

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON THE FOLLOWING DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

District: Cherwell

Application no: 21/02339/REM

Proposal: Reserved Matters application for 14/02121/OUT, Phase 1 Development of 500 dwellings, landscaping, new vehicular, cycle and pedestrian access routes and other operations

Location: Proposed Himley Village North West Bicester, Middleton Stoney Road, Bicester

Date: 13 January 2022

This report sets out the officer views of Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) on the above proposal. These are set out by individual service area/technical discipline and include details of any planning conditions or Informatives that should be attached in the event that permission is granted and any obligations to be secured by way of a S106 agreement. Where considered appropriate, an overarching strategic commentary is also included. If the local County Council member has provided comments on the application these are provided as a separate attachment.

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Location: Proposed Himley Village North West Bicester, Middleton Stoney Road, Bicester

Transport Schedule

Recommendation:

Objection

Key issues:

- OCC previously objected on a number of issues including Car Parking, Cycle Parking, Cycle Infrastructure, Bus Route (road width) and Bus Stops.
- OCC are also currently objecting to planning application 21/02337/DISC which should address the Design Code and Masterplan, however, the submitted documents fail to address several highway concerns, including some of those mentioned above.
- The amended documents submitted show that the secondary access route has been widened to 6.5m which meets the bus route requirement within the Oxfordshire Street Design Guide; however, a swept path analysis should also be provided which shows buses can safely navigate around the junctions on the route without using both lanes.
- Should this be provided and considered acceptable, this is one component of the site which on the whole is still deemed unsatisfactory due to the objections mentioned previously and above.
- The previously requested Public Rights of Way contributions have been removed due to the type of application.

Detailed comments:

Amended Information

The secondary access has now been widened to 6.5m to allow the streets through Phase 1 to be used as a bus route which is welcomed. In order for this to be agreed, a swept path analysis is required which shows buses can safely navigate the route with vehicles travelling in the opposite direction.

The width of the route and the location will effectively create 2 primary routes into the site. I have not seen traffic data which shows the split of vehicles using each access, but I would expect a relatively high level using both. This will also be covered by OCC's response to the Design Code and Masterplan, but I am concerned by the lack of cycle infrastructure on these routes, these are unlikely to meet the standards within LTN 1/20 or the Oxfordshire Street Design Guide (adopted September 2021). There is also

concern over the geometry of the roads which should be designed to 20mph. However, the straights, some of which appear to be over 70m, are not conducive to reducing speed and as such the layout of the site needs to be revisited to ensure it is safe for all users.

Car Parking

The proposal seeks to create a total of 1,192 parking bays for 500 dwellings across the site. These will be broken down as follows:

- 981 allocated off-street parking bays
- 64 allocated parking bays within private garages.
- 147 on-street visitor bays.

Firstly, this is above the level within Oxfordshire County Council's parking standards document for urban areas within Cherwell (Bicester, Kidlington, Banbury etc). This stipulates that dwellings of 2-bed+ can have a maximum of 2 spaces whilst the parking plan appears to show some having 2 plus a garage which is not acceptable. Oxfordshire County Council are currently working on updating the car parking standards which will likely result in a reduction in the number allowed.

It should also be noted that the parking standards are considered absolute maximums and with the sustainable options available to the site (Bicester North station, improved cycle infrastructure etc), the site should really be aiming to provide a significantly lower number of parking bays. The high level on site is not in line with Cherwell or Oxfordshire's pledge to combat the climate emergency and does nothing to assist in modal shift to sustainable modes of transport. Applying parking standards for Oxford City to this site would result in 500 parking bays with 0 visitor parking, whilst recognising this site is not in Oxford and has a slightly different character, with the site in a good position to make use of sustainable transport options, the applicant should really be aiming for a much lower provision.

No information has been provided as to why 147 visitor bays are needed. This level again is considered high, and it is unrealistic that all of these will be needed. The level of visitor parking will need to be lowered significantly for this to be acceptable.

In March 2021, the Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy was adopted, this gives standards to developers for the infrastructure that is required on all developments for electric vehicles going forward. This states that all dwellings with allocated parking should provide at least 1 EV charging bay and that 25% of all unallocated bays should be for electric vehicles.

As such, Oxfordshire County Council as the Local Highway Authority object to this application on highway grounds until car parking has been reduced and the appropriate level of EV charging infrastructure is provided.

Cycle Parking

No information has been provided for cycle parking which is not acceptable. Cycle parking should be in line with the Oxfordshire Cycling Design Standards which are also being updated currently with the assumption these will be raised to levels similar to the city. For now, 1-bed dwellings must provide a minimum of 1 space whilst 2-bed units and above must provide a minimum of 2. All spaces should be covered, secure and accessible without having to wheel through buildings or up steps. Sheffield stands are preferable.

