

<b>Applicant:</b>	Bicester Heritage Ltd		
<b>Proposal:</b>	Erection of hotel and conference facility with associated access, parking, and landscaping		
<b>Ward:</b>	Launton And Otmoor		
<b>Councillors:</b>	Cllr Tim Hallchurch Cllr Simon Holland Cllr David Hughes		
<b>Reason for Referral:</b>	Major application		
<b>Expiry Date:</b>	16 October 2018	<b>Committee Date:</b>	25 October 2018
<b>Recommendation:</b>	Approval; subject to conditions, no objections from highways and the finalisation of a S106 agreement		

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATION**

### **Proposal**

The application seeks consent for the construction of a five-storey hotel to the north of the existing buildings and adjacent to the Buckingham Road. At ground floor level, the hotel would include a reception, bar, restaurant, conference and meeting rooms, swimming pool and gym facilities, with separate entrance and reception for an aparthotel. The upper four floors would provide 252 guest rooms and 92 aparthotel suites.

The hotel would create approximately 180 full time equivalent jobs. The proposal includes a new vehicular access from the Buckingham Road and the provision of 311 car parking spaces within the site.

The proposed hotel would be of a similar scale and mass to the large hangars situated at the base and would sit in alignment with one of these hangars. The design is contemporary and utilises a mixture of materials including brickwork, textured brickwork, cladding, expanded metal mesh, glazed curtain areas and a glazed atrium.

### **Consultations**

The following consultees have raised **objections** to the application:

- Launton Parish Council, Caversfield Parish Council, Stratton Audley Parish Council and OCC Highways.  
*Most of these objections relate to highways matters. Appropriate highways infrastructure will be secured through a S106 agreement although at the time of writing the report some of these matters are still in negotiation (see report for more detail).*
- Historic England and the Bicester Delivery Team, whilst not specifically objecting, have raised concerns regarding lack of compliance with policy (on design grounds and energy efficiency respectively).

The following consultees have raised **no objections** to the application:

- Environment Agency, Highways England, Natural England, Thames Water, CDC Building Control, CDC Conservation officer, CDC Ecology officer, CDC Environmental health officer and CDC Landscape officer.

7 Letters of **objection** and 2 comments have been received in respect of the application.

### **Planning Policy**

The site is allocated in the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1, for '*Tourism Development*' (Policy Bicester 8).

The site is located within the Conservation Area of RAF Bicester. There are 22 Listed Buildings and several Scheduled Monuments located within the main technical site and wider airfield.

Much of the adjoining airfield is an allocated Local Wildlife Site (LWS). There is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within 2km of the site and a proposed District Wildlife Site (DWS) to the south, on the opposite side of Skimmingdish Lane.

The application has also been assessed against the relevant policies in the NPPF, the Development Plan and other relevant material planning considerations and guidance.

### **Conclusion**

The key issues arising from the application details are:

- Principle of development
- Siting, orientation, form, scale and massing
- Design and external appearance
- Heritage assets
- Highway safety
- Landscape and Visual Impact
- Ecology
- Trees and Landscaping
- Residential amenity
- Flood Risk and Drainage
- Contamination
- Energy Efficiency
- Planning Obligations

The report considers the key planning issues in detail, and officers conclude that the proposal is acceptable subject to conditions and a S106 agreement to secure highways improvements. The scheme meets the requirements of relevant CDC policies.

**RECOMMENDATION – DELEGATE TO OFFICERS TO GRANT PERMISSION SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS, NO OBJECTION FROM HIGHWAYS IN RESPECT OF AMENDED PLANS AND A S106 AGREEMENT TO SECURE HIGHWAY INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Members are advised that the above is a summary of the proposals and key issues are contained in the main report below which provides full details of all consultation responses, planning policies, the Officer's assessment and recommendations, and Members are advised that this summary should be read in conjunction with the detailed report.**

## **MAIN REPORT**

### **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. 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 most of the buildings are located) and the flying field which extends to the north and east of the main technical site area, totalling around 141.5 hectares.
- 1.2. The whole of the site (including the flying field) is designated as a conservation area and most of the buildings within the main technical area are listed (Grade II). The remaining buildings are considered to 'make a positive contribution' to the area in the Conservation Area Appraisal and would therefore be considered as non-designated heritage assets. There are also several Scheduled Monuments located on the edges of the flying field and within the main technical area. Existing 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. For the purposes of this application, the site area and redline relates to a parcel of land situated on the northern edge of the former technical site totalling 4.5 hectares. This parcel of land is therefore bounded by existing buildings of the technical site to the south and south-west, the airfield to the north and east and residential properties to the west.
- 1.4. The existing technical site is laid out to a Trident pattern of development of 3 avenues projecting from the main entrance of the site. The buildings are generously spaced out from each other in a relatively sporadic nature but maintaining the appearance of the avenues. The hangars are arranged in an arc around the outer perimeter of the existing technical site.
- 1.5. The following constraints relate to the site:
  - The site is located within the Conservation Area of RAF Bicester;
  - The wider Bicester Heritage site contains 22 Grade II Listed Buildings with the remaining buildings making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area and are therefore considered to be non-designated heritage assets;
  - There are several Scheduled Monuments located within the main technical site area;
  - There is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within 2km of the site (the quarry to the north);
  - The site lies within a designated Local Wildlife Site which extends around the perimeter of the airfield;
  - There is a proposed District Wildlife Site to the south of the site on the opposite side of Skimmingdish Lane;
  - The Bicester Heritage 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 Bicester Heritage site (opposite sides of the road);
  - The site is allocated in the Cherwell Local Plan for 'Tourism Development' (Policy Bicester 8).

## 2. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 2.1. The application seeks consent for the construction of a hotel with restaurant, conference and leisure facilities including an aparthotel.
- 2.2. The site area is 4.5 hectares with the proposed 344-bed hotel offering 18,000 square metres (internal floor space) of C1 Use (hotel), distributed over 5 floors. The hotel would create approximately 180 full time equivalent jobs. The hotel incorporates an 'aparthotel' which comprises slightly larger 'hotel type' rooms that also include a kitchenette and larger living space to enable longer stays. This would still function in a similar way to the hotel and therefore still comes under a C1 (hotel) use.
- 2.3. At ground floor level, the hotel would include a large open reception area and bar; restaurant with openable terraced area fronting the airfield; conference room which can be used as ballrooms; 4 meeting rooms and leisure area containing a swimming pool, gym and children's area. There would also be a separate entrance and reception for the aparthotel. The upper four floors would provide 252 guest rooms and 92 aparthotel suites. Most of the aparthotel rooms are to be provided with balconies as are some of the hotel rooms on the curved corner.
- 2.4. The proposed hotel would be of a similar scale and mass to the C-Type hangars situated on the adjacent technical site and would sit in alignment with one of these hangars. It will measure 35m high, 55m wide and 92m long. The design is contemporary but with a clear reference to the historical context. It proposes to use a mixture of materials including brickwork, textured brickwork, cladding, expanded metal mesh, glazed curtain areas and a glazed atrium. Detailed consideration of the design is set out later in this report.
- 2.5. The proposal includes a new vehicular access from the Buckingham Road leading to a small mini roundabout within the site. The car park is to be located to the western edge of the site adjacent to the boundary with Buckingham Road accessed from the northern arm of the internal roundabout. The plans shown provision of 311 car parking spaces (including 30 disabled spaces and 10 EV charging spaces), 26 of these are for feature display car parking (including 2 disabled) immediately outside the hotel with 4 spaces to be provided directly outside the aparthotel.
- 2.6. To the south of the internal roundabout will be green open space and to the east will be access to the drop off area of the hotel, the display car parking and the aparthotel.

## 3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1. The following planning history is considered relevant to the current proposal:

<u>Application Ref.</u>	<u>Proposal</u>	<u>Decision</u>
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	Pending Consideration
18/00044/SO	Request for a screening opinion for proposed erection of new building to provide	Screening Opinion not

a hotel and conference facility with requesting EIA associated parking and landscaping

17/01847/F	Alterations to existing site access including Application installation of replacement security gates Permitted and erection of gatehouse
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The above planning history shows the applications directly relevant to the hotel proposal. The adjoining technical site has a detailed planning history with several planning applications and listed building consent applications associated with individual buildings including a site wide consent for commercial uses.

The general approach taken on the technical site has been to allow changes of use that fit with the commercial nature of the site and minor physical changes to the buildings to ensure their long-term use and viability with the aim of conserving the heritage assets on the site.

#### **4. PRE-APPLICATION DISCUSSIONS**

4.1. The following pre-application discussions have taken place regarding this proposal:

<u>Application Ref.</u>	<u>Proposal</u>
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17/00054/PREAPP	Hotel development
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18/00045/PREAPP	Hotel development
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4.2. In the first pre-application submitted in 2017, officer advice was given in respect of the principle of the development on the site and the response from consultees. Initial advice was positive to the proposals in principle, but more discussion was needed in respect of the design and detailing and impact on heritage assets.

4.3. The pre-application submitted in 2018 focused in detail on the design, orientation and layout of the hotel on the site. Officers considered that the initial orientation presented did not respect the historical form of development and therefore caused harm to the heritage assets. There was no respect to the design and scale of the buildings on the site and their use of materials, so after many discussions and meetings, a compromise orientation was agreed upon, which is the orientation that has been formally submitted as part of this application. Through discussions, the proposals were amended to take more inspiration from the existing buildings at the site which received officer support and this application is now the result of those discussions.

#### **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 06.09.2018, although comments received after this date and before finalising this report have also been taken into account.

5.2. The objections and comments raised by the 9 third parties are summarised as follows:

- Traffic impacts and congestion;

- Left exit only to do a U-turn around the roundabout is not appropriate;
- Loss of view;
- Landscaping required to Buckingham Road;
- Light pollution – impacts on ecology and residential amenity;
- Design not in keeping with the surrounding area;
- Impact of building works on local residents in respect of noise and dust
- Ecology issues;
- The site would be highly suitable for the use of swift bricks to provide a nesting place for swifts, which is a species that is in decline;
- Noise pollution from increase in traffic and hotel activity;
- Increase in traffic pollution;
- Building not in keeping with the heritage site – it will be an eyesore;
- Car park adjacent to the road not a good first impression to Bicester
- Loss of privacy;
- Detrimental to the natural environment;
- Light pollution;
- Potential for an increase in noisy events;
- Devaluing of properties (not a material planning consideration)

5.3. The comments received can be viewed in full on the Council's website, via the online Planning Register.

## 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: **Object.** Current local highway infrastructure and other roads inadequate; plant area on top of the building appears to make the building a whole storey higher than the current hangars; the bulge on the side is not in keeping (curved corner); loss of visual amenity and light both within the airfield and for residents of Caversfield changes the aspect of the conservation area.

6.3. CAVERSFIELD PARISH COUNCIL: **Object.**

- Design of the hotel was not aesthetically pleasing and the comments of Historic England are noted. The plant area on top of the hotel appears to increase the height;
- The Apartments need to be limited in length of occupancy, so they may not be used as permanent dwellings;
- The building will be overbearing to properties on Turnpike Road - with upper rooms of the hotel being able to have direct view into the residential homes;
- Safety implications regarding the landing and flying of aircraft from the airfield were also raised - the overshoot area immediately opposite in which is now the 'American Park' in the village of Caversfield may not be accessible;
- Caversfield has limited street lighting and therefore assume the hotel and car park will cause light pollution - can modern techniques of movement sensors and more efficient LED bulbs in the external lighting be used to ensure lights are only used when needed;
- Do not consider there is adequate parking provision for the project as the travel plan assumes that many people will come by bus or train - but the trains are not as regular as they should be;

- Very concerned about the impact on the local highway infrastructure as no provision appeared to have been made for any traffic management mitigation proposals for busy periods - the speed should be reduced to 40mph at least. It should also be noted that the A4421 is one of the registered Haul Roads for HS2 and East/West Rail - increasing vehicle numbers and HGVs for many years to come;
- The additional junction entrance is also proposed to be unmanned which caused concern;
- The new vehicular access to the site is also contrary to the RAF Bicester Planning Brief which states it is not suitable to introduce a new access and a safe crossing point is yet to be provided;
- The Toucan crossing is not shown on the plans and should be secured through S106 and should be near the bus stops north of the main entrance;
- There should be clauses in the Travel Plan to prohibit people using the hotel from parking in roads around Caversfield;
- S106 funding for a traffic management scheme within the village and to agree that during events their traffic management plan will include stopping visitors impacting on the village

6.4. STRATTON AUDLEY PARISH COUNCIL: Broadly **supports** the development of a hotel on the site, but raised specific **concerns/objections** relating to;

- Site access and traffic management;
- All proposals are Bicester-centric and no account of the impact of the development on the area to the north and in the direction of Buckingham;
- No shared cycle path running north to the junction with Stratton Audley;
- The development would make walking and cycling along this length of road more risky;
- A footpath to the north would provide opportunities for green travel to villages, economic benefits and an amenity for visitors of the hotel and heritage site to access the countryside;
- The proposal will create an increase in congestion for residents accessing the main road and pedestrians attempting to traverse the road;
- Why no roundabout or traffic light system at the hotel entrance?;
- A shared use path could also be incorporated and new crossing, eliminating need for the crossing nearer the main roundabout that would cause congestion - the footpath on the eastern side of the road would not then be required;
- Queries various aspects of the supporting documents regarding sustainable travel - e.g. no cycle links from Buckingham and bus services are limited therefore access to the site is limited to those with cars; no provision for walking from Buckingham direction.

*[Officer Comment: See Paragraphs 8.75 and 8.76 for response to resident's and Parish Council's concerns]*

#### STATUTORY CONSULTEES

6.5. ENVIRONMENT AGENCY: **No objections** subject to conditions relating to contamination.

6.6. HIGHWAYS ENGLAND: **No objections.**

6.7. HISTORIC ENGLAND: 'Acknowledge that a degree of change is necessary as if the base is to have a sustainable future it needs to host a variety of beneficial uses which together represent a viable business model that ensures it is well looked after for the foreseeable future.

The siting of the building close to, and on the same alignment to a C-Type hangar represent a compromise between the operational needs of the hotel ... and the desire of the Council for the building to fit into the trident layout for the base. As the massing of the hotel has been altered to conform more closely to the form of the hangar there is a strong argument for fitting into the trident layout and I think this is a reasonable compromise’.

Historic England have acknowledged the ‘challenge of making this building conform to the massing of a C-Type hangar and look like it belongs as part of the base without looking too much like a hangar’. They have raised specific concerns with elements of the design particularly the curved corner, transition in material from brick to mesh metal and very regular window openings. They concluded that ‘if the architects were given a bit more time, and pushed a bit harder, they could refine these elevations and produce a much better building here’.

When considering the overall proposal in terms of the public benefits in the context of the NPPF, Historic England conclude that ‘While we accept that the public benefits, particularly helping secure the long-term future of RAF Bicester as a whole, outweigh the harm there is the need to ensure that harm is minimised as far as possible if it is to be considered justified. As we believe that the impact of the proposal on the Conservation Area could be meaningfully reduced by further improving the design we do not think that harm is at yet justified and more time should be allowed for design development’.

6.8. NATURAL ENGLAND: **No comments**

6.9. THAMES WATER:

- Waste Water – No objection but advised to seek comments from LLFA. Recommended a condition relating to swimming pool (control when emptying).
- Foul Water – Inability of the existing foul water network infrastructure to accommodate the needs of this development proposal. Recommends a condition to overcome this issue.
- Waste Water – Inability of the existing waste water network infrastructure to accommodate the needs of this development proposal. Recommends a condition to overcome this issue.

NON-STATUTORY CONSULTEES

6.10. BUILDING CONTROL: **No comments**

6.11. CONSERVATION OFFICER AND URBAN DESIGN: Detailed comments have been provided which consider the impact of the proposal on the various heritage assets on the site. The following conclusion was provided: ‘The proposed hotel has evolved through detailed pre-app discussions with Bicester Heritage and their design team. Whilst a number of different designs and orientations are possible, the submitted design is considered to be appropriate given the various heritage constraints and business considerations involved. In terms of the hotel design itself, it would be useful to clarify more precisely how the expanded metal mesh covering will be executed on the hotel’s façades, especially where it gives the impression of changing façade texturing across wall planes. This design detail proposed is welcomed and clarification would be useful on this point.

The impact on heritage assets has been considered, and the relative harm to the setting assessed. The scheduled monuments potentially impacted should be referred to Historic England. In the main, it is considered that whilst there will be less than substantial harm to the setting of the Conservation Area and Listed Buildings



and other non-designated heritage assets, within the context of the NPPF (July 2018) para. 196, these are outweighed by the public benefits of the hotel. A key factor is that the hotel's success will ensure longer-term conservation and site viability in the future'.

6.12. ECOLOGY OFFICER: The site is within a Local Wildlife site, but it is evident that the area within the application site does not meet the Local Wildlife Site criteria as the majority of the grassland is close mown etc. There is a strip of species rich grassland to the western boundary detailed to be retained except where the access is to be, which is proposed to be mitigated. Recommends conditions to ensure the development is carried out in accordance with the Ecological Assessment and the mitigation measures therein.

6.13. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER: Conditions regarding unexpected contamination, noise associated with mechanical plant or machinery; acoustic enclosure and a Construction Environmental Management Plan are recommended.

6.14. LANDSCAPE OFFICER:

- Grass moulding requires contextual cross-sectional illustration to assess;
- "robust edge" – needs unevenly spaced native trees as mitigation for dead elms;
- OCC vis-splay needs to be indicated as this may mean the loss of existing structural vegetation;
- Strategic planting will require evergreen species and projected tree growth;
- Is the re-alignment of the taxing route acceptable in heritage terms?;
- Further protection and conservation of calcareous grassland needed;
- Landscape management plan needed;
- Hard and soft landscaping proposals and tree pit detailing.

6.15. BICESTER DELIVERY TEAM: Summary of comments:

#### *Energy efficiency*

An Energy Strategy has been submitted as part of the suite of documents for this application which includes consideration of a number of ways to: reduce energy demand, increase energy efficiency, and generate energy from renewable energy sources. The analysis also considers the ways in which carbon emissions can be reduced and low carbon measures be embodied into the proposals.

The analysis shows that domestic hot water is the highest energy demand source for the proposed development. This is proposed to be addressed through the use of a CHP system.

Overall, the combination of passive and active measures are expected to result in a 19% improvement in energy demand, while the cumulative CO2 savings will reach 20%.

However, what is missing from these proposals is a commitment to implement these measures. It is also unclear why air source heat pumps are not considered further when they have been shown to be a feasible renewable energy option. The decision not to consider solar PV and solar thermal panels further due to the proximity of an airfield is to be questioned as there are a number of international airports around the world which have solar farms situated adjacent to them.

There is also no detail on how the following have been considered within the proposals, in relation to energy efficiency:

- Sitting, orientation, and aspect;
- How the impact on the external environment will be reduced through the provision of cooling and shading opportunities, use of open space, and planting;
- How the sustainable and local sourcing of construction materials has been considered;
- How the use of the embodied energy within buildings and re-using of materials has been considered;
- How recycled materials may be used in construction;

There is no detail regarding how BREEAM Very Good is to be achieved.

We would like to see further detail on the above and a commitment to incorporate the proposals already made in the Energy Strategy. As it stands, the proposals do not comply with policy requirements.

### *Construction Apprenticeships*

CDC's Developer Contribution SPD (adopted February 2018) Appendix 13 sets out the indicative number of new construction apprenticeships to be provided through new development. For non-residential uses the amount is 3 apprenticeships per 1000 sq. m of floorspace. This application proposes 18,500 sq. m of floorspace and therefore any S106 agreement should seek a target number of 55 construction apprenticeships and the submission of an Employment Skills and Training Plan in line with the guidance contained in Appendix 13.

#### 6.16. OCC HIGHWAYS: **Objection** for the following reasons:

- 1) An amendment to the layout of the site access is required in order to accommodate the movement of the largest vehicle anticipated to require access to the site.
- 2) It is not shown from the drawing submitted whether the proposed mitigation scheme can be delivered within the highway boundary and without detriment to existing pedestrian and cycle infrastructure. Further details of these schemes are therefore required.

If despite OCC's objection, permission is proposed to be granted then OCC requests the following prior to the granting of planning permission:

#### 1) S106 contributions:

- Strategic transport contribution (£607,103)
- Public transport infrastructure (£2,180)
- Traffic Regulation Order (£5,200)
- Travel Plan Monitoring (£2,040)

2) An obligation to enter into a S278 agreement (details of the works required have been provided).

#### 3) Planning conditions

- Access details
- Travel plan
- Construction traffic management plan

The following additional key points were highlighted in the response:

- A pair of bus stops and informal pedestrian of Buckingham Road are required at the site access.

- An updated site access drawing showing bus stops/informal tactile crossing with refuge island is required.
- Capacity improvements at the A4421/A4095 roundabout junction, B4100/A4095/Banbury Road roundabout junction and the A4421 Skimmingdish Lane/Care Home Access/Launton Road roundabout junction are required as mitigation of the development's traffic impact.
- The County Council welcomes the provision of shared use footway/cycleway on the eastern side of Buckingham Road and the toucan crossing near to the Buckingham Road/Skimmingdish Lane priority junction.
- Amendments to the travel plan will be required.

Detailed comments have been provided with regards to walking and cycling, public transport, traffic impact, strategic transport contribution, access, car parking, cycle parking, service and deliveries, drainage, and travel plan.

Full justification has been provided for the requested S106 contributions, the recommended conditions and the need for a S278 agreement.

*Officer comment: Amended plans have now been submitted to resolve these objections and re-consultation with OCC Highways is being undertaken. It is anticipated that a response will be received from OCC Highways prior to the committee and can be reported in the written updates, or otherwise delegated authority will be requested to officers to resolve any matters still outstanding at that time*

- 6.17. OCC DRAINAGE (Lead Local Flood Authority): The SuDS proposals for this site include the use of Permeable Paving, Swale and an underground geo-cellular soakaway. The drainage strategy reports infiltration rates that derive from tests carried out within Bicester Heritage Area, it is not clear whether infiltration testing has been undertaken at the site itself. Therefore OCC (drainage) requires that this testing must be undertaken to inform detailed design.

Existing natural surface water flow-paths are diagrammatically shown within the FRA as flowing from west to east. The drainage system must be designed to accommodate overland flow from adjacent land if this is likely to be intercepted or affected by the development. Consideration must be given to exceedance flow-paths at the site, and as well as the consideration of the modelled events there should be a qualitative examination of what would happen if any part of the drainage/SuDS system fails, to demonstrate that flood water will have flow routes through the site without endangering property and where possible maintaining emergency access/egress routes. This should be supported by a flood exceedance route plan.

Although a SuDS Maintenance Schedule was provided with the application, it is not clear the party responsible for maintenance of SuDS at the site. A SuDS Management and Maintenance Plan must be provided (A detailed list of the requirements of the maintenance plan has been included in the response from the drainage team).

- 6.18. OCC ARCHAEOLOGY: No archaeological constraints.
- 6.19. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Supportive of the proposal that will not only provide employment and add to the viability of Bicester Heritage but will also provide services to assist business, to retain expenditure and add to the development of the wider economy. It therefore represents key infrastructure that contributes to the Council's economic growth objectives. To ensure its successful development and

operation, it should engage with local partners to implement an employment and skills plan.

- 6.20. ARBORICULTURAL OFFICER: The arboricultural impact assessment was made prior to the design of the hotel being finalised, but do not anticipate many trees will require removal to facilitate the development. Would recommend conditions relating to tree removal plan, tree protection plan and arboricultural method statement and replacement planting to ensure as much screening as possible to the adjacent A4421.
- 6.21. WILDLIFE TRUST: No comments received
- 6.22. BICESTER LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY: No comments received
- 6.23. BUSINESS SUPPORT UNIT: No comments received
- 6.24. HEALTH PROTECTION: No comments received
- 6.25. PLANNING POLICY: No comments received
- 6.26. RECREATION AND LEISURE: No comments received
- 6.27. CRIME PREVENTION DESIGN ADVISOR: No comments received
- 6.28. WASTE AND RECYCLING: No comments received

## **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 Part 1)

- PSD1 – Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development
- SLE1 – Employment Development
- SLE3 – Supporting Tourism Growth
- SLE4 – Improved Transport Connections
- ESD1 – Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change
- ESD2 – Energy Hierarchy and Allowable Solutions
- ESD3 – Sustainable Construction
- ESD4 – Decentralised Energy Systems
- ESD5 – Renewable Energy
- ESD6 – Sustainable Flood Risk Management
- ESD7 - Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDs)
- ESD10 – Biodiversity and the natural environment
- ESD13 – Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement
- ESD15 - The Character of the Built and Historic Environment

- BIC8 - Former RAF Bicester
- INF1 – Infrastructure

### CHERWELL LOCAL PLAN 1996 SAVED POLICIES (CLP 1996)

- TR1 – Transportation Funding
- T2 – Proposals for hotels, motels, guest houses and restaurants within settlements
- C1 – Protection of sites of nature conservation value
- C2 – Development affecting protected sites
- C4 – Creation of new habitats
- C7 – Landscape Conservation
- C23 – Retention of features contributing to character or appearance of a conservation area
- C25 – Development affecting the site or setting of a scheduled ancient monument
- C28 – Layout, design and external appearance of new development
- ENV12 – Development on Contaminated land

### 7.3. Other Material Planning Considerations

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
- RAF Bicester Conservation Area Appraisal – November 2008
- Bicester Masterplan – Consultation Draft August 2012 (limited weight)
- RAF Bicester Planning Brief 2009
- Heritage Partnership Agreement – Bicester Heritage
- Cherwell Non-Statutory Local Plan 2011

## **8. APPRAISAL**

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

- Principle of development
- Siting, orientation, form, scale and massing
- Design and external appearance
- Heritage assets
- Highway safety
- Landscape and Visual Impact
- Ecology
- Trees and Landscaping
- Residential amenity
- Flood Risk and Drainage
- Contamination
- Energy Efficiency
- Planning Obligations

#### Principle of the development

#### *Policy Position*

- 8.2. The application site is allocated in the Cherwell Local Plan under Policy Bicester 8 for 'conservation-led' proposals to 'secure a long-lasting, economically viable future for the site and flying field'. The policy proposes a number of uses that will be acceptable at the site including tourism and leisure uses. Hotel and conference

facilities are specifically supported as part of a wider package of employment uses. In terms of the “wider package of employment uses”, whilst not part of this application, it should be noted that a further planning application is currently pending consideration for an expansion to the existing technical site (Ref: 18/01333/F). This proposal therefore accords with the allocation for the site within the Cherwell Local Plan.

- 8.3. In addition to Policy Bicester 8, the proposal for a hotel and conference facilities is also supported by the wider policies of the Local Plan. Policy PSD1 ensures that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development that accords with the Plan and secures improvements to the economic, social and environmental conditions of an area, subject to other material considerations. Policy SLE3 specifically relates to proposals that support tourism growth, in particular those proposals that will increase visitor numbers to the District and increase overnight stays, which this proposal will achieve.
- 8.4. The proposal for the hotel also includes rooms that would be classed as ‘Aparthotel’ rooms. These are rooms that include small kitchenettes and living spaces enabling longer rental of rooms (for up to a month is considered appropriate in this instance). They are slightly larger rooms than the hotel rooms, but otherwise function much the same as the hotel rooms, accessed via a communal reception area and internal doors from a central corridor. Therefore, in this respect, they are still considered to fall within the C1 use class and thereby comply with the requirements of Policy Bicester 8.

#### *Sustainable Location*

- 8.5. The proposal for a hotel on the former RAF Bicester site is considered to be in a sustainable location, on the edge of Bicester town centre. With motor car manufacturing in Oxford and much of the UK’s motorsport industry, particularly F1 businesses, located in the surrounding areas (particularly in Banbury, Brackley and Silverstone), Bicester is ideally located to provide a hub for classic car businesses and enthusiasts. Therefore, a hotel in this part of the District and close to a sustainable settlement is considered to comply with Policy PSD1. It will ensure the long-term viability of the site and improve the economic, social and environmental conditions in the wider Bicester area.

#### *Economic Benefits*

- 8.6. The proposal will also bring many economic benefits to Bicester and the wider District. As set out in the applicant’s Planning Statement, the operational hotel is expected to create 180 full time equivalent jobs and in the region of £5m GVA annually. It is also anticipated to create 455 temporary jobs through the construction phase of the development and £19m GVA. This would add to the existing strength of Cherwell’s visitor economy which in 2016 was valued at £396m, 7,000 jobs supported by tourism and approximately 7 million trips to Cherwell. The overnight trips accounted for only 0.4million trips and yet their value was around £77m. Therefore, the proposed hotel offers considerable scope to increase visitor numbers and overnight stays and increasing the value of these visits to the local economy. This will comply with policy SLE3 which seeks to support tourism growth in the District by increasing overnight stays and visitor numbers to the area. It will also lead to other further opportunities for growth.
- 8.7. The proposal for a hotel also complies with saved policy T2 of the Cherwell Local Plan 1996 which allows for the provision of hotels within the built-up limits of a settlement.

### *Compliance with National Policy and Guidance*

- 8.8. The proposal for a new hotel, in a sustainable location such as on the edge of Bicester is also considered to comply with the objectives of the NPPF and NPPG, in particular sections relating to sustainable development and building a strong, competitive economy. Para. 11 makes it clear that proposals that accord with an up to date development plan should be approved without delay. Para. 80 also stresses the importance that planning should create conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt and in this sense this proposal will be enabling Bicester Heritage to grow and expand further contributing to the local and wider economy.

### *Compliance with Planning Brief*

- 8.9. A Planning Brief was adopted by the Council in 2009 for the former RAF site in order to secure its long-term future. This was written at a time when much of the site was identified on the then English Heritage's Heritage at Risk Register and no owner had come forward for the site. It also pre-dates the Cherwell Local Plan and the NPPF both of which now represent a more up to date policy context. Therefore, the Planning Brief is now somewhat out of date and therefore holds limited weight. However, there is some useful information within the brief setting out the opportunities for the site and important constraints. It is considered that the proposal for a hotel which complies with the site's allocation in Policy Bicester 8 of the Local Plan generally conforms to the aspirations of the Planning Brief which was to preserve the site and secure its long-term viability.
- 8.10. Whilst Policy Bicester 8 requires development proposals to accord with the Bicester Masterplan, this document has only reached Consultation stage in 2012 and has not progressed further at this stage as it was overtaken by the Local Plan. Therefore, only very limited weight can be attributed to it. However, it is considered that this proposal, in according with other Local and National Planning policies, would be adhering to the wider aspirations of the Masterplan to encourage economic growth to the District and improvements to social and environmental factors.
- 8.11. The hotel proposal is not considered to impact on the continued use of the airfield as a gliding club which is set out in Policy Bicester 8 of the Local Plan and the Planning Brief that this use should be retained in order that aviation uses continue to be a feature of the site to retain links with the historic use of the site as a military airfield.

### *Conclusion*

- 8.12. In conclusion, the principle of the erection of a hotel (and aparthotel) on this site is considered to be acceptable and complies with the Development Plan, the National Planning Policy Framework and other material planning considerations subject to the details and all other issues being acceptable as set out in the following sub-headings.

### Siting, Orientation, Form, Scale and Massing

- 8.13. Policy ESD 15 of the Cherwell Local Plan Part 1 states that new development will be expected to complement and enhance the character of its context through sensitive siting, layout and high-quality design. All new development will be required to meet high standards and should respect the historic environment including conservation areas and listed buildings. Policy Bicester 8 of the Cherwell Local Plan also makes it clear that development at this site is to be 'conservation-

led', therefore meaning that it is what is appropriate for the site in terms of heritage related issues that must be at the forefront at all times. Both of these policies are supported by the NPPF (sections on design and heritage) which states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development to create better places (Para. 124). Decisions should ensure that (amongst other factors) developments are visually attractive; sympathetic to the local character and history and optimise the potential of the site (Para.127). Section 16 on the historic environment acknowledges that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance (Para. 184).

- 8.14. They are also underpinned by the saved policies of the Cherwell Local Plan 1996, in particular policies C28 and C30 requiring all new development to ensure that standards of layout, design and external appearance are sympathetic to the character of the context.
- 8.15. With the above policy context in mind, whilst the principle of a hotel on the site is supported, it is imperative that it is appropriately sited and designed to ensure that it fits in with the historical context of the site and respects the existing pattern of development. Scale-wise, the applicants were advised that the hotel should not be any larger in dimensions than that of the largest hangar on the site (a C-Type Hangar), however this was considered to give considerable scope for the design of a hotel.

#### *Siting and Orientation of building*

- 8.16. In terms of siting, the hotel was proposed to be in the area to the north of the existing technical site, in an area where there is an existing gap between the largest C-Type hangar and the Buckingham Road. This is a logical siting as it enables direct access to be gained from the Buckingham Road whilst also being able to provide a relationship to the airfield. The siting away from the central airfield also complies with the Planning Brief 2009, which states that any loss of the extent of the flying field, or incursion into it by built development would be wholly unacceptable and detrimental to its importance as an integral part of the conservation area.
- 8.17. Earlier iterations of the proposal sought a hotel on the same site as now proposed but to an orientation that saw its longest side parallel to Buckingham Road with its shorter side facing the A-Type hangar to the south. Officers felt that this orientation was at odds with the Trident form of development and that it turned its back on the existing technical site, rather than being designed to be an integral part of the site.
- 8.18. During the pre-application process, much discussion took place with the applicants regarding the appropriate orientation of the hotel on the site. Officers felt that an orientation with the long side parallel to the A-Type hangar would be most appropriate as this would continue the arc of the existing C-Type hangars, but the applicants felt this would not work as well in terms of the operational use of the hotel and accesses to the Hotel entrance and Aparthotel entrance and would also not maximise views of the airfield from hotel rooms. It was also considered necessary to ensure that views along the avenue from the site entrance, part of the Trident pattern of development, were not obscured by the hotel at the end.
- 8.19. Ultimately a compromise was agreed upon where the hotel was to be orientated with its short side parallel to the nearest C-Type hangar. This had the benefit in continuing the natural outer arc of the large hangars on the site, whilst also providing more space around the hotel and between the hotel and the A-Type hangar. It also enabled the hotel to maximise the outlook from the proposed hotel



rooms across the airfield and for the car parking area to be positioned to the west of the hotel minimising its impact from the airfield. The only minor negative was the need to slightly amend the alignment of the existing track on the airfield side of the hotel, but this was considered to be outweighed by the significantly improved relationship the amended orientation brings to the site and the public benefits of the hotel proposal in principle (see more under Heritage Assets).

#### *Scale and Massing of building*

- 8.20. The first designs of the form of the hotel incorporated projecting wings of 3 storeys to the north and south of the main 5 storey building. A subsequent design scaled this back to one projecting wing to the north which increased in height to 5 storeys to match that of the main building. Officers felt that the form of both of these designs did not emulate any of the existing development on the site, or respect the scale of the hangars, with the projecting wings appearing as an 'add-on' to obtain the additional floor space required rather than an integral part of the design. Officers felt that the form of the hotel should be kept to a simple rectangular plan form – to respect and not compete with the existing hangars.
- 8.21. The removal of the projecting wings led to discussion over the creation of a 'tower' at a corner of the building to reflect that of an airfield 'watch tower' and to provide the additional floor space required that the applicants were seeking. This could also be an opportunity to create a 'wow-factor' appearance to the hotel. The scale of the hotel was to not exceed the height of the hangars, but development at one or more corners could be higher as it would only be a small part of the overall massing. This design idea led to the creation of the 'curved corner' to the north (same height as the main building). This took inspiration from the curved nature of the perimeter track around the airfield, used now for the testing/driving of the classic cars at the site. This is considered to create a positive feature of the hotel, distinguishing it as different from the hangars and giving a more contemporary feature to the northern corner.
- 8.22. In making amendments to the design of the hotel (set out below), the height of the hotel has increased slightly so that it is now 400mm higher than the adjacent largest hangar. Whilst the height of the adjacent hangar had been set as a parameter, officers felt that the overall design response has been greatly improved to the extent that it is possible to support the slight increase, on the basis that this is a minor increase. Also, with the separation distance from the hangar and the element of perspective, it will in reality be hard to detect the slight height increase given the overall scale of the building.
- 8.23. It has been noted and raised by Launton Parish Council and Caversfield Parish Council, that there is to be a screen to obscure the plant and equipment to be located on top of the hotel. However, this will be set back from the front of the hotel and therefore only minimal views of this are likely. A condition will be imposed to ensure that details of the design of this screen are submitted for approval so that the visual impact is minimised.
- 8.24. Overall, the hotel has been scaled back and simplified from a sporadic form of development of varying scales and massings which did not draw reference from the existing site, to a simple rectangular form with a curved feature to its corner. The orientation now reflects that of the existing pattern of development at the site, continuing the natural arc of the largest hangars with a frontage to the airfield and now appears as an integral part of the development at the site.

#### Layout, Design and external appearance

- 8.25. Officers have consistently expressed the view that the design of the hotel in this location could be something quite bold, striking and contemporary, whilst still taking reference and design cues from the existing buildings on the site, in particular the hangars. It is acknowledged that this building is to be a hotel and therefore must look inviting and attractive and not like a hangar, but nevertheless there is considerable scope to design a building that clearly takes its inspiration from the existing 1930s technical site, the hangars and use of materials such as brick, concrete, slate, metal etc.

#### *Design Evolution*

- 8.26. With that in mind, the proposal has progressed significantly during the pre-application stage since 2016 and mostly notably this year. Earlier iterations of the proposed design and layout were not considered by officers to be bold enough for the site and there was no reference in the design and detailing as to the existing buildings and materials used at the site, for example brick.
- 8.27. The proposals presented in 2017 and early 2018 drew clear references from international interwar Modernism, such as Walter Gropius' 1925 Bauhaus in Dessau, Germany, amongst other influences. The hotel was designed to a very uniformed and regular appearance, to a highly modern design with the main colour being white to the external appearance. This was considered to be entirely at odds with the simple and less imposing architecture of the 1930s, including its use of colours and materials. Whilst officers were accepting of a contemporary design, the Modern Movement was not considered to be appropriate for this site as it bears no resemblance to its context. In this sense, officers are referring to the fact that during the interwar period there were very few examples of large Modernist buildings in Britain, and also, that airfield architecture tended to reflect the Air Ministry's preference for more traditional design, including neo-Georgian motifs and detailing. Whilst a contemporary design was encouraged, this also needed to sustain a design discourse with adjacent historic buildings.

#### *Current Design*

- 8.28. The proposals were therefore amended to those now formally submitted as part of this application, which represents a building of high quality design whilst respectful of its historic context. As set out above, the building was amended to a crisper but functional design with an understated elegance of many interwar airfield buildings. It now consists of a rectangular plan form to emulate the form and massing of the adjacent hangars. It is laid out with a glazed atrium that is off-set to the north-western half of the hotel. This will create a large reception and welcome area to the hotel, intended to create a 'wow-factor' design feature as the atrium will be a full height space up to the roof of the hotel, with internal rooms looking out over the atrium. The aparthotel entrance will be a scaled down version to the south-east with a glazed curtain wall at the ground floor level.
- 8.29. The hotel still retains a regular appearance due to its fenestration and the rhythm of horizontal banding and other design detailing, however on all elevations this is broken up by the use of other materials/design features. For example, on the east and north elevations, both of which incorporate a regular appearance of window openings, the curved feature will be evident on the northern corner across all floors of the building, together with a glazed curtain wall at ground floor level and the openable terraced area to the restaurant. On the main west elevation, the rhythm is broken up by the glazed atrium and also the use of sections of full height facing brickwork.

- 8.30. All elevations are varied and will use a mixture of brick, textured brickwork, light cladding, metal cladding and expanded metal mesh. The brickwork will be a red brick and is a reference to the use of brickwork in the existing technical site. The expanded metal mesh comes from the discovery that Bicester used to be a camouflage school of the RAF and hangars used to be covered with a netting. The idea is that the expanded metal mesh is positioned on top of the brickwork and then stops to expose the brickwork creating a transition between the two materials. This has the added benefit of toning down the colour palette from a solely brick structure and enables it to blend in with its surroundings much more appropriately, but at the same time creating a high-quality feature building within the site. To ensure that this works well, a condition will be imposed to require more detail of the blend between the brickwork and the expanded metal mesh as well as an architectural detailing condition.

### *Conclusion*

- 8.31. Overall, the proposed design is now considered to fully respect existing buildings at the site and uses these as clear inspiration for the design of the hotel, which together with its use of more appropriate materials, will create a high quality contemporary development that still appears integral to the site.

### Heritage Assets

- 8.32. The significance of this site relates to this being one of the best-preserved examples of an inter-war airfield, developed after the First World War at a time when technological advances in aircraft led to a need for different philosophies in military architecture and urban planning, led by Sir Hugh Trenchard (founder of the RAF).
- 8.33. The Conservation Area Appraisal describes the military base at RAF Bicester as *'the quintessential airfield of its age; almost better than any other site it typifies the public perception of the World War II airfield'*. It goes on to say *'The character of RAF Bicester is unified by its function as a military station. There were principles underpinning the planning of airfields in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and these are key determinants of the character that remains today'*. *English Heritage (now Historic England) also states that 'RAF Bicester retains, better than any other military airbase in Britain, the layout and fabric relating to pre-1930s military aviation.....With West Raynham in Norfolk it comprises the best-preserved bomber airfield dating from the period up to 1945....it also comprises 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'*.
- 8.34. The base was designated a conservation area in 2002, its primary architectural and social historic interest being its interwar design, layout and use. The nature of the site is defined by the historic landscape character of distinct zones; the domestic site (to the west of Buckingham Road), the technical site and the flying field (to the east of Buckingham Road). The layout of the site is built to a 'trident' pattern – with 3 arms branching out from a central axis creating avenues. The location of buildings was deliberately spacious so that if any buildings were ever bombed other buildings may be preserved. The conservation area designation acknowledges the special architectural interest, and as a conservation area, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance and provides the context and framework to ensure the setting and appearance of sections of the military landscape are preserved.
- 8.35. Within the technical site and the flying field most of the buildings are Grade II Listed, including the A-Type and C-Type hangars close to the proposed hotel.

There are several Scheduled Monuments which includes airfield defence structures such as trenches, a pillbox and an air raid shelter later thought to be an anti-aircraft gun position.

- 8.36. Scheduled Ancient Monuments are designated within the context of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (AMAA 1979). This designation affords a higher degree of protection than Listing, and decisions about proposed development potentially affecting them are assessed by Historic England.
- 8.37. To date, Bicester Heritage as current owners of the site have so far focused on renovating and refurbishing the existing buildings at the site to a very high standard and bringing them back into viable use (mainly commercial with some office provision). In order to allow for the growth of the site and maintenance of other buildings, inevitably new development now needs to be considered.
- 8.38. It is in recognition of the significance of the site in the national context that Policy Bicester 8 of the Cherwell Local Plan requires a 'conservation-led' approach to the development to be taken. Policy ESD15 of the Local Plan also requires developments to conserve, sustain and enhance designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings.
- 8.39. In respect of this proposal the application needs to consider the impact of the development on the character and appearance of the conservation area, the setting of the conservation area, the setting of the listed buildings and the setting of the scheduled monuments.
- 8.40. Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that special attention shall be paid in the exercising of planning functions to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area. Likewise, Section 66(1) of the same Act states that in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
- 8.41. Paragraph 192 of the NPPF advises: *'In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:*
- *the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
  - *the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic viability;*
  - *and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness*
- 8.42. Paragraph 193 goes on to advise: *'When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance'.*
- 8.43. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of a Grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest

significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, battlefields, grade I and II\* listed buildings, Grade I and II\* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.

*Impact on the Conservation Area and its Setting*

- 8.44. The proposed location for the hotel would be situated on the edge of the technical site to the north of the existing buildings, adjacent to the flying field and the nearest two listed hangars (A-Type and C-Type). This would be in a prominent location in the conservation area, visible from the airfield and from outside the site. In order for its impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area and its setting to be minimised the hotel has been designed with clear massing and elevational references from the C-Type hangars in mind to ensure that the hotel does not compete with the scale and massing of the hangars and sits comfortably within its setting.
- 8.45. The orientation (as previously discussed above) has been aligned to match that of the adjacent C-Type hangar so that the longest side fronts the airfield and the short side is parallel to the short side of the hangar. Whilst this was not the preferred orientation for the hotel for officers, it represents a compromise solution that still obtains the same objective, which is to respect the historical pattern of the development. By being positioned in this way, next to the largest hangar, the hotel will continue the built form of development in a natural arc around the periphery of the technical site which is considered to sustain the character and appearance of the conservation area and its setting.
- 8.46. In considering the orientation and position of the hotel, consideration was given to the Trident form of development at the site, in particular, the views along the avenue within the site (parallel to Buckingham Road) from the site entrance. These avenues are important to the character and appearance of the conservation area as they maintain the sense of space and tranquillity at the site. It was therefore considered important not to obstruct the openness of the views and ensure that the hotel was kept behind the line of the avenue.
- 8.47. Another important axis to consider in the orientation and position of the hotel was the views from the watch tower. Historically, the watch or control tower would have had a 360° view of the flying field, hanger hard standings, perimeter tracks, and taxiways. A key factor was to maintain control over aircraft take-offs and landings, so as to avoid accidents. Bicester's example was built during the late 1930s. Therefore, in order to preserve the historic integrity of the site, it was important to ensure that views across the airfield from the watch tower were not interrupted by the hotel.
- 8.48. Whilst a contemporary new hotel on the site will be visible from Buckingham Road to an extent (softened by landscaping as explained later in this report), as set out in the above sub-heading its high-quality design, detailing and use of materials will ensure that the setting of the conservation area, when viewed from outside the site, can be preserved.

*Impact on the setting of the listed buildings and other non-designated heritage assets*

- 8.49. The nearest listed buildings are the two hangars as well as several other smaller buildings positioned behind the hangars. There are also a number of smaller buildings close to the site that are not listed although would be considered to be 'non-designated heritage assets' due to the positive contribution that they provide to the conservation area as a whole. Most of these are obscured from the hotel by

the hangers however small glimpses of the listed buildings will be evident from the existing technical site.

- 8.50. An assessment of the various buildings potentially affected by the proposal and their settings have been assessed within the Council's heritage advice with the conclusion that the separation distances from the hotel and the improved design of the hotel will go a significant way to minimising the impact of the proposal on the setting of these listed buildings and non-designated heritage assets.
- 8.51. The curved feature is purposely positioned to the northern corner in order to maximise the views across the airfield, however this contemporary addition to the hotel is positioned furthest away from the listed buildings so that it will not cause direct harm to the immediate setting of the listed buildings.
- 8.52. The scale of the hotel was an important factor for officers to ensure that it did not significantly exceed the height of the adjacent hangars. The revised proposal is slightly higher than the neighbouring hangar by c.400mm, however this is not considered to be substantial in its context. The hotel will be sited approximately 50m from the adjacent C-Type hangar and from this perspective, it is not considered that the slight height increase will be noticeable from the wider area and will not adversely impact on the setting of the listed hanger.
- 8.53. The proposal is now utilising materials that are more in keeping with the site (brick, cladding, metal mesh etc.) and the overall colour palette is now much more akin to the existing technical site, therefore the overall design and appearance of the hotel is considered to blend with the existing technical site much better, which will enable the setting of the listed buildings and the character and appearance of the conservation area to be maintained.

#### *Setting of Scheduled Monuments*

- 8.54. The agreed orientation has resulted in the need to slightly amend the alignment of the concrete track by straightening it out in front of the north elevation of the hotel. However, this has meant that the track now terminates at a small roundabout, in the middle of which will be a retained wartime concrete pillbox (scheduled monument). It is therefore considered that whilst the realignment of the track slightly alters the historic track alignment, this is a subservient section of the track (not the main perimeter track around the flying field's perimeter) and also allows for the enhancement of the Scheduled Monument at the end of the new section of track and within a small roundabout. The Scheduled Monument will therefore become a feature in this area and given more prominence. A condition will be imposed to ensure that further details are submitted to ensure the setting of this Scheduled Monument within the new track is preserved (i.e. appropriate surfacing materials).
- 8.55. There is a Scheduled Monument (an air raid shelter and anti-aircraft gun position) to the western boundary of the site which is to be retained. However, the landscaping proposals show this to potentially be obscured by a proposed native hedge which would impact on its setting. This is an opportunity for better revealing the significance of this Scheduled Monument in a similar way to the one to be retained in the new track roundabout to the north-eastern corner of the hotel. Therefore, it is considered reasonable to impose a planning condition for details of the boundary to this Scheduled Monument to be submitted to ensure that it is brought into the development and not obscured.
- 8.56. It should be noted that no works are proposed to the Scheduled Monuments as part of this application.

### *Archaeology*

- 8.57. In respect of archaeology at the site, OCC has confirmed that there are no archaeological constraints to the development and therefore no conditions are required in this respect.

### *Conclusion*

- 8.58. The NPPF states at paragraph 197 that a balanced planning judgement will be required by the planning authority having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage assets.
- 8.59. In conclusion, and taking into account the advice in the NPPF, the proposal is considered to cause less than substantial harm to the heritage assets at the site. It cannot be concluded that there is no harm as the erection of a large, modern, new development in such close proximity to the existing technical site will undoubtedly cause a degree of harm. However, officers conclude, that due to the significant improvements that have been made to the design and its careful siting and orientation that the harm caused can be considered to be less than substantial in this case. The mitigation measures that have been put in place are considered to ensure that the significance of the site can still be appreciated and that the historical integrity, character and special interest of the site will not be compromised.
- 8.60. Under paragraph 196 of the NPPF, the authority must consider...'*Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use*'. It is considered that the development of a hotel at RAF Bicester provides substantial public benefit in terms of supporting and securing an optimum use for the wider site, which is financially viable and will ensure the longer-term conservation of the heritage assets on the site.

### Highway safety

- 8.61. At the time of writing this committee report, negotiations are still ongoing with highways in relation to some specific matters as they have objected to the application. Their objections relate to:
1. an amendment is required to the site access to accommodate coaches as currently the swept paths at the site entrance for coaches overhang the central island and would hit the bollards and;
  2. clarification that the mitigation measures proposed in the Transport Assessment (TA) relating to the 3 roundabouts on the outer ring road can be carried out in the highway boundary and without detriment to existing pedestrian and cycle infrastructure.
- 8.62. Having discussed these matters with the Highways Officer and the applicant, amended plans have now been submitted to resolve these objections and re-consultation with OCC Highways is being undertaken. It is anticipated that a response will be received from OCC Highways prior to the committee and can be reported in the written updates, or otherwise delegated authority will be requested to officers to resolve any matters still outstanding at that time. There are also some other highways issues that need to be resolved, but these did not constitute objections from Highways. One of the matters still being negotiated relates to a

couple of the planning obligations requested by OCC Highways (this will be explained later in this report under the sub-heading Planning Obligations).

- 8.63. The proposals include a variety of measures in order to provide mitigation for the development to ensure that it is acceptable in terms of highway safety and provides the appropriate level of connections (public transport, pedestrian, cycling) to improve the access to the site by other more sustainable modes of transport. These measures are set out in the following sub-sections for clarity.

#### *Traffic Impact*

- 8.64. The application proposes the creation of a new access onto the Buckingham Road to directly serve the new hotel development. Appendix E of the Transport Assessment shows how this is to be laid out. It will consist of a right-hand filter lane into the site and then left-only egress from the site with a junction island to discourage right-hand egress. The design of this is considered to be acceptable to Highways except that it required a slight amendment to cater for coaches entering the site as the swept path analysis plans in the TA show overhanging of the island (first reason for objection set out above, amended plans now submitted). Visibility splays can also be achieved from this access and detailed designs will be established at S278 stage.
- 8.65. The TA has not considered the cumulative impact of the proposal together with the pending application for the new technical site reference 18/01333/F. The TA for this application shows a traffic generation of 182 trips in the AM and 149 trips in the PM which equals 331 two-way trips. However, the TA shows that the junctions on the outer ring road (the 3 nearest roundabouts) are over capacity in the forecast years and so mitigation has been proposed in order to account for these extra trips. The mitigation is set out in Appendix K of the TA and shows widening and elongating of lanes at the nearest 3 roundabouts, however Highways required confirmation that these works can all be carried out in the highway as at present the plans suggest some encroachment onto private land or a detrimental impact on the pedestrian/cycle infrastructure. This is the second reason for objection from highways, but the applicant has submitted amended plans to address this issue.

#### *Car Parking*

- 8.66. The amount of car parking proposed is 311 spaces (for staff and guests) of which 30 will be dedicated as disabled spaces, 10 as EV charging spaces, 26 for feature display car parking (including 2 disabled) immediately outside the hotel with 4 spaces to be provided directly outside the aparthotel. The level of car parking is considered to be acceptable to highways as it is considered that hotels rarely operate at above 80% occupancy due to the turnover of rooms and also multiple guests may also arrive using a single car. The level of car parking provided equates to 90.4% (car parking spaces to rooms) which allows for 69 spaces to be used for staff car parking. However, if parking demand were ever to exceed the number provided there is considered to be further space within the site.
- 8.67. A Car Park Management Plan should be included within the Travel Plan to set out how the car parking will be properly managed between staff and guests. This will be subject to a planning condition.

#### *Public Transport*

- 8.68. Despite the TA setting out that 73% of people in Bicester travel to work by car, the Highways Officer considers this is not likely to be reflective of staff working at the hotel on lower-paid work, part time and shift work of which a larger proportion are



less likely to own their own car and will therefore require access to the site by other sustainable means. As such the provision of bus stops should be required near the proposed road access which would be 400m north of the existing Caversfield turn bus stops. As part of the pedestrian requirements (set out below), these bus stops could be provided along with the required informal tactile crossing and refuge island at the site access.

- 8.69. At the time of writing the committee report, the justification for these bus stops is being discussed further between the applicant and Highways and it is anticipated that a resolution on this issue can be reported to planning committee.

#### *Pedestrian accessibility*

- 8.70. A Toucan pedestrian crossing is proposed around 230m to the south of the proposed access and there will be a 3m wide footway (to operate as a shared footway/cycleway) to the south of the proposed access on the eastern side of Buckingham Road, to connect to the location of the proposed pedestrian crossing.
- 8.71. Highways are requesting the applicant to also provide an informal tactile crossing and pedestrian refuge island within the hatched area for the right-turn lane to provide access to the western side of Buckingham Road from the application site. However, this is another matter that is currently being negotiated with the applicant and an update on this matter is anticipated will be able to be reported to planning committee.

#### *Cycling provision*

- 8.72. The level of cycle parking provision (24 spaces) provided is considered to be acceptable and meets the County Council's minimum standards. The proposal includes shower, changing and locker facilities for staff cycling to the site. A condition will be imposed to ensure the cycle provision is secure and covered.

#### *Servicing and Deliveries*

- 8.73. Servicing and deliveries are to be undertaken internally towards the rear of the building away from the parking and entrance areas which is considered to be appropriate. It is not considered to be necessary to impose a condition in respect of the hours of deliveries to the site as any activity associated with this would be a considerable distance from any existing residential properties and in any event the amenities of the residents of the hotel itself would be a factor in considering when it is appropriate for deliveries to take place. Therefore, it is considered that this can be controlled via the applicant.

#### *Travel Plan*

- 8.74. The Travel Plan currently submitted with the application requires several changes to be made to it however these can be dealt with by the imposition of a planning condition.

#### Response to Residents' and Parish Council's concerns:

- 8.75. Of the local objections received, many of these relate to concerns regarding highway matters. However, it is considered that with the provision of the mitigation measures set out above, the proposal is not considered to cause detriment to highway safety. Comments are also noted from the Parish Councils, in respect of providing pedestrian access to the north of the application site to connect up to the junction with Stratton Audley. However, as set out by the Highways Officer, the

justification for a footpath to the north of the application is not considered to be reasonable at the current time as there will be limited demand for movements to the north generated by users of the hotel. It would not therefore be considered justified in the context of the NPPF and the CIL Regulation 122 tests at this time but if there is any further development at the Bicester 8 site allocation then this infrastructure may be requested.

- 8.76. Overall, it is considered that the proposals will, subject to re-assessment of the amended plans now submitted by Highways, be sufficient to make the development acceptable and provide the required level of mitigation, together with the planning obligations (set out later in this report).

#### Landscape and visual amenity

- 8.77. Policy ESD 13 of the CLP Part 1 states that: *'opportunities will be sought to secure the enhancement of the character and appearance of the landscape, particularly in urban fringe locations, through the restoration, management or enhancement of existing landscapes, features or habitats and where appropriate the creation of new ones, including the planting of woodlands, trees and hedgerows'*.
- 8.78. The proposal for a five-storey hotel on this site needs careful assessment in terms of its potential impact on the landscape and visual amenity of the area due to its scale. The impact of the hotel on the landscape needs to consider views into the site from the surrounding local area, in particular Buckingham Road; views of the hotel from within the site – including the internal avenues and across the airfield and longer distance views of the proposal from beyond the immediate local areas (from local villages etc.). Mitigation can be in the form of its design and siting together with utilising the existing landscaping and proposing new landscaping in order to ensure that the hotel blends into its environment.
- 8.79. The application has been submitted with a Landscape Character and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) report and a proposed landscaping plan to support the proposals, both of which have been assessed by the Council's Landscape Architect together with the Arboricultural report submitted with the application. The LVIA has been considered as a generally comprehensive and proportionate document.
- 8.80. In terms of the design and siting of the development, due to the amendments which have been made to the proposal including the reduction in the spread of the form of the hotel resulting in a more compact built form, the use of brick and dark colour tones and its siting adjacent to the C-Type hangar, thereby at an angle to Buckingham Road, it is considered that considerable work has already been done to ensure that the hotel itself blends seamlessly within the landscape. Additional mitigation can be provided by the use of existing and new vegetation proposals as set out below:

#### *Views from Buckingham Road*

- 8.81. The Arboricultural report sets out that the 'robust edge' of existing mature landscaping, intended to provide mitigation for the western boundary of the site, indicates that a number of dead elm will need to be removed and so these will need to be replaced by unevenly spaced native trees in order that the robust edge can achieve its full height and spread to mitigate the potential visual harm. There will be some loss of the existing landscape fabric in order to provide the development access gap of 17m, but this will be supplemented with new native planting.

- 8.82. Visibility splays required for highways have not been noted on the plans but may require the loss of existing structural vegetation and therefore greater visual exposure of the development. This can be controlled via a tree removal plan condition.
- 8.83. Strategic planting is proposed adjacent to the car park and north-western side of the hotel in order to provide mitigation over time from views along Buckingham Road. These are positioned in uniform rows at an angle to the road and placed perpendicular and parallel to the hotel. These rows of trees have been placed relative to each other in order to increase the screening effect but without creating large scale planting features that would be out of character with the open airfield character. This is considered to be an appropriate and proportionate response to the landscape mitigation in this area and will provide additional landscape screening to supplement the existing landscaping on the western boundary. However, in order for this screening to be effective, as stated by the Council's Landscape Architect, it needs to be provided with evergreen species for year-round visual cover.

#### *Views from within the site*

- 8.84. Views of the proposal from within the technical site will be minimal at ground level due to the siting of the hotel. An important vista of the historical trident form of development at the site is the views along the avenues so the hotel has been specifically sited so as to ensure that it cannot be seen along the avenue that runs parallel to the Buckingham Road. The car parking area will be visible, but this will be softened by the use of low level shrub planting and some areas of earth mounding. A condition will be imposed to request cross sectional details of the earth mounding to ensure that this is proportionate to the car parking areas.
- 8.85. Glimpses of views of the hotel will be visible between the two neighbouring hangers but there are already a significant number of existing trees in this area that will naturally screen the hotel to a considerable degree. The carefully considered improvements that have been made to the form, design and external appearance of the hotel will also enable the hotel to blend in well with its immediate environment.
- 8.86. Views from the watch tower and across the airfield will be uninterrupted by existing or proposed landscaping which is necessary in order to safeguard the historical integrity of the site. The impact on the landscape and visual amenity of the area rests on the careful design of the hotel as set out previously in this report which is considered to be acceptable.

#### *Longer range views towards the site*

- 8.87. As set out in the LVIA, the magnitude of change in the landscape would diminish with distance and the intervening screening features. There are considerable field hedges at a lower level with fragments of woodland strips and taller vegetation that has the effect of screening out views towards the airfield. Therefore, it is considered that the impact of the hotel on longer range views are considered to be acceptable.

#### Ecology

- 8.88. The application site is located in an area designated as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) which is of county importance due to the presence of Habitats of Principal Importance including Open Mosaic Habitat on Previously Developed Land and Lowland Calcareous Grassland. The application has been submitted with an

Ecological Assessment to support the proposals and has been assessed by the Council's Ecologist.

- 8.89. Policy Bicester 8 of the CLP Part 1 which allocates the site for development purposes, requires the biodiversity of the site to be protected and enhanced and habitats and species surveys (including Great Crested Newt Survey) should be undertaken. Policy ESD10 of the CLP Part 1 also requires due regard to be given to biodiversity and the natural environment and these policies are both supported by national policy in the NPPF. Also, under Regulation 43 of Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017, it is a criminal offence to damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place.
- 8.90. The Council's Ecologist has advised, in assessing the submitted report, that the area of the part of the LWS that is within the application site does not meet the LWS criteria for designation and is not of sufficient quality to be considered as a Habitat of Principal Importance due to the majority of the grassland being close mown, disturbed by car parking and grounds management resulting in a low species richness. It suggests that the interest for which the LWS was designated is in other parts of the Bicester Airfield LWS. It is also noted that this area of grassland in the application site is only likely to decline in quality further in the absence of development.

#### *Grassland*

- 8.91. The loss of this grassland habitat is mitigated with the creation of species rich calcareous grassland in the areas surrounding the development – the retained grassland to the west of the site, areas of grassland around the proposed car parking and on the proposed earth mounds. There is a strip of unmown species rich grassland along the western boundary hedge that is considered likely to qualify as Lowland Meadow Habitat of Principal Importance which is proposed to be retained as part of the proposals except for the area of the proposed entrance (mitigated by the proposed new grassland areas). This area of unmown grassland should be protected with appropriate fencing whilst the construction takes place.

#### *Bats*

- 8.92. In terms of other species, there are no trees or buildings with potential to support roosting bats within the application site, with the western boundary offering some limited potential for foraging and commuting bats which will be retained as part of the proposals. New tree and shrub planting and hedgerow bolstering will enhance foraging resources for bats and the provision of bat boxes on suitable trees within the application site will provide new roosting opportunities. Any lighting scheme will need to consider the needs of bats utilising hoods and cowls to direct lighting away from the newly created habitats.

#### *Reptiles*

- 8.93. In terms of reptiles, other than a small strip of grassland along the western boundary of the site, the vast majority of the site is managed as short mown grassland and as such offers no potential opportunities for this group. As the proposals would have the potential to directly impact upon reptiles during the site clearance and construction operations, it is considered that an appropriate clearance methodology involving habitat manipulation, encouraging reptiles to move into suitable habitats in the wider area will ensure that no reptiles are killed or injured during construction works. Enhancements will be provided through the retention and creation of areas of long species rich grassland.

### *Birds*

- 8.94. In respect of birds, there are some opportunities for nesting birds in the form of a single hedgerow along the application sites western boundary. A single breeding bird survey recorded the presence of a limited range of common and widespread species utilising this hedgerow therefore the site is considered of no particular significance in this respect. All species of birds are afforded general protection whilst nesting and so it is recommended site clearance of hedgerows is undertaken outside of the breeding season or under the supervision of an ecologist to check for breeding birds prior to vegetation removal. The proposals will provide a significant increase in nesting opportunities for birds in the form of tree and shrub planting and hedgerow bolstering with the enhanced grasslands providing enhanced opportunities for ground nesting birds.

### *Great Crested Newts*

- 8.95. In respect of Great Crested Newts, Policy Bicester 8 of the CLP specifically refers to the need for surveys, however the Ecology survey assesses that the application does not provide a suitable habitat for Great Crested Newts as there are no waterbodies within the site or within 500m of the site that are not separated by major barriers to migration. As such the application site is not likely to support this species or any other range of amphibian species.

### *Conclusion*

- 8.96. The proposals are therefore considered to be acceptable in terms of ecology at the site subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions as set out by the Council's Ecologist and that the Council's statutory obligations in relation to protected species and habitats under the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017, have been met and discharged.

### Trees and landscaping

- 8.97. The Arboricultural Report submitted with the application is dated August 2016, before the designs of the hotel were finalised. However, the Arboricultural Officer does not anticipate the removal of many trees to facilitate the development. The only area where existing trees will be affected is the western boundary in order to create the new access. As already set out above under the Landscaping and Visual Impact sub-heading, mitigation will be provided for any trees removed at the new site entrance by replacement tree planting within the development. As recommended by the Arboricultural Officer (and Landscape Architect), conditions will be imposed regarding tree removal, tree protection, replacement planting and an Arboricultural method statement.
- 8.98. In addition to the landscaping proposed in order to aid the screening of the development to minimise its visual impact on the landscape, and the new areas of calcareous grassland, other landscaping is proposed throughout the development. This consists of providing a tree lined entrance to the site which will mimic the tree lined avenues within the existing technical site, low level shrub planting in the car park areas, new trees to the south of the hotel and ornamental trees to the display car park area. There will also be a new native hedge along the western boundary of the main car park and some mounding areas to reduce the visual impact of the car park when viewed from the airfield. More detail will be requested by planning condition in terms of the precise number and types of species to be proposed.
- 8.99. In terms of hard landscaping, the proposals set out a mixture of feature paving, paving, porous paving (car parking areas), vegetated porous paving and porous

road surfacing. However, further details of these materials will be required in order to ensure that the details are appropriate for the development, but these can be required by condition.

#### Residential amenity

- 8.100. Paragraph 127 of the NPPF includes, as a core planning principle, a requirement that planning should have a *high standard of amenity for all existing and future users*. This is reflected in Policy ESD 15 of the CLP Part 1, which states that new development proposals should: *consider the amenity of both existing and future development, including matters of privacy, outlook, natural light, ventilation, and indoor and outdoor space*.
- 8.101. The nearest residential dwellings are located on the western side of Buckingham Road in Turnpike Road, approximately 58m from the nearest edge of the application site boundary and a further 60m from the nearest corner of the proposed hotel. These residents in Turnpike Road are separated from the application site by the Buckingham Road and also a strip of landscape screening approximately 25m deep. It is therefore considered that they are positioned a sufficient distance away from the development so that it will not cause any detriment to their residential amenity by reason of overlooking or loss of light.
- 8.102. Residents living further north of Turnpike Road (Thompson Drive and its side roads) will be around 20m from the northern point of the application site boundary (nearest property) and in excess of 140m from the nearest part of the hotel which is also considered to be a sufficient distance in order to protect their amenities.
- 8.103. Understandably, residents are concerned about potential issues of light pollution, noise and dust (highways concerns are already addressed in the highways section of this report) however these matters, due to the distance and existing screening to Buckingham Road, are not considered likely to cause any significant detriment. Whilst a lighting scheme has not been formulated yet, this will be a condition of the planning approval and it will be imperative to ensure that the lighting is kept to a minimum, not only from a residential amenity perspective, but from a visual impact perspective and also to ensure that the lighting is proportionate and in keeping with the heritage site.
- 8.104. In respect of noise and dust, a Construction Transport Management Plan will be required to be submitted by condition which will set out conditions that the development will need to meet during the construction phase in order to mitigate the impacts of noise and dust (amongst other matters). It is not considered that the development, being primarily a hotel, will cause significant noise and disturbance to the area although some noise conditions will be imposed in respect of the plant and equipment at the site. A hotel will undoubtedly create more activity to this part of the site than there is at present, but this is not considered will be to a detrimental level.
- 8.105. In this respect, the proposal therefore accords with Government guidance contained within the NPPF and Policy ESD 15 of the CLP Part 1 that requires appropriate standards of amenity and privacy.

#### Flood risk and Drainage

- 8.106. The application site is located within Flood Zone 1 (low risk) of flooding from fluvial, tidal or groundwater. However, Policy Bicester 8 requires development proposals to consider the Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and as the proposal is a major development, the application has been supported by a Flood Risk

Assessment. A Drainage Strategy and Water Quality Management Report has also been submitted with the application. These reports have been assessed by the Environment Agency, Thames Water and OCC Drainage (Lead Local Flood Authority) as necessary.

- 8.107. The FRA confirms that flooding is low risk, the main risk being from surface water flooding and infrastructure failure, although the surface water risk is largely constrained to the employment site (pending consideration under 18/01333/F). However, an industry standard recommends setting finished floor levels 150mm above ground level to offer a level of protection. A condition will be imposed in any case to require finished floor levels to be submitted (on grounds of visual impact) and so this will also be able to ensure the finished floor levels also meet the minimum level required in the FRA. It should also be noted that the Environment Agency have not objected to the application or raised any issue or suggested any conditions in respect of flooding at the site.
- 8.108. In addition, sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDs) are proposed to deal with surface water drainage at the site. These consist of permeable paving, swale and an underground geo-cellular soakaway. However, infiltration testing has not been carried out at the site and will therefore be required to inform the detailed design. It is also not clear from the application who will be responsible for the maintenance of the SUDs and therefore a SUDs Management and Maintenance Plan will also be required to be submitted.
- 8.109. In terms of water, Thames Water has identified an inability of the existing water network infrastructure to accommodate the needs of this development. They therefore recommend conditions regarding water network upgrades and an Infrastructure Phasing Plan to be agreed with them prior to occupation.
- 8.110. In terms of waste water, this is not intended to be discharged into the public sewer and therefore Thames Water has no objections but recommends a condition regarding the emptying of swimming pools.
- 8.111. In respect of foul water, the application form states that it would be the intention to connect to the mains sewer, however Thames Water considers there to be an inability of the existing foul water network infrastructure to accommodate the needs of the development. They therefore request a condition to be imposed for an Infrastructure Phasing Plan to be submitted and agreed with them prior to occupation of the development.

#### Contamination

- 8.112. The proposals have been submitted with a Phase 1 Land Contamination and Ground Condition report which concludes that the application site is of low risk from contaminants and unlikely that ground conditions or potential pollutant sources would have any significant impact on the condition of the land or the receptors identified, including people.
- 8.113. Notwithstanding the above, the Environment Agency consider that for the proposals to comply with the NPPF, conditions should be imposed in respect of contamination, including a preliminary risk assessment, site investigation, remediation strategy and verification plan and report. A further condition regarding unexpected contamination should also be imposed and this is also recommended by the Council's Environmental Health Officer.

#### Energy efficiency

- 8.114. Policies ESD1-5 of the CLP Part 1 require development proposals to mitigation the impacts of climate change by providing a reduction in carbon emissions through sustainable construction by using decentralised energy systems and renewable energy.
- 8.115. The Energy Statement submitted with the application proposes the use of a combination of passive, active and green measures to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions.
- 8.116. The passive measures propose a reduction in space heating demand, exposed high thermal mass building elements and the provision of adequate daylight. Active measures propose heating and ventilation with variable speeds, efficient ventilation, space heating, high heat recovery system, an LED lighting strategy and cooling systems. Green measures propose the implementation of a Combined Heat Pump. Overall, the combination of passive and active measures is expected to result in a 19% improvement in energy demand, while the cumulative CO2 savings will reach 20%.
- 8.117. The Council's Bicester Delivery Team has reviewed the Energy Statement and considers the proposals do not currently meet the policy requirements as there is *"...no commitment to implement these measures. It is also unclear why air source heat pumps are not considered further when they have been shown to be a feasible renewable energy option. The decision not to consider solar PV and solar thermal panels further due to the proximity of an airfield is to be questioned as there are a number of international airports around the world which have solar farms situated adjacent to them."* They go on to state that there is no detail as to how the following has been considered within the proposals, in relation to energy efficiency:
- Siting, orientation, and aspect;
  - How the impact on the external environment will be reduced through the provision of cooling and shading opportunities, use of open space, and planting;
  - How the sustainable and local sourcing of construction materials has been considered;
  - How the use of the embodied energy within buildings and re-using of materials has been considered;
  - How recycled materials may be used in construction;
  - How BREEAM Very Good is to be achieved.
- 8.118. The applicants have therefore been asked to provide further detail and submit a revised Energy Statement. It is hoped that this can be resolved prior to planning committee, but if this cannot be resolved in time then officers will request delegated authority from Members to resolve this issue or consider whether this can be controlled through the imposition of a planning condition.
- 8.119. It should be noted that, whilst it is clearly important to ensure compliance with Policies ESD1-5, the energy proposals need to be balanced against the heritage context of the development to ensure that all proposals are appropriate to its surroundings and will not adversely impact on the heritage assets and this will be a matter that Officers will ensure is confirmed through a revised Energy Statement.

#### Planning Obligations

- 8.120. As set out in the Highways section, OCC Highways have requested the applicant to contribute the following S106 contributions as a result of the development:



- Strategic transport contribution (£607,103) (still to be agreed)
- Public transport infrastructure – 2 x bus stops (£2,180) (still to be agreed)
- Traffic Regulation Order (£5,200)
- Travel Plan Monitoring (£2,040)
- An obligation to enter into a S278 agreement
- S106 monitoring fees

8.121. A contribution towards Strategic Transport is required in accordance with the Local Transport Plan 4 Bicester Area Strategy Policy BIC 1 scheme which requires upgrading of the A4421 to a dual carriageway between Buckingham Road and Gavray Drive and the contribution would be used towards the Eastern Perimeter Route, Skimmingdish Lane section. Currently the contribution required has been based on another site at Wretchwick Green (a mixed use site) and a formula calculated using the number of trips likely to be generated from that development compared to this proposal. This amount is still being negotiated and therefore not agreed.

8.122. The provision of 2 bus stops is considered necessary due to the potential for a significant number of staff at the hotel to require access to the site by other sustainable means and to improve connections to the site. There are however already two bus stops near the main entrance to the Bicester Heritage site and it is understood that the new bus stops would be around 400m from the existing bus stops. This is still being negotiated and therefore not agreed.

8.123. In respect of the other S106 obligations requested, the changes to the Traffic Regulation Order are considered necessary in order to make the development acceptable in terms of highway safety by reducing the speed limit on Buckingham Road and providing signage regarding a left egress only from the new access to the development. A contribution is also required towards the monitoring of the Travel Plan biennial over a period of 5 years to ensure that it remains up to date. S106 monitoring fees would also be required.

8.124. OCC considers all these of these contributions are required in order to make the development acceptable in planning terms and that they are all justified and compliant with CIL Regulation 122. At the time of writing the committee report, these contributions have not all been agreed to by the applicant and it is understood that the applicant is currently liaising with OCC about these Heads of Terms, in particular, the Strategic Transport contribution and the provision of bus stops. It is hoped that an update on these discussions will be able to be provided to Members at the Committee.

8.125. The Bicester Delivery Team have also requested that the applicant provide for a level of construction apprenticeships as part of the development to be secured by S106 clauses. However, Officers are looking into whether this can be adequately secured via a planning condition rather than the S106.

## **9. PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION**

9.1. The application proposes the erection of a new 5 storey hotel on the Bicester Heritage site, a nationally significant airfield dating from the inter-war period. Whilst the Council has considered through the Planning Brief 2009 and the Cherwell Local Plan Policy Bicester 8 that there is scope for new development at the site, and in particular a new hotel, it has been critical to ensure that this development is 'conservation-led'.

9.2. The amended submission is considered to meet this objective by proposing a new hotel of high-quality design whilst respectful of its historic context. By creating a

crisper but functional designed building with an understated elegance of many interwar airfield buildings, it fits in with the existing pattern of development at this important site and is reflective of the buildings on the site, in particular the hangars, in terms of its form and massing and use of materials. Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposal is considered to cause less than substantial harm to the heritage assets at the site, this is considered to be outweighed by the public benefits derived from the proposal in terms of finding an economically viable use for this part of the site and providing many economic benefits to Bicester and the District.

- 9.3. The proposal is not considered to cause harm to highway safety due to the mitigation measures provided, subject to agreement in respect to the requested planning obligations. Mitigation measures are proposed in relation to landscaping and visual Impact, trees, ecology, flood risk and drainage together with the imposition of conditions relating to various matters and also contamination and energy efficiency. The proposals are not considered to cause any detriment to the amenities of neighbouring residents.
- 9.4. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with the relevant policies of the Development Plan set out in the report, specifically Policy Bicester 8 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

## **10. RECOMMENDATION**

Delegate to the Assistant Director of Planning Policy and Development to grant planning permission, subject to:

1. continuing negotiations in respect of the highways infrastructure, in particular the strategic transport contribution and the provision of bus stops;
2. in the event that the highways infrastructure contributions are not resolved satisfactorily then the application will be reported back to committee with a revised recommendation
3. to receive and review an amended energy statement either prior to determination or via a planning condition
4. Conditions relating to the matters detailed below (the exact conditions and the wording of those conditions to be delegated to the Assistant Director for Planning Policy and Development).
5. Completion of a planning obligation under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as substituted by the Planning and Compensation Act 1991, in accordance with the summary of the Heads of Terms set out below;
  - Strategic Transport Contribution in connection with Policy BIC 1 of the Local Transport Plan 4 in respect of the dualling of the eastern perimeter route and Skimmingdish Lane section (amount to be agreed);
  - £2,180 for Public Transport Infrastructure – for 2 x bus stop flags and case units (to be agreed);
  - £5,200 for an amendment to the Traffic Regulation Order for a reduction in the speed limit on Buckingham Road and a mandatory left-turn egress from the hotel entrance;
  - £2,040 for Travel Plan monitoring
  - An obligation to enter into a S278 agreement with Highways
  - S106 Monitoring fees

### **Conditions:**

#### **General**

1. Time limit – 3 years
2. Approved plans
3. Restriction of let of aparthotel rooms to a maximum of 1 month

### **Design**

4. \*Finish floor levels (on grounds of visual impact and surface water flooding mitigation)
5. \*Schedule of materials (including samples)
6. \*Architectural detailing
7. \*Further details of the expanded wire mesh cladding
8. Details as to how the Scheduled Monument on the western boundary will be better revealed and its boundary treatment and also how the northern Scheduled Monument will be preserved within the newly created area of track
9. Boundary treatment (if required) details to be submitted
10. Details of the design of the roof screen to the plant and equipment area on the roof
11. Lighting strategy which also must take into account the recommendations in the ecology assessment and to minimise light pollution
12. Signage strategy

### **Trees and Landscaping**

13. Landscaping scheme – hard and soft details – evergreen species, tree pit detailing
14. Landscape Management and Maintenance Plan
15. \*Tree removal plan
16. \*Tree protection plan
17. \*Grassland protection plan
18. \*Arboricultural method statement
19. Replacement planting
20. Earth mounding – cross sections

### **Highways:**

21. \*Construction Travel Management Plan (CTMP)
22. Cycle parking – secure and covered
23. Parking and manoeuvring details
24. \*New access details
25. Amendments to Travel Plan – including Car Parking Management Plan
26. \*Details of the realignment and surfacing of the existing track

### **Drainage**

27. \*Surface Water Drainage Strategy and SUDs management and maintenance
28. Waste water – relating to the emptying of the swimming pool
29. Foul water to address capacity issue – Infrastructure Phasing Plan
30. Water network upgrades or Infrastructure Phasing Plan – for water

### **Contamination**

31. \*Contamination – including a preliminary risk assessment, site investigation, remediation strategy and verification plan
32. Verification report and long-term monitoring and maintenance plan – no

- occupation
33. Unexpected contamination not previously identified, require development to stop and submit a remediation strategy

**Energy Efficiency**

34. The development should meet BREEAM 'Very Good' rating

**Noise:**

35. \*Plant and machinery  
36. \*Noise – acoustic enclosure  
37. \*Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP)

**Economic:**

38. Employment and Skills and Training Plan  
39. Construction apprenticeships

**Ecology**

40. Accord with survey  
41. \*Landscape and Ecological Management Plan  
42. \*Reptile mitigation strategy

(\* Approval will be required from the applicant for the conditions shown with an asterisk which at the time of writing the report are anticipated likely to need to be pre-commencement conditions)

**Informatives:**

1. EA advice – site investigations to include ground water sampling in order to check for underground fuel storage and any potential leaks associated with this.
2. Thames Water – advice regarding easements, wayleaves and waste water.
3. Architectural detailing – to include window depths and reveals; window detailing; wall finishes and colours; detail of the curved feature corner and eaves treatment details
4. In respect of Condition 13 – hard landscaping proposals should ensure that a matching concrete is used for the realignment of the track.