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Your Ref:

22nd August 2019

Dear Vanessa Thorpe

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

Application No.: 19/01255/SCOP

Applicant's Name: Vanessa Thorpe

Proposal: Scoping opinion - Redevelopment of existing 9 holes of the wider 18 hole course at Bicester Hotel Golf and Spa to provide a new leisure resort (sui generis) incorporating waterpark, family entertainment centre, hotel, conferencing facilities and restaurants with associated access, parking and landscaping.

Location: Bicester Hotel Golf And Country Club
Akeman Street
Chesterton
Bicester
OX26 1TE

Parish(es): Chesterton

Further to your submitted EIA Scoping Report, I have consulted relevant colleagues both in Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council, together with other statutory authorities and consultation bodies. Their responses are set out below, and in some cases may include matters that go beyond the site boundary. These responses constitute the Council's opinion.

The request for a Scoping Opinion relates to the future planning application for the proposed redevelopment of existing 9 holes of the wider 18 hole course at Bicester Hotel Golf and Spa to provide a new leisure resort (sui generis) incorporating waterpark, family entertainment centre, hotel, conferencing facilities and restaurants with associated access, parking and landscaping.

Whilst not forming part of the scope of the Environmental Statement (ES) it is noted that the reports submitted with your scoping opinion request (outlined in table 3-3) state that the Open Space Assessment will form part of the Design and Access Statement. Given the issues regarding the loss of the golf course and the Council Open Space, Sports and Recreation Assessment and Strategy I would advise this forms a stand-alone document. The purpose of this document needs to be extended to understand the proposal in the context of paragraph 97 of the NPPF and Policy BSC10 of the Cherwell Local Plan Part 1.

At paragraph 2.2.7 it is stated that construction would start in 2021 with a two-year construction phase. However, at paragraph 3.4.2 it is stated that the year of completion and operation would be 2022. Clarification should be provided on this.

In relation to the topics to be scoped out of the EIA outlined in chapter 4 this is agreed.

Socio-economics

Concerns have been raised that the information provided on employment should be based on the most recently available data. It is noted that paragraph 5.7.3 of the scoping report commits to this.

The impact that the development would have on leisure needs will be partially covered by this chapter and will need to have regard to the different catchments and nature of the proposed development compared to the existing development on the site (i.e. golf course).

The information relating to the visitor expenditure outside of the proposed development needs to take consideration of the nature of the proposed development as a destination venue.

The Council's Economic Development Officer has commented that the general overview as to the importance of the leisure and retail sector locally should be expanded upon as the proposed loss of half of the golf course would inevitably affect the economic viability of this remainder of this existing leisure facility – either positively or negatively. Furthermore, the principle of how this development links to other aspects of society and economy locally, regionally and nationally will also be important to fully understand. This should provide insight into the wider economic impact alongside comprehensive details of the benefits to accrue to the local community.

In paragraph 5.2.6, recognition is given to 'barriers to housing', which should be expanded upon in detail in the ES as to how this proposal would seek to define and address this matter. Affordability of housing is implied so, for instance, how would the specific types of employment created enable the workforce to better afford local housing costs? It is also important to be clear as to the types of employment to be created by this development in order to understand how, for example, it would contribute towards the local employment market, Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy, the wider 'Arc' and Cherwell's extant and emerging economic strategies that focus upon high value employment in terms of skills and incomes, providing stable employment with defined career paths. Mention is made of links to colleges which should be expanded upon in detail with, for example, commitments to the creation of apprenticeships and employment opportunities to meet the future needs of local residents.

Highways

The Local Highway Authority (LHA) has provided comments on the scoping report, which I have appended. It is considered that the identification of pedestrians and cyclists as low sensitivity should be reviewed for the reasons outlined in the attached comments.

With regards to the methodology, concerns have been raised regarding assessing the severity of 'effect' purely according to percentage increase in traffic flows and that it is not set out how the impact on delay would be assessed. The significance of the development's impact on delay and amenity would also depend on the baseline flows and characteristics of the link; for example a link which experiences high traffic flows may be more susceptible to delays at junctions with a low percentage increase of additional traffic (for instance a 5% increase) and this could have a more significant impact on delay and amenity than may be the case for a very quiet road experiencing a 100% increase in traffic flows. Paragraphs 6.7.3 and 6.7.4 would suggest that the percentage increase is the only criterion against which the 'effect' of the development on delay and amenity would be considered and the scoping note does not set out how the impact in delay would be assessed. The methodology also provides no information on how the effect of severance would be assessed.

The scoping note currently provides limited information about the methodology and content of the Transport Assessment and this will need to be updated as detail is determined. I understand separate scoping discussions are ongoing with the LHA and it should be ensured that this takes into account all elements of the proposal including the conference facilities as I note that paragraph 2.2.3 of the Scoping Report states those facilities would be available for wider use as well as for groups staying at the hotel. The LHA also states that whilst the TA will consider the impact of traffic generated by the development during agreed peak periods, the EIA should also assess the impacts of total traffic across the day.