In addition, visitor parking must also be provided at a level of 1 stand per 2 residential units. Until the county is satisfied with the cycle parking level provided, an objection is raised.

Public Transport

Public transport service and infrastructure contributions from this development have been secured through the outline application 14/02121/OUT, the Section 106 agreement for which was signed on 30 January 2020.

Contributions are not required until at occupation of at least 400 dwellings, or the delivery of the major infrastructure as defined in Schedule 20 of the S106, whichever is earlier. This means the majority of Phase 1 of the development is expected to be complete and occupied prior to any funds for a bus service coming forwards from this site.

However, the development at Heyford Park is providing funds for a continued bus service to/from Bicester which operates on the Middleton Stoney Road to the south of this site. This is currently an hourly service, with some headway widening at peak times, but it is intended to increase this progressively to a 15-minute service over a ten year period.

Travel Plan

I have some specific comments on the Travel Plan for this application, as per the below:

- 3.2.11 and 3.6.2 state that the nearest bus stop is on Wansbeck Drive, 1.0km from the site. This is not the case as a stop has recently been installed on the B4030 at the junction with Empire Road, these are currently served by route 250 which operates hourly on Mondays to Saturdays, however it is hoped that this will be improved to half hourly at peak times and a new hourly Sunday service from later this year 2021.

In addition, service 26 operates to/from a westbound bus stop on Middleton Stoney Road in the vicinity of Ludlow Road, which is closer than the Wansbeck Drive stops.

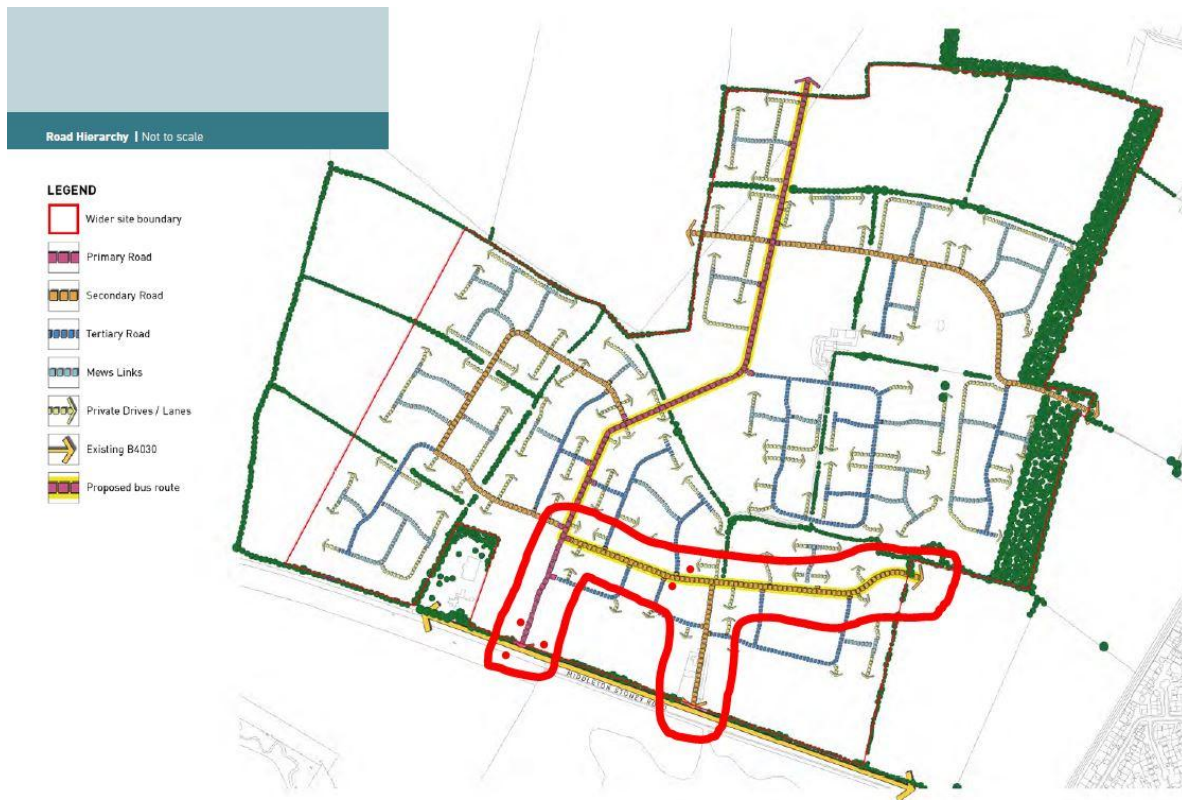
- 3.2.12, 3.6.3 and 4.10.1 outline the public transport strategy for the wider North West Bicester area, however this has been subject to change and it is no longer envisaged that Bucknell Road will be the main route for buses to/from the development. The Himley Village area is instead more likely to be served from Middleton Stoney Road or via the Highfield estate

Design Code

Para 4.17 of the Design Code refers to service 25A (now service 250) and states there are no bus stops in the vicinity of the site, which is not the case. The service does not currently operate at a half-hourly frequency.

