

CD 13-13



landscape architecture ■ urban design
expert witness ■ environmental planning

SUMMARY PROOF OF EVIDENCE

of

DAVID HUSKISSON Dip (LA) Glos CMLI

relating to

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

on behalf of

CHERWELL DISTRICT COUNCIL

Appeal against the refusal of Cherwell District Council

to grant planning permission for

Redevelopment of part of a golf course to provide new leisure resort (sui generis) incorporating waterpark, family entertainment centre, hotel, conferencing facilities and restaurants with associated access, parking and landscaping on land to the east of M40 and south of A4095, Chesterton, Bicester, Oxon

Local Planning Authority Reference: 19/02550/F

Planning Inspectorate Reference: APP/C3105/W/20/3259189

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DAVID HUSKISSON will say:

- 1 My qualifications and experience are set out in Appendix 1, **CD 13-14**. My proof is at **CD 13-12**.
- 2 I have reviewed the LVIA element of the Environmental Statement (**CD1-13**) and its various supporting documents, together with other pertinent information, and have reviewed the policy and landscape character context. I have visited the site and surrounding area. My evidence draws from this work to address Reason for Refusal 4.
- 3 Reason for Refusal 4 does not allege widespread landscape and visual harm. Thus, I have not evaluated or tested all the LVIA's findings, although I do consider some of the findings local to the site to be questionable as set out in my proof. Additionally, I note that the LVIA fails to address the changes to the A4095, to Green Lane and the junction at Middleton Stoney.
- 4 I broadly concur with the baseline findings reported in the LVIA in terms of landscape character types and areas.
- 5 The appeal site lies at the south eastern edge of National Character Area 107, the Cotswolds, which merges into the adjacent NCA 108, The Upper Thames Clay Vales to the south east.
- 6 At the County / District scale, the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study shows the site to lie in the Wooded Estate/land Landscape type, a large swathe of countryside. In character area terms it lies in the Middleton Stoney Landscape Description Unit but, again, this is an extensive area.
- 7 I note that the Countryside Design Summary (CDS) (June 1998) SPG, prepared by CDC to guide development in rural areas so that the distinctive character of the district's countryside and the settlements and buildings within it are maintained and enhanced is referenced in Policy ESD 13 which is cited in Reason for Refusal 4.
- 8 I acknowledge that the viewpoints selected for use in the LVIA were agreed with CDC, but I consider local views are underrepresented. The views that I consider to be of primary importance are those that will be available for users of Green Lane, the A4095, the local footpath and the M40.
- 9 The overall landscape condition/quality of the majority of the site's local setting and the site itself can be ranked as **good**.
- 10 I have looked at landscape value in accordance with GLVIA3 guidance. Considered in the round, I categorise the site as having at least a **medium** landscape value at the district level, a value that becomes somewhat higher in the immediate local context at Chesterton.

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13 I identify aspects of the appeal proposal relevant to its design, layout and landscape and visual issues. These demonstrate that the scheme:

- Has not adopted a landscape first approach. Rather the landscape and the local context appears to be addressed largely as an afterthought.
- Has not been responsive to the subtle landform.
- Would not give rise to a proposal that sits comfortably in an extensive landscape context, but would be very substantially oversized, monolithic and institutional in appearance with many aspects that would be perceived as incongruous in terms of their form, scale, mass and cladding and which would be inconsistent with both the established local vernacular and the rural character.
- Would be prominent and wholly out of character as perceived from a large part of the A4095 frontage and from parts of Green Lane.
- Would be out scale and character with the adjacent BHGC and the two nearby properties.
- Would be out of scale and character with the wider surrounding pattern of fields and hedgerows.
- Would have its institutional appearance compounded by the frontage swathe of parking.
- Would have a parking area that contains several potential points of conflict that would need to be either designed out before construction, leading to an increased area covered by parking, adding to urbanisation and increasing the overall footprint of the development or would prejudice the landscape strategy.
- Would not foster local distinctiveness.
- Would create an alien landform along its southern boundary at slopes wholly out of character with the gently sloping surrounding topography.
- Would urbanise the corridor of the B4095 to the detriment of the rural approach to Chesterton and its Conservation Area and would also erode the setting of Bignell Park not only as a result of the physical works but by increased traffic.
- Would compromise the Green Buffer notation of Bignell Park.
- Would divert a public footpath from an attractive open route across the golf course into a mean corridor, flanking the service road and car park and contained by artificial bunding, fencing and acoustic screening whilst also requiring users to walk

along the public highway.

