BICESTER HERITAGE
(FORMER RAF BICESTER)
BUILDING 144

DESIGN AND ACCESS
STATEMENT

January 2018

NICK COX ARCHITECTS
77 HEYFORD PARK  UPPER HEYFORD  OXON  OX25 5HD
INTRODUCTION

The following Design and Access Statement has been prepared to accompany the Full Planning Application for “the repair, partial rebuild, extension and alteration of Building 144 (currently derelict) and change of use from Sui Generis MOD use to Class A3 use to create a new on-site cafe as part of the RAF Bicester Technical Site redevelopment” at Building 144 located 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 for change of use, alteration and extension for Building 144 to create a new cafe within the technical site. As a tenant for the cafe is not yet known, it is likely that amendments to the current application and further detail will be necessary to meet the requirements of the tenant, it is recognised that revised applications will be required in this circumstance.

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.

**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.

**Building 144 (Works Services)**

The application relates to the repair, rebuilding and alteration to Building 144 to enable its reuse as a cafe to serve the businesses on the technical site, in addition to members of the Public on the event days, and continuing development of Bicester Heritage.

Building 144 is located within the RAF Bicester Conservation Area Appraisal (2008) which covers the Domestic and Technical sites and airfield. The building is not listed, however, it is considered to be a building of local importance; the building also provides a positive contribution to the conservation area. The appraisal identifies Building 144 as a ‘Category A’ building at risk (“Immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric; no solution agreed.”) as a result of an historic arson attack.

The RAF Bicester Conservation Area Appraisal identifies that the character of the conservation area “is unified by its function as a military station.” Characteristics of this include: the chosen materiality of the buildings (permanent materials being preferred such as brick and concrete); the height of the buildings which was restricted to one or two storeys (with the exception of the hangars) and extensive tree cover across the site to provide camouflage.

Building 144 is located behind buildings 146 (Operations Block) and 147 (Station HQ), along the southern perimeter route around the technical site and is constructed of brick, laid in flemish bond, with a ‘U’ shaped duo pitched slate roof with a catslide roof over the south-east extension. The majority of windows and historic doors have been lost as a result of the fire.

The building was built in 1927, evidenced by the date stone located in the south-east facing elevation. It is identified as the ‘Work Services’ Building which would have provided offices and stores for the station’s Clerk of Works. Internally, there are remains of a few timber partition walls in addition to the brick walls.
The building is currently derelict following an attack of arson and is not used. In its derelict state, it is considered to be detrimental to the conservation area and setting of the nearby listed buildings.

**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 144 is not listed, however, is considered to be within the curtilage of Buildings 146 and 147 (both listed Grade II)

**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

**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.

A walkover survey of Building 144 was carried out by Ecology Solutions Ltd in November 2018. The report is appended.

At the time of the survey, no evidence was found to indicate that the building was currently being used by bats, however, the building is considered to be of some (low) potential value. As such a further emergence or re-entry survey (to be carried out between May and August, inclusive) has been recommended to confirm the requirements for mitigation.

**Structural assessment**

Building 144 is derelict following an act of arson many years ago. Access internally is limited due to health and safety concerns relating to the stability of the structure.

A structural review of the building has been carried out by a Structural Engineer; an initial report is appended.
Consultation

The principles of the proposals have been discussed with two Local Authority Case Officers and Conservation Officer. All were supportive of the opportunity for the space to be reused again after being derelict for so long.

---

DESIGN

This Planning application is in regard to the repair, partial rebuild, extension and alteration of Building 144 in relation to creating a new cafe space on the technical site. The proposed works include:

- Careful stabilisation and rebuild of any fire damaged masonry.
- Repair to roof trusses and renewal of the roof; the new roof is to be insulated and incorporate new patent glazing rooflights within the hidden valley.
- New extension to the north-west elevation to provide new kitchen space and external bin storage.
- Change of 2no existing entrance doors into windows, to match adjacent;
- Change of 1no window to create a new main entrance door near to the centre of the elevation.
- Removal of a few internal partition walls, in addition to creating new door openings within retained masonry walls to create better connection between the spaces.
- Inserting 2no new windows in the south-west elevation to provide views outwards and allow daylight inside.
- New glazed screen to infill the opening on the south-east elevation.
- New WC’s; to connect to the existing foul system in the vicinity.
- External landscaping to relate to new entrance and external seating area.
- Provision of new grasscrete/turfstone access road to the south-west side of building 144 for use by vehicles for delivery and pedestrians.

Use

It is proposed to repair, alter and extend Building 144 to create a new cafe, with seating area, for use by businesses and visitors to Bicester Heritage.

The application seeks a change of use from Sui Generis MOD use to Class A3 use as a cafe and restaurant and/or Class B1 (C) as a workshop and/or sui generis as a showroom.

The building is currently derelict; its reuse as a cafe would bring the building back to life and provide a positive contribution to the technical site as well as adding additional amenities to the site.

A tenant for the cafe is still to be confirmed.

The alterations proposed within this application are considered necessary to ensure that the building is flexible enough for the new cafe to work successfully and/or an alterantive use in line with other business opportunities on the site.
Amount

The proposals include for a single storey extension to the north-west elevation to provide a kitchen space with bin storage.

The proposed extension is to mirror the width of the existing extension to the south-east elevation, however is to be set back from the front elevation of the building to provide some differentiation between the ages of the two structures.

The existing roof structure is generally in poor condition. It is proposed to carefully dismantle the existing roof, repair the primary steel trusses and lay a new roof to match the historic construction detail seen elsewhere on site (slates laid over exposed sarking boards). It is proposed to insulate the roof to improve the thermal performance of the building; the roof line will be raised slightly as a result.

Layout

Externally, it is proposed to change 2no existing doors into windows and create a new entrance door in the location of an existing window more central on the north-east elevation of the building.

Internally, it is proposed to remove a number of internal partition walls (including those that are fire damaged) in order to create larger, more flexible spaces for seating areas and a servery space. In order to create better connections between the spaces, it is proposed to create new openings within some of the internal masonry walls; new concrete lintels, to match the aesthetic of the existing elsewhere, will be used.

Scale

The scale of the proposed extension is to be no greater that the height, width and depth of the existing extension on the south-east elevation. This will provide the building with some symmetry when viewed and approached from the north-east.

The scale of development is considered commensurate to the existing building as well as the surrounding buildings of the technical site.

Landscaping

It is proposed to carry out some minor alterations to the pathway and landscaping to the north-east (front elevation) of Building 144 to create a larger paved area in front of the proposed entrance door. A new concrete pathway around the perimeter of the building will provide access to the kitchen and bin store.

In addition, a large paved area to the south-east of the building is be create to provide an external seating area for the cafe.

The existing trees around the building are to be retained.

A new access route, constructed using grasscrete/turfstone, is to be provided for
deliveries and pedestrians arriving from the proposed new road to the south of Building 144 (covered by a separate application).

**Appearance**

The proposed extension and alterations will be carried out using the pallete of materials extant in building 144 and other existing buildings around technical site, namely brick, slate and timber.

The new extension will be constructed of red brick to match; all existing (damaged) and new windows will be metal casement windows with slimline double glazed units to match windows of adjacent buildings; new external doors will be painted (gloss green) timber and rainwater goods will match those on existing buildings.

A new glazed screen with doors is to be installed within the large opening on south-east elevation, to provide access to the external seating area.

---

**ACCESS**

The technical site has existing level vehicular access and external parking spaces. The majority of users of the cafe will arrive on foot from the nearby businesses. The proposals in this application 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 level pedestrian access into the Building 144 for use as a cafe. Level access will be provided at each external doorway and throughout the interior.

---

**SUMMARY**

Building 144 is currently unoccupied and is detrimental to the historic setting.

