

Application No: 11/00152/CAC	Ward: Caversfield	Date Valid: 04/03/2011
Applicant:	City and Country Bicester Ltd	
Site Address:	Former DLO Caversfield, Skimmingdish Lane, Caversfield	

Proposal: Demolition of building 2 (shooting range), removal of roof on building 19 (guard room), removal of accretion on building 28 (mess), partial demolition of building 44/45 (mortuary and ambulance garage) and demolition of garages.

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 The site was formally part of RAF Bicester and is located to the south of Caversfield and north of Bicester and consists of what is referred to as the domestic site. The domestic site has close historic links to the technical site and airfield which are located on the west side of Buckingham Road.
- 1.2 The site is a significant part of the Conservation Area and contains many listed buildings. The site includes buildings such as Officer's mess and quarters, barrack blocks, ration stores, decontamination chambers and central heating stations.
- 1.3 The RAF first used the site in 1918 but no buildings were retained from this time. However some buildings do date back to the 1920's and 30's. The site has been described by English Heritage as comprising the best preserved and most strongly representative of the bomber stations built as part of Sir Hugh Trenchard's 1920's Home Defence Expansion Scheme.
- 1.4 This application deals only with work to non-listed buildings which require Conservation Area consent for whole or partial demolition. Although all the buildings on the site are within the Conservation Area partial demolition of listed buildings is not covered in this application as the need for listed building consent overrides the need for conservation area consent. The proposals are as set out above and further consideration to each element is given in the assessment at section 5.

2. Application Publicity

- 2.1 The application was advertised by way of a site notice and press notice. The final date for comment was 18 March 2011.
- 2.2 No letters of objection have been received from neighbouring properties in relation to this specific application.

3. Consultations

- 3.1 A summary of the consultation responses is set out below (see electronic file for full details)
- 3.2 **Caversfield Parish Council** has not commented specifically on this application but has expressed general support for the scheme as a whole.
- 3.3 **Bicester Town Council** raises no objections to this proposal.

- 3.4 **English Heritage** did not consider it necessary for the Council to have consulted them specifically in relation to the Conservation Area Consent application and made no comments.
- 3.5 The Council's **Conservation Team** have incorporated its response to this application within its response on the full application therefore the relevant comments have been extracted and summarised below;
- The existing Building 2 (rifle range) is a modern intervention in this historic space. At the time of writing the Planning Brief, Defence Estates advised that this building was to be retained, excluded from sale and offered to the Air cadets as new premises. Its future was not, therefore, considered as part of the future of the site in the Planning Brief, except to say that it was a building whose demolition could enhance the conservation area.
 - Building 2 is the only building on the site (except for the building currently used by the Air cadets, which is outside the application site) that is not identified as making a positive contribution to the conservation area. It is therefore considered that, in principle, the demolition of Building 2 and its replacement with new development that meets the PPS5 design criteria, together with the creation of an enhanced landscape treatment of the space, could in principle enhance the to-be-established character of the conservation area and the setting of the listed buildings, Buildings 16 and 20.
 - The reinstatement of building 19 as the entrance to the site and of its original orientation is appreciated, as is the removal of the pitched roof.
 - The removal of the later accretions is generally positive and allows a better interpretation of the site. Modern electrical plant has been sited outside the building, and this is proposed to be removed, as are the external fire escapes, and this is welcomed.
 - The proposed demolition of the garages between buildings 31 and 32 opens up the site in that area providing better interpretation of the parade ground, and this is welcomed.

4. Relevant Planning Policies

- 4.1 Central Government Guidance
Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 5 – Planning for the Historic Environment
- 4.2 South East Plan Policies
BE6 Management of the Historic Environment
- 4.3 Adopted Cherwell Local Plan
C23 Retention of buildings within the Conservation Area
- 4.4 Non Statutory Cherwell Local Plan
EN40 Retention of buildings within the Conservation Area

5. Appraisal

- 5.1 Main Planning Considerations
- 5.1.1 The main issues to consider in the determination of this application are as follows –
- Impact on the Conservation Area
 - Implications of approving this application in isolation from the other

applications.

