

22 St Peter's Crescent  
Bicester  
OX26 4XA

Ms Clare Whitehead,  
Case Officer,  
Development Management,  
Cherwell District Council,  
Bodicote House,  
Bodicote,  
Banbury, OX15 4AA

22<sup>nd</sup> December 2019

Dear Ms Whitehead,

**Ref: Great Lakes UK Ltd – Planning Application No: 19/02550/F.**

I wish to strongly object to the Great Wolf Planning application ref No: 19/02550/F.

Having read the proposal in great detail alongside the local development plan, I do not believe that the application is in accordance with the local development plan and I think there are no material considerations that would warrant planning permission being granted.

It is a huge application and I would like to point out some of the omissions and factual errors in support of my objection.

#### **Application for Planning Permission**

There are some basic errors in the Application for Planning Permission which I will outline below.

Town and Country Planning Act 1990, see document "App form" does not appear to be completed correctly and I think it should be re-submitted with the correct information. The following points refer to areas of the application I have noticed need to be analysed and reviewed in more detail:

**Item 13.** The application states that the Main sewer connection is "unknown".

I think it is very concerning that such a large application does not know the plans for the sewage scheme. Although it is Thames Water's problem dealing with the sewage outflow, the developer should know the details at this stage including:

- how long it will take to connect the Water Park to the main sewerage;
- if the present sewerage pipe diameters and pumping stations have spare capacity to take the sewage flow from 500,000 visitors and staff per annum, and the peak filter back wash trade effluent from the leisure pools.

I do not believe that Chesterton should have to cope with "temporary" sewage tanker traffic through the village to support the functioning of the scheme – it is not a sustainable solution.

**Item 15.** The application states that there is no trade effluent. This is incorrect as the back-wash flow from the leisure pool sand media/or glass filters is classed as trade effluent.

## **Item 21: Hazardous Substances**

The application says that there are no hazardous substances. The proposal does involve the use and storage of hazardous substances. Chlorine and pH correction chemicals will be used for the pool treatment.

**Item 25.** The name of the owner has not been completed in the Ownership Certificates and Agricultural Land Declaration.

I am challenging the following statements in italics that are extracted from the planning application:

### *ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT VOLUME 1 CHAPTER 5 – SOCIO-ECONOMICS*

#### *Contribution to Leisure Supply 5.3.33.*

I disagree that this a unique facility. We have similar water parks within an hour travel time, one at Centre Parcs in Woburn and the new “Wave” £36 million water park in Coventry. If this application were to proceed, there would be three water parks in close proximity, all designed by the same water park designers, Water Technology inc.

#### *5.6.11 Residual Effects*

The statement *“For example, there are several thousand students at nearby Oxford Brookes”* suggests that students from Oxford Brookes will take up jobs at the proposed Water Park. With the best of connections, this would involve 2.5 hours of travel time each day for the student workers by public transport, (It would involve taking a bus from Headington to Westgate, then a train from Oxford to Bicester Village, then taking a coach to the amusement water park). I therefore don't believe that the proposed Water park could be a practical nor local employment option for students studying in Oxford.

The partnership with Brookes University that is mentioned within the application implies it would meet an aim to drive local employment. I think this is unrealistic, largely due to the travelling time from Brookes University to the proposed Water Park. I also note that there is no supporting statement or letter of intent from Brookes University regarding a partnership with the Water Park within this application. I think there are/ will be more suitable locations in Oxford for students to seek employment.

There is a chart in the application which concludes that there will be a minor benefit for traffic in the area. I cannot see how this conclusion has been drawn as I believe the Water Park will cause an increase in traffic to the local area due to increased visitor numbers from outside of the local area and staff travelling to and from work.

## **Planning Statement Nov 19**

The application states that, *“3. The planning history demonstrates CDC's in principle support for hotel and leisure operation on this site (and for additional accommodation to that currently there).”*

This isn't factually correct. The hotel was initially built without planning permission as rooms for golf club members' guests. Through use of a week planning system, the property developer gained permission to change the Planning use to a hotel. I believe that there is little doubt that if the proposed development is approved, then the precedent will be set to build over this open space. This is likely to then prompt a second planning application to add, for example, holiday lodges in a mass-build over the first 9 holes of the Golf course.

## Transport

Many residents are objecting to the development because of the significant concerns they have about the worsening effect the Water Park will have on traffic in Chesterton and Bicester. Below are my thoughts on this matter:

I believe the transport plan needs further considering. Has the Planning committee considered the logistics of transporting Chesterton residents, workers and guests in large numbers from Bicester Village Stations to the water park? Currently, there is space outside Bicester Village Railway station for about 7 private cars plus the taxi rank to pick-up and drop-off railway passengers. I have major concerns that there is no space within the station for the potential convoys of resort coaches to park up while they pick up passengers.

I would like to know which route the coaches will take from Bicester Village station to the Water Park. The level crossing on London Road will be virtually closed once the East-West Rail link opens. If the development proceeds, coaches will have to go up Launton Road and drive round Lords Lane, (where there will be an increase in traffic from the new hotel and warehousing), in order to avoid Bicester Village traffic and the existing school and commuter traffic congestion. I think it is worth noting that Howes Lane is due to be built over with new eco housing, so coaches will have to follow a new slow High Street route through the new eco town too.

The same issues arise when you consider Bicester North Railway Station access. As it stands, there is only room for Bicester Village shuttle busses to park up outside the station. At most times, busses will have to avoid Bicester congestion and turn right out of the station road to avoid the town and to head for Lords Lane.