Planning permission is being sought to repair, alter and extend Building 144 to create a new cafe for use within the technical site.

In order for the building to usable as a cafe, the proposed alterations are required in order to enable access for vehicles and larger, flexible spaces for activities to occur within.

The proposals to Building 144 have been developed so that the proposed use fits well with the historic fabric whilst also meeting the physical and functional requirements set by the client.

It is anticipated that once a tenant has been found, additional information regarding any reserved details can be submitted for discharge.
Dear Jonty

BICESTER HERITAGE – BUILDING 144 INITIAL STRUCTURAL REPORT

Building 144 is the former Works Services Department. It is a single storey brick building with a tiled duo-pitched hipped roof with roof valley to the south west. The roof is supported on timber purlins which span between either full height brick walls or steel angle trusses. A lean to structure is located to the south east elevation.

The building measures approximately 12m by 16m.

The building roof structure has been severely damaged by fire and degradation due to lack of maintenance.

Due to the parlous state of the roof structure, a full and detailed structural inspection of the entire building has not been possible. However, it has been inspected both internally and externally from floor level.

The roof is in poor condition at the northern end of the building, where the most significant fire damage has occurred. The timber purlins are severely charred and degradation due to fire and water ingress has caused corrosion of the steel trusses. The roof tiles are missing from the northern end of the building and many of the sarking boards are missing exposing the interior of the building.

The brickwork walls are in good condition throughout the building.

We recommend that the timber roof structure is inspected and the degraded elements replaced or repaired as necessary.
The steel angle trusses should be wire brushed to remove the loose corrosion and then assessed to determine the remaining sectional areas. If strengthening is necessary, the structural elements can be overplated with steel.

We trust that the above is satisfactory until a time when a full inspection can be undertaken. If you have any comments or would like to discuss further, please do not hesitate to make contact.

Yours Sincerely,

Leon Walsh
Senior Structural Engineer
INTRODUCTION

1. Ecology Solutions was commissioned by Bicester Heritage in November 2018 to undertake surveys of the Bicester Heritage site, Bicester, Oxfordshire (the site), to determine whether the existing buildings have the potential to support roosting bats.

2. This document sets out the results of the specific internal/external building bat surveys undertaken on Building B144 at the site.

3. As concluded in this note, whilst no evidence of bat roosting was recorded within B144, the building is of some (low) potential value to roosting bats. As such, further survey effort in the form of a single emergence or re-entry survey is recommended to confirm any requirements for mitigation.

LEGISLATION AND ECOLOGY

4. Legislation. All bats are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and included on Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (“the Habitats Regulations”). These include provisions making it an offence to:

   - Deliberately kill, injure or take (capture) bats;
   - Deliberately disturb bats in such a way as to be likely to significantly affect:-
     (i) the ability of any significant group of bats to survive, breed or rear or nurture their young; or to hibernate; or
     (ii) to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species concerned;
   - Damage or destroy any breeding or resting place used by bats;
   - Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any place used by bats for shelter or protection (even if bats are not in residence).

5. The words ‘deliberately’ and ‘intentionally’ include actions where a court can infer that the defendant knew ‘the action taken would almost inevitably result in an offence, even if that was not the primary purpose of the act.

6. The offence of damaging (making it worse for the bat) or destroying a breeding site or resting place is an absolute offence. Such actions do not have to be deliberate for an offence to be committed.
7. In accordance with the Habitats Regulations the licensing authority (Natural England) must apply the three derogation tests as part of the process of considering a licence application. These tests are that:

1. the activity to be licensed must be for imperative reasons of overriding public interest or for public health and safety;
2. there must be no satisfactory alternative; and
3. the favourable conservation status of the species concerned must be maintained.

8. Licences can usually only be granted if the development is in receipt of full planning permission (and relevant conditions, if any, discharged).

