glazed doors; replacement of 1no pair of steel doors with new glass door and panel; replacement of steel louvres over the existing windows with solid glass lights; removal of 2no internal masonry walls to create larger internal space, to include installation of new steelwork to support roof structure; installation of new internal lighting and heating, internal and exterior decoration, external repairs, lighting and signage all in accordance with the HPA.

Building 97, built c. 1926, was built for use as the 'Inflammable Store'; located near to the Lubricant Store (building 96) it would have been used for storage of paint and other inflammable items. It is currently used for storage of car parts in connection with an existing business operating out of part of Building 99 opposite. The building is currently in poor condition and in need of repair and restoration.

The existing doors are painted steel; it is proposed to remove the 3no pairs of steel doors to the principle elevation and replace them with 2no pairs of part-glazed painted timber doors and a single full-height glass door and fixed light to the central opening. The timber doors are to match the detailing of existing timber doors nearby.

The width of the two side openings is to be increased in order to allow for vehicles to access the building for storage/works or display. The reveals to these openings are to be reformed using the existing bricks where possible, or new matching bricks where necessary. The existing concrete lintols are to be removed and a new steel beam is to be installed across the width of the three openings; the steel is to be faced with three new cast concrete lintols to match the detail and appearance of the existing.

The existing concrete threshold ramp is to be removed from in front of the three doors to provide level access internally.

4no internal brick walls are proposed to be removed in order to combine the spaces to create a larger, single space for use by the business. New steel beams are to be inserted on the lines of the wall to support the roof structure.

It is also proposed to carefully remove the steel louvres from the top lights of the 4no steel windows across the principle elevation and replace them with new pieces of glass; this will allow additional day light into building.

New bin storage between Buildings 146 and 147 (Operations Block)

Proposal: the construction of a new brick enclosure along an existing wall with timber louvered doors to provide storage for commercial wheelie bins; alteration of an existing window and door to create access to a proposed accessible WC in the existing WC block.

Buildings 146 and 147 are listed Grade II, however, both are in need of significant repair. The buildings are not currently used. There are no works being proposed to these buildings as part of this application.

The bin store enclosure is to be of red brick construction, to match the aesthetics of the bricks around the site, with two pairs of green painted timber louvered doors to provide access; the doors will provide natural ventilation to the internal space. Additional air bricks are to be integrated into the new enclosing walls. A bitumen roof is to be constructed over the new enclosure; this is to be built in connection to the replacement of the existing roof over the adjoining currently unused WC.

The easternmost window, in the adjoining WC block, is to be removed and the existing opening altered to create a 1m wide doorway and a narrower window. A new painted timber door and frame is to be fitted into the altered door opening; a new metal casement window, to match the details of the existing, is to be fitted into the reformed window opening; the window is to contain privacy glass. The existing adjacent timber door (leading to additional WC's) is to be replaced on a like-for-like basis. New sanitaryware and walls and floor finishes are to be installed.

The palette of materials and scale of the proposed bin enclosure is considered to be in keeping with the existing fabric and result in minimal impact to the overall aesthetics of listed buildings 146 and 147; the overall presentation of the area by concealing bins, which are currently stored in this location, will be greatly improved.

Tank Stores (behind Hangar 108 and 137)

Proposal: alterations to the 2no extant Tank Housings to create storage areas for commercial wheelie bins. Works proposed include: the removal of sections of brick wall to create access; removal of the existing concrete oil tank footings and consolidation of the concrete slabs internally to create a level surface and threshold; raising the height of the front brick wall of the housing by Hangar 137 to screen bins behind.

The housings are considered to be later structures and were built to house service equipment. Both housings in this application are constructed using two different types of brick. Neither structure is noted as having any architectural value within the Conservation Area Appraisal and neither currently serves any purpose.

The removal of short sections of wall to both housings will enable their reuse and reduce the number of commercial bins visible around the technical site which will enhance the setting of the overall site.

Car Port (behind Building 129/130)

Proposal: the construction of a new steel framed, open sided, car port with monopitch corrugated sheet roof. It is proposed to extend the existing grasscrete car parking area and create a connection to the central drive to improve circulation around the parking area. It is proposed to remove 3no trees located behind Building 129.

The proposed car port is to be used for displaying of historic vehicles on open days and during special events.

The car port is to be built of green painted, galvanised steel box section primary structure with a secondary roof structure of timber with a PVC coated corrugated steel sheet roof covering. New gutters are to be black half-round with black, circular downpipes, to match the other new rainwater goods around the site.

A Grasscrete/Turfstone (or similar) reinforced paving system is to be used to extend the existing hardstanding area (staff carpark) up to the edge of building 129 to provide vehicle access. It is proposed to continue the reinforced paving northwards to create a route for vehicles to link back to the central driveway. Reinforced grass paving has been successfully used elsewhere around the technical site and is visually low-key, which will minimise the visual impact on the building's setting.

Three trees are proposed to be removed in order to construct the car port.

The palette of materials and scale of the proposed car port is considered to be in keeping with other structures about the technical site and will be of an appropriate aesthetic when read against the adjacent buildings.

ACCESS

The site has existing level vehicular access and external parking spaces. The proposals will utilise the existing access to and around the Technical Site and will not increase or decrease the number of parking spaces available.

The proposals seek to provide vehicle access into the Buildings 81 and 97 for use as workshops and/or showroom and/or light industrial units.

Generally, the proposals seek to create level access internally to all buildings and structures.

SUMMARY

The proposed development of buildings 81 and 97 will support the continued development of the Technical Site and contribute to securing an economically viable future for the buildings at Bicester Heritage.

The proposed development is in accordance with Policy Bicester 8. It is sensitive to, and will help to preserve, the historic fabric and layout of the existing building and wider site.

The proposed development is in accordance with other policies of the Development Plan, including, Policy SLE1 (Employment Development) BSC7

The proposed development will facilitate the proposed use and the alterations are considered to be of an appropriate scale and to respect the character of the area in accordance with Policy SLE1 (Employment Development).

The proposed development will deliver high quality design that complements the asset and is in accordance with Policy ESD15 (Character of Built and Historic Environment).

Therefore, in accordance with Policy PSD1 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development) and having regard to paragraph 14 of the NPPF the proposed development should be approved without delay.

All of the buildings and structures included within this application are currently unused, with the exception of building 97 (which is underutilised). The proposed alterations will allow for each of the buildings to have a viable future function which contributes to the continuing growth of Bicester Heritage.

The proposals have been developed so that their various proposed uses fit well with the historic setting of the wider site, whilst also meeting the physical and functional requirements set by the client.

APPENDIX A

Listing Description for Buildings 146 and 147 (Station Offices and Operation Block)

SP5924 A 421 (SOUTH-EAST SIDE) 1714/0/10061 RAF Bicester: Technical Site 01-DEC-05
Building Nos 146 and 147 (Station offices and Operation Block)

GV II

Station administrative offices (147) with attached Operations Block. Dated 1926. By the Air Ministry's Directorate of Works and Buildings, to drawing number 1443/24 (147) and 1161/24 (146). Dark red brickwork in English bond, hipped asbestos-cement slate roofs.

PLAN: The forward office building, in 2 storeys with part basement, is a long rectangular range with slightly brought forward hipped pavilion ends to a central entrance leading to entrance hall, with transverse internal corridor, and taken through with a link passageway, to the separate operations range in one storey, set parallel with the main building across narrow courtyards. The traversed brick wall around the operations block has been removed.

EXTERIOR: Main front in 2+3+2 bays, with steel casements in 2 lights with transom and mullion, to flush concrete lintels with slight stopped chamfer, and stooled sills. The recessed centre has 2/2-panel doors and over-light flanked by casements, and under a verandah with later corrugated asbestos-cement roof to hipped returns carried on 4 square concrete slightly chamfered posts to bases and wide impost heads. Above this a central bulls-eye light flanked by small casements; this section has a flat roof at eaves level. The right return has 3 and the left 2 casements at each floor, and the plain rear has regular close-set windows. To the right of the door is a small ridge stack. All quoins have brick rustication.

A simple low corridor with pitched roof connects to the long hipped operations building, in 10 bays with tall casements, and 2 on each return. There is some later infill between the blocks. Both ranges have exposed rafters to open eaves.

INTERIOR: Retains original joinery including panelled doors, circular aperture to camera obscura. Dog-leg stairs with iron balusters and wreathed handrail.

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. Sited at the main gate, facing the Guardhouse (qv) across the main avenue, this building fulfilled both a key operational and administrative function - one that lent it a degree of architectural treatment only also afforded to the Guardhouse. It comprises one of the first examples of permanent designs for Britain's independent air force, part of a uniquely important site.

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).