## Planning Statement Nov 19

I believe there are major flaws in some of the basic premises in the planning statement summary that have been made by the developer's consultants to justify the loss of this open space amenity. I outline my thoughts on these below:

*They state that "There is an oversupply of 18 hole courses in the area and the trade of the golf operation at BHGS is in decline."*

I do not believe that this is the case. This year, locals have lost Banbury Golf club at Adderbury and Carswell Golf club. North Oxford Golf club is due to close now that St John's College has planning permission for the large Oxford North Development.

Nearby Kirtlington Golf club's membership is full or nearly full, so given the fact that North Oxford Golf Club Course will close in the future, there will be a lot of local golfers looking membership or to play at a new club.

*The application says that "The course's membership and membership revenue has fallen significantly. This is in line with the wider oversupply in the UK. The importance of this income has fallen in the context of the wider hotel and leisure business;"*

Having read all the applicant's "evidence", I see no mention of the contribution of "Golf Societies" and "Golf Breaks" players anywhere in the discussion. Golf Hotel Breaks clientele have been promoted in preference to the golf members which has been a significant reason for the recent membership decline at Bicester Golf Club. (prior to Wolf Creek planning application). Golf societies and Golf Hotel breaks bring to Bicester Golf course varying groups of people. You often see womens' golf societies and groups from all ethnic backgrounds on the course. There are well-established, local

golf societies based at local pubs and football clubs in Chesterton and Bicester who all play regularly at Bicester Golf club.

In his blog, local PGA golfer Eddie Pepperell once described how the general decline in UK golf membership correlates with the austerity years from 2008. Bicester Golf club members have seen an annual, steady rise in fees (above inflation) alongside a reduction in disposable income in the same period. Now that the austerity years are over you will likely see again a rise in the uptake of golf.

The application states *"Loss of 9 holes of golf from BHGS is unlikely to damage the wider hotel and leisure business;"*

I do not believe this is correct, societies and golf breaks groups business will obviously collapse and affect the hotel business, if it is only 9 holes on offer. In the summer, golfbreaks.com had Bicester Golf club ranked in the top 10 destinations but an 18-hole golf course is essential to secure this income stream for the business.

*"The retained 9 holes would not constitute a material loss of amenity given the shift in demand to shorter formats and it may be a more viable option for the owner of BHGS long term to develop and improve the remaining 9 holes";*

It has to be recognised that you can already play 9 holes of golf if you want. You phone up the pro shop and book it. You don't have to be a member or hold a handicap certificate. If there is no one coming up the 9<sup>th</sup> fairway, the pro shop will even let you go off from the 10<sup>th</sup> tee.

The argument that reducing the course to 9 holes will encourage more players or still satisfy the existing demand is simply nonsense as the club is not a member's only club. Anyone can play if they phone up and book a tee.

*"There is significant additional 18-hole golf provision within an acceptable drive time for members that want it. In addition, the likely demographic subset overwhelmingly has access to a car and significant alternate 18-hole provision within a 20 minute drive time";*

The advantage Bicester Golf Club has over other courses is the close proximity to population centres, so the main users don't have to drive miles. This is a primary reason for retaining this golf course as an 18 hole course, as I previously mentioned Kirtlington Golf Club is at near capacity and North Oxford Golf club is due to close.

Bicester is the best golf course in the local area, there are lots of reviews out there on the internet that back this up. The all year-round playability, excellent drainage and challenging layout for the average golfer make it a very desirable course to play. Even after one of the wettest autumn periods, as I write in December, the greens are in fabulous condition.

*"The golf course is providing amenity to only a very small proportion of the total population of Cherwell and the wider area";*

There is a lot in the planning application about the majority of members being older, white males. As I stated above, I do not believe that this demographic is true of all the people that play golf at Bicester Golf club when you include non-members, golf societies and Golf Hotel Break guests. It would be useful to understand the facts around the demographic of players at the current Golf course by way of a survey.

Inevitably, golf will always be skewed to older people whose families have grown up or those who are retired. Medical professionals will agree that Golf is a great sport to take into your retirement, as it keeps you fit healthy and active into old age..

There is a need to increase participation in the sport by young people, particularly from backgrounds where they have less opportunity. Existing Section 106 funds from other development schemes could be invested in sustainable engagement programmes to encourage and support children and young people into Golf and to increase accessibility to the Sport.

I believe that a key part of any kind of engagement programme into golf for younger people needs to include access to an 18 hole course. In order to develop skill and enthusiasm for the sport, alongside the notable health and wellbeing benefits, a longer game over a large 18-hole course is essential. This is supported by Golf England's recommendations regarding local provision of 18-hole courses which is already cited in the Consultee Comments from Clare Whitehead at CDC.

### **APPENDIX 3 SEQUENTIAL ASSESSMENT**

The developer's consultants state that they have looked at alternative sites for the scheme, but as far as I can make out, most sites listed are not available to acquire, so I don't understand why they are listed.

It is interesting how many other potential development sites quoted in the appendix only allow development in the B1 to B8 categories of employment i.e. good jobs with career potential. If the Oxford/Cambridge corridor is to develop into an arc of science, engineering and technology, the development is totally inappropriate for the area.

There is no evidence that Great Wolf have looked seriously into assessing other potential sites other than produce a list of all the sites that are not available. I would like to see the evidence that the developer has engaged with other Councils to see if they can take this £200 million investment at a more suitable location that doesn't involve sacrificing a perfectly good open county side sports facility, to a large industrial-scale, indoor, amusement park.

Yours sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature and name of the sender.