

Richard J Porter
Vicarage Farm
Chesterton
Bicester, OX26 1TE

15 December 2019

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

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

Dear Ms Whitehead

I am writing in response to the above planning application and proposal, which I have to say up front is fundamentally flawed and not in accordance with any aspects of the local development plan. I can therefore see no material considerations that would warrant planning permission being granted.

I have set out below my rationale and justification for this assessment.

1. An unsustainable development and associated design

The development is in a wholly inappropriate location on the edge of a village and includes provision for 900 car park spaces, with a significant reliance on car travel. This in itself goes fundamentally against the Cherwell Strategy of reducing car usage. Furthermore, the village no longer having an 18 hole golf course will result in the existing golf club members having to drive to alternative 18 hole course, creating further unsustainable and increasing car travel.

In addition, the construction of 500,000 sq ft of buildings on this greenfield site (the equivalent of 3 Tesco Extras, I might add!) will irreversibly remove important green infrastructure and will disrupt ecological environments. It is an inefficient and bad design. The proposed low-rise design, to mitigate its visibility, means that the buildings and associated car park spread across a large part of the entire site, resulting in a significant urbanising impact on this rural location. Furthermore, the 500,000 sq ft scheme comprises two/three overbearing large blocks, which are wholly not in keeping with the local area.

Schemes in such a rural location should be of small scale, detached buildings at low height (similar to the existing golf club and hotel), enhancing the character of the local area as outlined in Cherwell Council's Design Summary, 2008. It can only be said that this development will be an ugly blot on the landscape.

With potentially over 2,000 visitors each day this proposal will have significant impact on the area, therefore Great Wolf should have worked with Cherwell Council to be allocated a site through the correct local plan process. This is a speculative planning application in the wrong location and should be refused on this basis.

2. Traffic impact

The existing road infrastructure around the proposed site and that of the surrounding villages would not be able to cope with the extra 1,000+ daily increase in traffic volume, including the construction traffic to build a development of this scale. The village of Chesterton is already a "rat-run" for many drivers and experiences major traffic congestion as an escape route during the regular traffic issues on the M40 or A34. The current proposed routing plans via already stressed routes such as Middleton Stoney, Weston on the Green and Wendlebury are wholly unacceptable. The proposal would also direct traffic onto the A34, which itself already encounters significant traffic problems. In addition, the proposal also adds to the numerous other significant proposals that have already recently been approved in Bicester (including Kingsmere, Bicester Gateway and Bicester Heritage). The road networks cannot cope with this additional traffic and therefore the proposal is in a completely wrong and ill thought out location.

3. No/little economic benefits for Cherwell and local areas

It goes without saying that this proposal is contrary to Cherwell Council's strategic aim of prioritising "Knowledge Based" business investment as a priority, thereby offering employment supporting the "Knowledge Economy". Hotel rooms will only be available to Great Wolf resort guests and this will not assist the growth of other businesses in the area providing their employees or business partners with a place to stay overnight.

No local businesses support the scheme to reinforce Great Wolf's suggestions of significant economic benefits. Great Wolf's business model is to keep all guests on site, using their own restaurants, bowling alleys, retail shops etc. so there will be little if no economic benefit for local businesses in the area – all profits and economic benefits will be retained by Great Wolf.

Local businesses are already finding it incredibly hard to recruit the employees that Great Wolf will be targeting. Therefore, as such Great Wolf will either take employees away from local businesses which will have a negative impact, or they will seek to bring in employment from other areas, adding further to traffic congestion noted above.

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4. Loss of sports facility

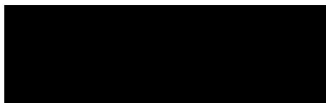
The proposal will result in the reduction of the existing 18 hole golf course to 9 holes. The existing golf course and hotel is viable and shows no financial problems, however the reduction to 9 holes is likely to result in significantly reduced membership leading to a question mark over its future viability. Surely there should be investment plans to ensure the course remains viable and attractive to existing/prospective members, although a 9 hole course in itself is not that appealing given that golf is an 18 hole game. The golf course serves an important purpose in the local community for wellbeing and therefore its demise can only be detrimental. With the loss already of the North Oxford 9 hole course to housing, open space provision is rapidly disappearing in Cherwell and this can only be a further potential outcome of this proposal.

5. Ecological and environmental impact

The loss of a greenfield habitat would be a disaster for the ecology of the area and the abundance of wildlife that the existing site supports. Furthermore, the public outdoor space on the site will be right next to the motorway resulting in further deterioration in air quality and noise pollution from additional traffic, construction work and service vehicles. Light pollution will also be impacted in the adjacent area removing the rural feel and character of the area.

In summary this project is unwanted and totally unnecessary in the proposed location. As an immediate neighboring property, this proposal will create a carbuncle on what is a lovely rural setting and yield no benefit whatsoever for the local community. Planning permission must therefore be withheld on behalf of local residents by Cherwell Council as anything less will be a betrayal, so I strongly urge refusal.

Yours Sincerely

A solid black rectangular box redacting the signature of Richard J Porter.

Richard J Porter