- Would erode the rural appearance of the A4095 beyond the site to the west and along Green Lane by additional footway construction in verges.
- Would introduce lighting into a relatively dark landscape.
- Would have a detrimental physical impact arising from the road works at Middleton Stoney, exacerbating the effects of the already consented but damaging widening.
- Would be likely to have some wider offsite effects arising from signing.

- 14 I assess the landscape and visual effects of the scheme and refer to some of the findings in the LVIA where these are at variance with my own assessment.
- 15 I consider the site has a **medium high** landscape sensitivity.
- 16 I consider the proposal would result in a major alteration to key elements / features / characteristics of the baseline landscape introducing elements totally uncharacteristic of the wider receiving landscape. This ranks as a **high adverse** landscape effect at Day 1.
- 17 Turning to consider the significance of the effect, a high adverse magnitude of landscape effect in a landscape of medium high sensitivity gives rise to at least a **moderate / substantial adverse landscape effect** if not a **substantial adverse landscape effect** at Day 1 at the site and in the immediately adjacent area, dissipating with distance. This is to be regarded as a significant effect.
- 18 Over time, with the maturing tree cover and a long term management plan in place, there could be some offsetting of an element of the adverse landscape effect but 12 hectares loss of open recreational land and the landscape resources it comprises cannot be replicated. The change in landscape character will have been fundamentally detrimentally altered in the locality by the built form, parking areas, bunding and the offsite works (that cannot be mitigated) along the A4095, Green Lane and at Middleton Stoney. The once rural character would remain urbanised. Whilst woodland is a feature of the wider landscape character, it is less represented in the local area where the character is more generally open farmland, thus the mitigation would be somewhat at odds with the established character, compounded by the use of coniferous planting. The Day 1 adverse landscape effect would not therefore reduce very much over time but would remain in the ranking of a **moderate/ substantial adverse landscape effect**. This is a significant adverse effect.
- 19 There would be a range of receptors who would be exposed to adverse visual effects that would be significant and which would not be materially reduced by year 15. This contradicts

the findings of the LVIA.

- 20 Most concern relates to the changes to visual amenity for all users of the A4095 where views would be harmed by the obvious urbanisation of the road corridor reinforced by the looming presence of the hotel element seen across the extensive car park. Users of the diverted footpath would also be detrimentally affected. These effects, which include the effects of signing and lighting, also impact on the appreciation of the setting of Chesterton and Bignell Park.
- 21 Receptors on Green Lane would also experience significant adverse effects from the proposal that would be prominent, reducing slightly over time, but they would also experience the urbanising of the road from the proposed footways to either side of The Hale that would erode the visual appeal of a significant length of Green Lane.
- 22 Additionally, the "extra over" works at Middleton Stoney would be notably damaging visually.
- 23 Residential receptors at two properties will be left with long term significant adverse visual effects, including from lighting.
- 24 I set out the conflicts the proposals would have with the various policies cited in Reason for Refusal 4.
- 25 Reason for Refusal 4 also states that the proposal is contrary to Government guidance contained within the NPPF. I conclude that the proposals would be in clear conflict with parts a), b), c), d) and e) of paragraph 127 and paragraph 170 a) and b).

Conclusion

- 26 I conclude that Reason for Refusal 4 is fully justified. In the event that planning permission were to be granted, there would be a range of significant adverse landscape and visual effects that would arise which could not be appropriately mitigated.