Access and circulation

As part of Phase 1 further bus stops are expected to be delivered on Middleton Stoney Road and on the development itself, which could facilitate the diversion of services into this Phase and avoid the need for a dedicated service in the short to medium term.



Given the prevailing context of development in the area, Himley can be expected to act as a standalone new settlement close to but outside Bicester for a significant period of

time. It is therefore imperative that an initial bus route can penetrate into the Phase 1 development at an early stage. Therefore the roads indicated in the above diagram (circled with red lines) must be to Primary standards, not Secondary, as two-way bus operation will almost certainly be required on these streets for a significant period. (from p109 of Design Code).

Access points to/from Middleton Stoney Road, and on-site junctions to be used by bus, must be suitable for full size single deck buses (up to 12.2m in length) to make suitable turns.

It is noted that no provision is made for off-carriageway parking in bays along the Primary Street. A continuous frontage is proposed, without individual vehicular access from the Primary Street. Experience with this shows that these arrangements set up particular pressure to use the carriageway for parking, including for delivery vans, all of which tends to seriously impede the progress of buses. As far as possible a clear carriageway should be provided on all roads intended to act as bus routes. The optimum way to balance these requirements would be through the provision of off-carriageway bays. The alternative, which is less desirable albeit reasonably effective, would be the use of enforceable parking restrictions, such as double yellow lines, that allowed for loading.

Without high levels of bus productivity, it is impossible to provide a high level of service in developments such as this as buses take too long to navigate through the development.

Whilst the bus service pattern envisaged in the Eco Town Master Plan (with both north and south routes utilising Bucknell Road) is not now considered the most appropriate means of serving the sites by bus, highway connections to adjoining land holdings forming part of the Eco Town are necessary for the final intended pattern of bus access and circulation in the future. The link between the Primary Street to the boundary with Albion, referred to as a Secondary Street within the Design Code, is as important in this regard as the Primary Street.

Bus stop provision

The only bus stop provision explicitly made at any point in the submissions is a single new pair on Middleton Stoney Road. On their own, this is neither adequate, convenient nor attractive for the majority of development residents, given that a dedicated service is unlikely to be provided for a significant period of time; however, it is important to provide some kind of choice for the very first occupiers, as it clearly would be infeasible to bring any service into the site for some time, until the interim on-site bus route is constructed and open for public use.

It is considered that a third stop should be provided on the access arm into the site, down-stream of the junction. This will serve the mixed-use area, complementing the currently proposed provision on Middleton Stoney Road. Such an arrangement is good

practice. Bus stops (five in total) must be delivered as indicated by the red dots on the above plan, which will enable access to the development both before and after the route through the development is available. A pair of stops must also be provided on the link road between the two access points, in the centre of the proposed Phase 1 development. It is imperative that bus access through the development must be available at the earliest opportunity and certainly no later than occupation of 220 dwellings.

The provision of bus stop infrastructure must be as per that set out in the Bus Stop Specification (Outline) contained in Schedule 19 of the S106. A separate financial contribution has been secured for the delivery of bus stop poles, flags and shelters.

Passive provision of bus stops needs additionally to be made on the wider Primary Street to facilitate the wider public transport vision for the Eco Town north beyond Himley in the future. The Council will hold the necessary bus infrastructure contribution until that time, when shelters and other facilities will be installed.

Summary

- Buses are likely to use both access points into the development and junction design and bus stop placement should reflect this;
- No fewer than five bus stops should be provided within the Phase 1 area and on Middleton Stoney Road;
- The Secondary Street linking the two access roads, and the eastern access road itself, must be upgraded to a Primary Street to accommodate two-way bus access; and
- These roads must be kept clear of obstruction through provision of off-carriageway parking bays or double yellow lines.

Travel Plan

A few changes to the travel plan are required as follows:

- Add the anticipated number of residents.
- Add the planned / estimated date of occupation of the 500 dwellings or each stage.
- 4.5.5 – what type of cycle parking will be provided? What capacity will this have?
- 5.7.1 – No measures to reduce the need to travel? Provide details of home delivery services? High-speed broadband to enable working from home?
- Action Plan - Welcome pack needs to be ready to be sent at occupation.
- 6.2.3 – TPC role needs to be for 5 years from full occupation.

21/02337/DISC

A separate objection has been raised by Oxfordshire County Council on the above application for a number of conditions which relate to the proposed development site. This response included objections to the Design Code, Masterplan, Vehicle Access,

Travel Plan and details to footway and cycleway links between the land, local highway network and adjacent parcels.

Officer's Name: Will Madgwick

Officer's Title: Transport Planner

Date: 12 January 2022