It is noted that a Travel Plan is stated to be an opportunity to enhance the environment, but it is considered this is a measure required to reduce the detrimental impact of the development on the environment rather than enhancement.

The LHA has also requested that the EIA should include the public rights of way and publicly accessible routes as part of the traffic and transport assessment.

Noise and vibration

The Council's Environmental Protection Officer has reviewed this and is satisfied with the scope of works proposed in this respect. The list of properties at paragraph 7.3.1 should include Stableford House, Kirtlington Road, Chesterton, Bicester, OX26 1TE immediately to the east of the site. Paragraph 7.33 notes that a review to determine whether there is potential for significant effects on noise at sensitive locations further from the site once existing and predicted traffic flows are known. It is also considered that the impact of existing traffic noise from the M40 and adjacent roads on the proposed users of the site should be considered and this does not appear in Table 7-1.

Air quality

The Council's Environmental Protection Officer has reviewed this and is satisfied with the scope of works proposed in this respect.

Biodiversity

Unfortunately to date I have not received specialist advice from the Council's Ecologist but I will provide this once it is received. I attach comment from Natural England (NE) in respect of the scoping request. I would highlight that NE notes the presence of the Wendlebury Meads & Mansmoor Closes Site of Special Scientific Interest and states that the ES would need to include a full assessment of the direct and indirect effects of the development on the features of special interest within this site and should identify such mitigation measures as may be required in order to avoid, minimise or reduce any adverse significant effects.

Archaeology and Cultural heritage

The County Council Archaeologist has raised no objection to the scoping opinion. I note that a programme of archaeological field investigation is to be carried out on the site to inform the baseline conditions.

I note that the impact on the development on the setting of the designated heritage assets are to be scoped out of the EIA. However, an assessment of the development on the setting of these designated heritage assets should accompany the planning application given the statutory duties to have special regard to these matters.

Ground Conditions

The Council's Environmental Protection Officer has reviewed this and is satisfied with the scope of works proposed in this respect.

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

The landscape officer is satisfied with the methodology outlined and has highlighted the importance of considering cumulative effects and the effects of lighting.

It is considered that the effects outlined in table 12.2 of the Scope Report should be included within the scope of the EIA as these have the potential to be significant given the likely scale and size of the proposal.

In terms of the viewpoints these generally are acceptable. However, it has been requested that assessment of views from the M40 to the west of the site and views from the road to the south of the site also be included. An assessment of views as you travel along these roads should also be included.

Water Resources, Flood Risk and Drainage

The Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) has stated that SUDs should be used for the site as outlined in your scoping report. Oxfordshire County Council have published the "[Local Standards and Guidance for Surface Water Drainage on Major Development in Oxfordshire](#)" to assist developers in the design of surface water drainage systems. The surface water drainage proposals should be undertaken in accordance with this guidance which is based upon and derived from the CIRIA SuDS Manual (C753). The LLFA states that surface water management must be considered from the beginning of the development planning process and throughout – influencing site layout and design.

The LLFA highlights that, wherever possible, runoff must be managed at source (i.e. close to where it falls) with residual flows then conveyed downstream to further storage or treatment components, where required and should mimic the existing drainage regime of the site. The LLFA also states that details of source control attenuation and conveyance features should be included and has requested that the attached pro-forma being completed.

Thames Water has stated the following should be covered in the EIA:

1. The developments demand for Sewage Treatment and network infrastructure both on and off site and can it be met.
2. The surface water drainage requirements and flood risk of the development both on and off site and can it be met.
3. The developments demand for water supply and network infrastructure both on and off site and can it be met.
4. Build-out / phasing details to ensure infrastructure can be delivered ahead of occupation.
5. Any piling methodology and whether it would adversely affect neighbouring utility services.

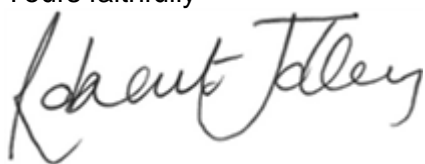
Cumulative effects

The list of cumulative developments to be assessed is outline at in table 14-1 of the Scoping Report. This largely appears to be as previously agreed. However, the approved applications at the land allocated under Bicester 10 of the Cherwell Local Plan (2015) (16/02586/OUT and 17/02557/REM refers) appear to have been omitted. This should be included in the cumulative assessment.

Regulation 18(3) requires a description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the developer, which are relevant to the proposed development and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the effects of the development on the environment. I note that this is proposed to be covered in chapter 3 of the Environmental Statement

If you have any questions or queries regarding the above please contact the Case Officer using the details provided above.

Yours faithfully



Assistant Director for Planning and Economy

Attachments:

OCC Comments dated 8th August with LLFA pro-forma
Natural England comments dated 5th August