



Proposed Great Wolf Lodge,
Chesterton, Bicester

Summary

of Highways and Transport Evidence
on behalf of Great Lakes UK Limited

of

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1.0 Qualifications and Experience

1.1 My name is Phil Bell and I am a Director at Motion Consultants Limited, which I was jointly responsible for setting up in 2004. I am a member of the Institute of Logistics and Transport and of the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation. I have over 30 years' experience in the field of transportation planning, traffic engineering and highway safety, including in relation to major leisure and tourism schemes such as that proposed. I have also acted on other significant proposals in the Bicester area and am very familiar with the local area.

2.0 Scope of Evidence

2.1 My evidence focuses on the two reasons for refusal that directly relate to transport, namely reasons 2 and 3. I have considered these in the context of the Cherwell Local Plan along with the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance.

3.0 Reason for Refusal 2

3.1 Reason 2 alleges that the appeal scheme would be in a geographically unsustainable location with no access via public transport and would neither reduce the need to travel nor offer a genuine choice of alternative travel modes other than the private car.

3.2 This is incorrect for the reasons set out in my evidence, which can be summarised as follows:

- ▶ The Proposed Development includes a wide range of enhancements to the local pedestrian and cycle network including new sections of footway on the A4095 and on Green Lane along with a contribution towards cycle improvements and a significant number of on-site cycle parking spaces.
- ▶ The Appellant has been fully committed to the provision of dedicated shuttle buses for both staff and guests from the outset. The staff shuttle bus will operate between the Site and Bicester, calling at the local rail stations, the town centre bus stops and the local centres around Bicester. The guest shuttle bus will focus on providing a connection between the Site and the stations, facilitating strong links to major towns and cities including London, Birmingham, Coventry and Reading. Indeed, it is estimated that in excess of 10 million people will be able to access the Site within 2.5 hours by public transport and the guest shuttle bus. A significant advantage of the private shuttle buses is that they will be versatile and can adapt to suit the needs of staff and guests. For example, the route of the staff shuttle bus can vary depending on where staff live and the guest shuttle bus can be timed to coincide with train times. The shuttle buses themselves will be low or ultra low emission vehicles.
- ▶ In addition to the shuttle buses, the Appellant has agreed to a request from Oxfordshire County Council for a £1.6 million contribution to fund a new public bus service linking the site to Bicester town centre and railway stations.
- ▶ The use of electric vehicles, which are defined in the NPPF as a sustainable mode of transport, will be actively encouraged and at least 10% of the car parking bays will include charging points with the remainder of the spaces having the necessary infrastructure to enable them to be adapted at a later date as necessary.
- ▶ Car sharing is another sustainable mode of travel as defined by the NPF and the nature of the Proposed Development is such that families would typically arrive as groups with an anticipated car occupancy of at least three.
- ▶ Sustainable day passes will be offered to local residents at a discounted rate for those travelling to and from the Site using sustainable travel modes. This will also reduce the need for local people to travel further afield to comparable facilities.
- ▶ There will, of course, also be a Travel Plan secured by planning condition, which will promote sustainable travel choices among staff and guests as well as including a strategy for ongoing monitoring.

- 3.3 In relation to reducing the need to travel it is a matter of common sense that by their nature tourism and leisure destinations involve discretionary trips. Therefore, it is my view that to resist the Proposed Development on this basis would effectively place an embargo on such uses, which would be in conflict with policies in both the Cherwell Local Plan and the NPPF, both of which actively encourage leisure and tourism. It is also noteworthy that the Site is well located with respect to other complementary tourist and visitor destinations such as the City of Oxford, Blenheim Palace, the Cotswolds, Bicester Village and Bicester Heritage/Motion, thereby providing strong potential for linked trips.
- 3.4 Reason 2 also alleges that the private motor vehicles will access the site utilising minor rural roads. This too is incorrect as the routes between the motorway network and the Site consist entirely of A and B class roads which, by definition, are appropriate for cross and inter-county movements. I do not consider these to be minor roads. I do acknowledge, however, that there has been some local concern in relation to the use of minor roads, such as the road through little Chesterton. This can and will be controlled through a coordinated signage strategy that will be secured by S106 obligation and which will afford full control to Oxfordshire County Council.
- 3.5 In relation to the matters covered by reason for refusal 2, I should emphasise that neither OCC (as local highway authority) nor Highways England (as strategic highway authority responsible for the M40) has raised any objection on these grounds.

4.0 Reason for Refusal 3

- 4.1 Reason for refusal 3 alleges that the information submitted at the time of determination of the planning application fails to demonstrate that traffic impacts are, or can be made acceptable, particularly in relation to the junction of the B4030 and B430 in the centre of Middleton Stoney some 3 kilometres by road from the Site.
- 4.2 In response to this my evidence demonstrates the following:
- ▶ My firm undertook extensive consultation with OCC starting well in advance of the submission of the planning application and continuing after the planning application was determined. The Transport Assessment that supported the planning application was prepared fully in accordance with the pre-application discussions.
 - ▶ Based on the Transport Assessment, it is anticipated that vehicle movements through the Middleton Stoney junction in the assessment year of 2026 will increase by around 1.4% to 2.2% during the peak hours, which equates to less than one vehicle per minute and is well within daily flow fluctuations. I consider that such an increase in traffic would be imperceptible and certainly not significant in the local context.
 - ▶ While unnecessary in my view, there is potential to adapt the signage strategy, which has the potential to roughly halve the development traffic travelling through Middleton Stoney.
 - ▶ Notwithstanding the insignificant increase in traffic movements through Middleton Stoney, my firm has developed a mitigation strategy that takes full account of major development proposals at Heyford Park to the north-east of the site. The Appellant is prepared to either implement or fully fund the mitigation scheme, which has the effect of adding an additional northbound lane at the junction. The analysis indicates that with the mitigation in place, the Proposed Development would have no significant impact on the operation of the junction and the safety of the junction would in fact be improved.
 - ▶ In correspondence towards the end of 2020, OCC raised some concerns in relation to road safety. In this regard, I should emphasise that the suggested mitigation works were subject to a Stage 1 Road Safety audit that raised 5 problems, all of which I consider minor in nature and capable of being addressed at the detailed design stage. Furthermore, I consider that the safety of the junction would in fact be improved as a consequence of the proposed improvements.

- ▶ Although I do not consider it necessary (for reasons already stated), even if there remained any residual concern about traffic generation through the junction in the morning peak, this residual concern can be addressed by a simple planning condition regarding check-in time for guests in the morning.

4.3 With the above in mind, I am in no doubt that the Proposed Development will not lead to either an unacceptable impact on highway safety or a severe impact in the road network.

5.0 Rule 6 Party Objections

5.1 Parishes Against Wolf (PAW) has raised a number of concerns, the most significant of which is the sustainability of the Site. This is covered in detail in my evidence and summarised above where I demonstrate that staff and visitors will have a genuine choice of alternative travel modes over the private car and that even guests using cars will be travelling in a sustainable manner as they are likely to be car sharing.

5.2 PAW raises other objections based on trip attraction, traffic impact, car parking provision, design of the access junction and the right of way diversion. My evidence responds to these points but, with the exception of traffic impact at the Middleton Stoney junction, I would highlight that these are not concerns that are shared by Cherwell District Council, Oxfordshire County Council or Highway England.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 On the basis of my evidence, I am of the professional opinion that the Proposed Development fully accord with the Cherwell Local Plan and the NPPF and therefore should not be resisted or refused on highways or transport grounds.