5.2 Impact on the Conservation Area

- 5.2.1 Almost of all of the buildings on the site will be altered in some way as part of the proposed development of the site. Many buildings have been added to over the years with unsympathetic extensions forming for example stores for electric supply equipment or additional staircases for fire escapes. A large proportion of the buildings are listed and the alterations to listed buildings are dealt with through the Listed Building application. However proposals for whole or partial demolition of unlisted buildings require Conservation Area consent due to their location within the designated Conservation Area. The proposal is therefore as set out above. Each element will be considered in turn.
- 5.2.2 Building 2 is a large modern shooting range which was built in the early 2000's. It was constructed close to the north western boundary of the site. Given the functional nature of the building it does not lend itself to conversion to residential or commercial uses. The building may however have lent itself to some form of community use. However the reuse of this building does not form part of the applicant's wider development proposals. Building 2 does very little to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Therefore its removal is considered to at least preserve and even enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Given this judgement there is little justification for requiring its retention and reuse.
- 5.2.3 Building 19 was originally a guard house located facing onto an original access point. However over time the site has been altered and its most prominent but rear elevation now faces onto the car park at the current main entrance. The building has been altered over the years, the most obvious addition being a pitched roof. The removal of the roof helps return the building to its original appearance. The alteration is considered to preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and returns the building to its original form which is positive in terms of its historic integrity.
- 5.2.4 Building 28 is an unlisted Mess building with a typical U-shaped footprint. On the southern wing in the internal courtyard there is a small external accretion with no internal link to the main building. It is likely that this is some form of electricity cabinet or store building. The removal of this element will preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- 5.2.5 Buildings 44 and 45 are two buildings, originally used as a mortuary and ambulance building which in the past have been linked together with a covered area. The proposal is to demolish the link and rebuild a more permanent structure to create one dwelling. The link is of no historic value and its demolition does not harm the character and appearance of the adjoining buildings or the conservation area.
- 5.2.6 Located between buildings 31 and 32 is a block of garages. The structure is open fronted and constructed of brick and corrugated metal. The structure is functional and of its time but does not have any particular historic significance in terms of its architecture or use of materials. It does not currently cause particular harm to the Conservation Area but its removal is likely to result in an enhancement to the area as it will improve views into the parade ground which is one of the sites most

historically significant areas.

5.2.7 Overall the proposals for conservation area consent are unlikely to cause harm to the character and appearance of it and in many cases the proposals will enhance the area. It is therefore considered that the proposal complies with Guidance contained within PPS5 and policies BE6 of the South East Plan, C23 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan and EN40 of the Non-Statutory Cherwell Local Plan.

5.3 Implications of approving the application in isolation

5.3.1 This application relates to the wider proposals for the rest of the site covered by the full (11/00151/F and 11/00805/F) and listed building (11/00153/LB and 11/00806/LB) applications. Hence why they have each been brought to the same committee for consideration. However as the work only involves demolition and does not directly affect the proposals covered by the listed building or planning permission this application could be determined in isolation without having a bearing on the other applications.

5.4 Conclusion

Based on the above considerations it is recommended that the application be approved subject to the conditions set out below. Given the nature of the works and the fact that an approval would not have a direct bearing on the full or listed building applications and would not be detrimental to the future of the site if carried out in isolation it is considered that it can be determined in isolation regardless of the outcome of the other applications.

6. Recommendation
Approval , subject to the following conditions
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. SC 1.4A (RC2) Duration limit, 3 years2. SC 5.7B (RC27A - delete reference to C18 of the adopted Local Plan)
SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE GRANT OF CONSERVATION AREA CONSENT AND RELEVANT DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES
The Council as local planning authority, has determined this application in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development is considered to be acceptable on its planning merits as the proposal is considered to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. As such the proposal is in accordance with guidance contained in PPS5, Planning for the Historic Environment, and policies BE6 of the South East Plan, C23 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan and EN40 of the Non-Statutory Cherwell Local Plan . For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, the Council considers that the application should be approved and conservation area consent granted.

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