

# Executive

## RAF Bicester Conservation Area

17 November 2008

### Report of Head of Legal and Democratic Services

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report contains a referral to the Executive from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

This report is public

#### Recommendations

---

The Executive is recommended:

- (1) to note the Overview and Scrutiny Committee belief that, having regard to the situation and historic status of RAF Bicester it should not be considered as a suitable site for housing, and that the Executive be requested to feed this view into the consultation process for the Local Development Framework.
- (2) to confirm and recognise the historic status of the RAF Bicester site and their commitment to ensure that the appropriate bodies ensure the historic buildings are maintained.
- (3) That in light of recommendation two above, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing be requested to keep this issue within his consideration and to take action as appropriate.
- (4) To welcome proposals such as that of Bomber Command Heritage to raise the profile of the heritage and value of the RAF Bicester site.

#### Executive Summary

---

##### Introduction

- 1.1 The Overview & Scrutiny Committee met on 7 October 2008 and received a presentation from representatives of Bomber Command Heritage regarding their proposals for a heritage centre at RAF Bicester.
- 1.2 The relevant extract from the draft minutes is set out below:

##### 11. RAF Bicester Conservation Area

The Committee considered a presentation made by Bomber Command Heritage and their proposals for a heritage centre at RAF Bicester. The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing also provided the Committee with background information on the site at RAF Bicester and its status as a conservation area. The Committee were advised that as the Conservation Area had been approved by the Executive the site would not be developed for housing. The Portfolio Holder identified the challenges surrounding RAF Bicester including: finding a suitable use for the site and addressing the disrepair of the buildings as a matter of urgency.

The Committee considered the use of the site as a heritage centre and how this would be distinct from other historical sites in the UK. The members also discussed if the site would be a working airfield, representatives from Bomber Command advised the Committee that their proposals included a working airfield for old aircraft and they were keen to repair the hangers on the site in order to safely store historical aircraft.

Bomber Command Heritage assured members that the centre they proposed would be serious in tone, whilst providing learning opportunities for local people. They wanted to make the project interesting and engaging whilst conveying a serious message. They felt the centre could be used to educate the public about the nature of conflicts and also provide practical teaching opportunities in relation to the engineering and machinery of the aircraft which would be on site.

Members of the Committee expressed concerns about the state of the buildings on site and the level of disrepair. The Conservation Officer advised the Committee that the level of problems with the building varied some were high risk with extensive structural problems while others mainly suffered from water damage. The Conservation Officer indicated that the Council had requested access to the site so a structural engineer could ascertain the level of disrepair.

### **Resolved**

(1) That having considered the situation and historic status of RAF Bicester, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee believe that RAF Bicester should not be considered as a suitable site for housing and that the Executive be requested to feed this view into the consultation process for the Local Development Framework.

(2) That the Executive be requested to confirm and recognise the historic status of the site and their commitment to ensure that the appropriate bodies ensure the historic buildings are maintained.

(3) That in light of recommendation two above, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing be requested to keep this issues within his consideration and to take action as appropriate

(4) That the Executive be requested to welcome proposals such as that of Bomber Command Heritage to raise the profile of the heritage and value of this site.

(Councillor Stratford requested that his abstention from the vote be recorded.)

### **Conclusion**

- 1.3 The Overview & Scrutiny Committee made a number of recommendations to the Executive and the Portfolio Holder, Planning, Housing and Economy.
-

## Implications

---

- Financial:** There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.  
Comments checked by Denise Westlake, Service Accountant CS&R 01295 221559
- Legal:** There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.  
Comments checked by Pam Wilkinson, Principal Solicitor 01295 221688
- Risk Management:** There are no risk implications arising directly from this report.  
Comments checked by Rosemary Watts, Risk Management & Insurance Officer 01295 221566

## Wards Affected

---

Bicester North, Bicester East, Caversfield, Fringford, Launton

## Corporate Plan Themes

---

Theme 6: Protect and enhance the local environment  
Theme 8: Rural Focus  
Theme 10: Focus on Cherwell's People

## Executive Portfolio

---

Councillor Michael Gibbard  
Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Economy

## Document Information

---

	<b>Title</b>
Appendix [X]	None
<b>Background Papers</b>	
RAF Bicester: Responses to the Draft Conservation Area Appraisal, Approval of Final Appraisal and Designation, Report to Executive, 6 October 2008	
<b>Report Author</b>	James Doble, Democratic, Scrutiny and Elections Manager
<b>Contact Information</b>	01295 221587 james.doble@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk