

BY EMAIL AND POST

Cherwell District Council
Bodicote House
Bodicote
Banbury
Oxfordshire
OX15 4AA

For the attention of Ms Caroline Ford

21278/A3/IP/ac
14 November 2016

Dear Caroline

LPA REF 14/02121/OUT
'HIMLEY VILLAGE' LAND AT NORTH WEST BICESTER, MIDDLETON STONEY ROAD,
BICESTER, OXFORDSHIRE

Thank you for consulting A2Dominion (A2D) on the above amendment to the application dated 14 October 2016. The amendment, as set out on the Council's website comprises a variation to the access strategy, supported by an updated Transport Assessment and consequential amendment to the air quality assessments and traffic noise assessments, included within an addendum to the Environmental Statement (ES). We also note the comments of the County Council and the accompanying report prepared by WYG dated 4 November 2016.

In short the outline application seeks permission for the construction of 1,700 new homes, hotel, veterinary surgery, primary school, extra care/ retirement village, commercial floorspace and related socio and community facilities. The transport impacts arising from the proposal are to be addressed through, inter alia, an interim signalised improvement scheme at the railway bridge at the junction between Howes Lane/ Bucknell Road and Lords Lane. The application does not propose any improvements to the Middleton Stoney/Howes Lane Roundabout, the Banbury Road/Lords Lane junction, nor does it seek to rely upon the proposed link road in the NW Bicester master plan as per Policy Bicester 1: North West Bicester Eco-Town of the Local Plan (July 2015) and the North West Bicester Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (February 2016). The signalised junction is proposed as an 'interim scheme' pending the completion of the bridge scheme the subject of the application by A2D (reference 14/01968/F).

In principle, A2D support the phased implementation of the NW Bicester master plan. There is a need for a pragmatic approach to be taken in respect of timing of key infrastructure including highways improvements but also the provision of social and community facilities such as schools. However, such pragmatism should not be at the expense of creating unacceptable impacts of traffic on the road network nor undermine the ability to provide the required infrastructure for the master plan.

The issues that arise in considering the addendum are:

- Whether the approach taken by the applicant is robust?
- Has the likely impact been correctly modelled, impacts identified and mitigation proposed?
- What is the merit of the proposals in highways terms?

Modelling and Assessment and Highways Merits.

Arcadis have undertaken an initial review of the submitted Transport Assessment and have reviewed the objections of the County Council as highways authority.

The County has objected to the amendment on a number of levels, not least the assessment methodology. The findings of Arcadis broadly accord with the objections of the County in respect of the highways assessment. In short, it is the view of Arcadis that the Addendum has failed to present an appropriate design or to properly assess the likely impacts of the proposals. We would reiterate the comments of Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) on the interim solution, whilst also emphasising that:

- The proposed LinSig model does not appear to accord with the junction design presented in the plan. The modelling shows the right turn from Arm 3 into Arm 6 not blocking back straight ahead traffic. However, the proposed layout provides no space for right turning vehicles and would block straight ahead traffic, thus reducing capacity.
- The split phasing of Howes Lane as modelled does not match the drawing arrangement or signal layout, this arrangement requires an island and separate signals.
- The proposed modelling does not include signalised pedestrian crossing facilities. All junctions forming part of the NW Bicester proposals include signalised crossing facilities, as required by OCC. There are existing movements in the area between the footway/ cycle route along Lords Lane and the residential areas around Bucknell Road, as well as those arising from the early phases of the development, and these need to be safely accommodated.
- As raised within the RSA (3.2.1) the junction appears to have insufficient turning space. The south bound signal from Lords Lane to Bucknell Road is at a pinch point (approx. 7.5m) and there is insufficient space for a second (off side) signal head. The drawing shows the south bound lane as tapered in order to fit it in the width. There is conflict on HGV movements (north bound from Howes Lane to Lords Lane) based on provided swept paths, the narrow width at the pinch point may result in the stop line needing to be moved back thus reducing stacking/capacity.
- Again raised in the RSA (3.2.1) the forward visibility to the traffic signals may be compromised.
- The double sets of signals and relatively large signal separation could be at risk of red light running – reinforcing the case for a second (off-side) signal head.

The submission identifies an impact upon Shakespeare Drive but fails to provide any mitigation. The assessment is silent as to the impact upon Howes Lane/Middleton Stoney Road/Vendee Drive junction as well as measures to bring forward the improvements to the Banbury Road roundabout. All of which are shown to be effected by the interim scheme to a greater extent than assessed by A2D as the traffic signal scheme displaces traffic elsewhere. It also makes no reference to the substandard nature of the existing Howes Lane and the impact the 1,700 homes would have on this link.

The scheme relies upon a signalised junction as an interim scheme with no provision for the realignment of Howes Lane and the removal of the constraint at Howes Lane/Bucknell Road. The 'interim scheme' as proposed fails to make adequate provision for pedestrians and cyclists and would result in a detrimental impact upon the local road network. It is worth noting that at early stages of the master plan analysis, traffic signalised options were dismissed internally by Arcadis as not offering an improvement in capacity on the existing layout due to the constraints under the railway bridge.

The assessment and resultant justification has been found by Arcadis not to be robust and this is consistent with the objection of OCC.

Wider Merits

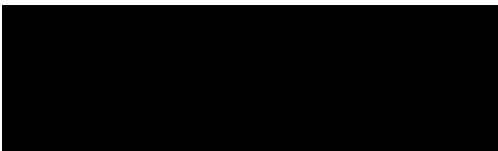
Notwithstanding the substantive highways based objections of OCC, we would make the following comments as to the merits of the proposal. A key issue is whether the scheme would be comprehensive? Is it consistent with the master plan? Would it fetter or undermine the delivery of the master plan in respect of the wider area of land identified in the master plan, including that the subject of applications on behalf of A2Dominion? Again, we note the comments of OCC.

Education Capacity: The application makes no provision for secondary education facilities within the master plan area. The master plan as enshrined in the SPD, requires the provision of a secondary school. This is to be accommodated within that part of the master plan area the subject of application 2 (reference 14/01641/OUT) submitted on behalf of A2D. To date, permission has not been granted and occupations within Himley Village would need to be restricted until such provision is made. There is therefore no certainty that the secondary school land will be available for the residents of Himley Village under the terms of the Himley Village application. OCC has suggested that Himley Village would be required to reserve a site for a secondary school. This would be inconsistent with the master plan and would require a substantial amendment to the proposals.

Compatibility with the Master Plan: The Council will need to assure itself that if it is minded to grant permission for the Himley Village proposal, that the scheme can be implemented in a way that is consistent with the master plan, takes a comprehensive approach including access and circulation within the master plan area and would not jeopardise nor fetter the implementation of the remainder of the master plan scheme.

The various applications submitted on behalf of A2D are consistent with the adopted master plan. These applications will provide for the timely provision of schools as well as the realignment of Howes Lane and the railway underpass. The applications benefit from a resolution to grant permission and negotiations are ongoing as to the terms of the various s106 agreements. The current proposal is for A2D to provide for the key infrastructure necessary to enable the implementation of the master plan, including not only the bridge and link but also the land for the new schools, energy and waste provision. The developers of Himley Village and other parts of the master plan area that are not under the control of A2D will be able to connect to and derive benefit from the key infrastructure but only on terms that prior to implementation they pay to the Council their fair contribution to the cost of that key infrastructure which will be reimbursed to A2D. The grant of permission for Himley Village without such enforceable arrangements in place would jeopardise the implementation of the master plan.

Yours sincerely



IAIN PAINTING
Senior Planning Partner