Heritage Category:

Listing

List Entry No :

1393034

Grade:

II

County: Oxfordshire**District:** Cherwell**Parish:** Launton

For all entries pre-dating 4 April 2011 maps and national grid references do not form part of the official record of a listed building. In such cases the map here and the national grid reference are generated from the list entry in the official record and added later to aid identification of the principal listed building or buildings.

For all list entries made on or after 4 April 2011 the map here and the national grid reference do form part of the official record. In such cases the map and the national grid reference are to aid identification of the principal listed building or buildings only and must be read in conjunction with other information in the record.

Any object or structure fixed to the principal building or buildings and any object or structure within the curtilage of the building, which, although not fixed to the building, forms part of the land and has done so since before 1st July, 1948 is by law to be treated as part of the listed building.

This map was delivered electronically and when printed may not be to scale and may be subject to distortions.

List Entry NGR:

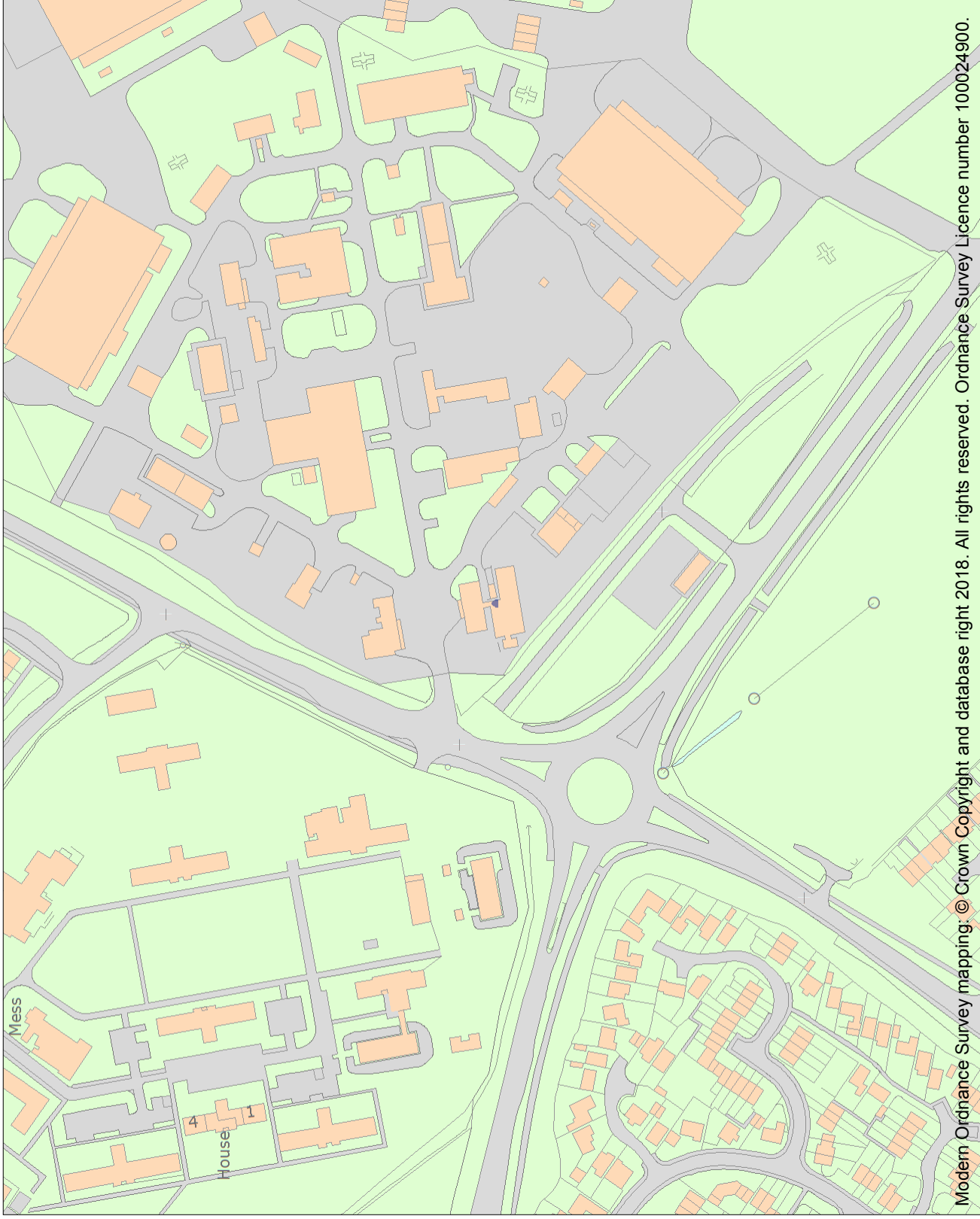
SP 59066 24382

Map Scale:

1:2500

Print Date:

17 January 2019



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Name: BUILDING NOS 146 AND 147 (STATION OFFICES AND OPERATION BLOCK)



Historic England

HistoricEngland.org.uk

APPENDIX B

**Ecology Report by
Ecology Solutions Ltd**

APPENDIX C

List of Relevant Planning History

| Reference | Description | Decision |
|------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| 18/01333/F | Extension to existing Technical Site to provide new employment units comprising flexible B1(c) light industrial, B2 (general industrial), B8 (storage or distribution) uses with ancillary offices, storage, display and sales, together with associated access, parking and landscaping. | Awaiting Decision |
| 18/01253/F | Erection of hotel and conference facility with associated access, parking, and landscaping. | Awaiting Decision |
| 17/00541/DISC | Discharge of Condition 4 (plans for buildings 129 and 131) of 16/01806/LB. | Application Permitted 21/12/2017 |
| 17/00540/DISC | Discharge of Condition 4 (plans for buildings 129 and 131) of 16/01805/F | Application Permitted 21/12/2017 |
| 17/02490/F | Variation of condition 8 (permitted uses) to include B1c (light industrial use), sui generis (showroom/workshop use) and ancillary A3 use to building 129 (retrospective); and variation of conditions 16 and 17 (to revise the timeframe for the installation of the new access) of planning permission 17/02312/F. | Application Permitted 04/05/2018 |
| 17/02312/F | Variation of Condition 14 of 16/01805/F - For Buildings 131 and 135 only. | Application Permitted 09/02/2018 |
| 16/01805/F | Change of use of buildings from sui generis MOD use to various commercial uses as detailed in accompanying Planning Statement with associated physical works and demolition of buildings 101 and 104 and erection of replacement structures. | Application Permitted 25/09/2017 |
| 16/01806/LB | Physical works to buildings 79, 108, 113, 123, 129, 130, 131, 135 and 137 to enable restoration and conversion to commercial use. | Application Permitted 25/09/2017 |
| 15/00820/F | Change of use of building 105 from sui generis MOD use to class B1 workshops and offices, class B8 storage and ancillary class A1 use for the sale of heritage motoring and aviation goods to include associated equipment, supplies, sundries, memorabilia and literature. | Application Permitted 25/02/2016 |

| | | |
|-------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| 15/00616/F | Variation of Condition 2 of 14/00772/F to allow for Minor Material Amendments to approved scheme and variation of Condition 8 to enable the building to be used for BI purposes and/or vehicle sales with ancillary residential accommodation. | Application Permitted 25/02/2016 |
| 15/00611/F | Change of use of building 92 from MOD use (sui generis) to class B1 (office) and B8 (storage use), change of use of building 93 from MOD use to vehicle showroom (sui generis) and change of use of building 94 from MOD use to class B1 workshops and offices, class B8 storage and ancillary class A1 use for the sale of heritage motoring and aviation goods to include associated equipment, supplies, sundries, memorabilia and literature. | Application Permitted 25/02/2016 |
| 15/00612/LB | Internal and external alterations to building 92. | Application Permitted 25/02/2016 |
| 15/00523/F | Change of use of building from sui generis Ministry of Defence use to B1(c) light industrial use with associated internal and external alterations and landscaping. | Application Permitted 29/06/2015 |
| 14/02065/LB | Change of use from Ministry of Defence to B1/A1 including structural repairs and alterations. | Application Permitted 20/02/2015 |
| 14/01759/F | Change of use from Ministry of Defence to B1/A1 including structural repairs and alterations. | Application Permitted 30/12/2014 |
| 14/01430/F | Material change of use from Ministry of Defence use to B1 use, including minor structural alterations and a new build extension. | Application Permitted 24/10/2014 |
| 14/01448/F | Change of use from Ministry of Defence use to B1 including minor structural repairs. | Application Permitted 21/10/2014 |
| 14/00454/F | Material change of use of Ministry of Defence workshop use to office and workshop use. | Application Permitted 13/05/2014 |