9. Seven species of bat are Priority Species, these are Barbastelle *Barbastella barbastrellus*, Bechstein’s *Myotis bechsteinii*, Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*, Soprano Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, Brown Long-eared *Plecotus auritus*, Greater Horseshoe *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*, and Lesser Horseshoe *Rhinolophus hipposideros*.

METHODOLOGY

10. Field surveys were undertaken by Ecology Solutions with regard to best practice guidelines issued by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2004¹) and the Bat Conservation Trust (2016²).

11. Building B144 within the site was subject to an internal and external survey in November 2018 using a ladder, torches, binoculars and an endoscope where necessary.

12. Evidence of the presence of bats was searched for, with particular attention paid to the roof areas and crevices in the brickwork. Specific searches were made for bat droppings, which can indicate present or past use and extent of use, and other signs to indicate the possible presence of bats e.g. presence of stained areas, or areas that are conspicuously cobweb-free.

13. The probability of a building being used by bats as a roost site increases if it:

   • is largely undisturbed;
   • dates from pre-20th Century;
   • has a large roof void with unobstructed flying spaces;
   • has access points for bats (though not too draughty);
   • has wooden cladding or hanging tiles; and/or
   • is in a rural setting and close to woodland or water.

14. Conversely, the probability decreases if a building is of a modern or pre-fabricated design/construction, is in an urban setting, has small or cluttered roof voids, has few gaps at the eaves or is a heavily disturbed premises.

15. The main requirements for a winter/hibernation roost site are that it maintains a stable (cool) temperature and humidity. Sites commonly utilised by bats as winter roosts

include cavities/holes in trees, underground sites and parts of buildings. Whilst different species may show a preference for one of these types of roost site, none are solely dependent on a single type.

SURVEY RESULTS & EVALUATION

16. Building **B144** is a single-storey burnt out brick building with a pitched tile roof. The building is in a poor state of repair as a result of extensive fire damage which has led to the collapse of much of the roof, as well as the destruction of the buildings interior.

17. Where sections of the pitched roof remain, these comprise tiles fitted on wooden boards. Several of the tiles are displaced or raised, offering some potential for crevice dwelling bat species.

18. The external brickwork is considered to be in good condition, with no significant cracks or crevices present which would offer opportunities to roosting bats.

19. Internally, there building is compartmentalised into four rooms. Given the extensive fire damage, no features of potential value to roosting bats are present internally, with the pre-existing ceiling collapsed and the loft void open to the elements.

20. No evidence of use by roosting bats was recorded during a detailed internal and external inspection of **B144**.

21. In summary, building **B144** is in very poor condition, being burnt out, and partially collapsed. Notwithstanding the extensive fire damage, some features of potential roosting value remain on the buildings exterior (raised tiles with wooden boarding underneath) and these were not possible to survey exhaustively as part of the internal and external inspection. As such, and despite no evidence such as droppings or feeding remains were found, **B144** is considered to have some low potential to support roosting bats.

22. Therefore, a single night-time (Emergence/Re-entry) survey is recommended to further ascertain the use of this building by roosting bats. In line with best practice guidance set out by the Bat Conservation Trust (2016) it is recommended that this further survey work is undertaken between the period of May - August inclusive.

NEXT STEPS & MITIGATION

23. As set out above, and in order to confirm the use of **B144** to roosting bats, follow up survey work in the form of a single bat emergence or re-entry survey is recommended.

24. The results of this subsequent survey will be sufficient to confirm the mitigation requirements (if any) that would be required for works to the building. Should this survey find no evidence of roosting bats, no mitigation would be required.

25. It is recommended that any further survey work is undertaken between the period of May - August inclusive.
CONCLUSION

26. In conclusion, no evidence of roosting bats was recorded during the internal and external survey work undertaken upon B144.

27. However, it is considered that the existing building **B144** offers suitable, albeit very limited, roosting opportunities for bats. As such, further surveys are required to determine the extent at which bats utilise the building, before any demolition works on the building can begin.