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To: VE.RT
Subject: Case No: App/C3105/W/22/3304021 - CDC Planning Appeal Reference: 22/00045/REF

As the Oxfordshire County Councillor for Bicester North I strongly objects to this Planning Application

This planning application has a high level of public interest and concern amongst Bicester Residents.

This speculative planning application for industrial warehouses on a site earmarked for housing is premature and contrary to both the NW Bicester Master Plan, and Bicester Policy 1 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan.

No further planning applications are allowed on the NW Bicester site other than those applications which have already been approved by the local planning authority (Cherwell District Council) until the new realigned Howes Lane has been constructed.

In April 2021, it was a fantastic engineering feat over 72 hours to install an under bridge and underpass through the railway embankment at Howes Lane Bicester. This scheme was to facilitate the re-alignment of the A4095 Howes Lane that will help deliver thousands of zero carbon neutral homes, a fit for purpose road network, social infrastructure and improve essential access links across the 6,000 home ECO development at NW Bicester. Any delay in building the new realigned A4095 Howes Lanes will cause years of delay to other major housing and road projects in Bicester and put at risk the completion of the ECO Development leaving us in Bicester with several white elephants of bridges and roads going nowhere for the foreseeable future, with ever increasing levels of traffic congestion. Also the longer the road waits the higher the costs to realign will become and the more we risk the under bridge and underpass becoming damaged.

The proposed application site on Howes Lane already has an existing planning permission to build 150 residential units but which cannot be built until the re - aligned Howes Lane has been constructed.

I note from the Officers report that in regard to traffic movements, the applicant and Highways say that an additional 624 traffic movements will not cause a problem. Any additional traffic will have a significant impact in to traffic movements and congestion especially at the junction of Howes Lane with Bucknell Road, by the Railway Bridge and at the junction of Howes Lane with Middleton Stoney Road. Oxfordshire County Council's vision is to reduce current vehicle so this contrary to this vision.

The scale, design and height of the warehouse buildings will have an unacceptable landscape impact which will in turn impact on the amenity of existing residents, on the adjoining estate.

The proposals are contrary to the Cherwell Local Plan para 42, the supporting text to SLE 1 which states that in all cases very careful consideration should be to locating employment and housing in close proximity as unacceptable adverse effects on the amenity of residential properties will not be permitted.

The proposed development by its size scale, height, massing, design, and visual impact will dominate the street scene and blight the skyline. The NPPF emphasises that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. The importance of design has been heightened and there is a fundamental role to the planning process in creating high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and place. Beautiful is not a word that I and many residents would use to describe the design, height and visual impact that these Warehouse buildings will have on neighbouring residential areas.

Poor design and impact on the character of the area is a reason for refusal as it is contrary to policy ESD 15 of the Cherwell Local Plan

The adverse impact the proposed development will have on the character and appearance of the area

The adverse impact that the proposed industrial development will have on the road network by traffic congestion, noise, air and light pollution is a real concern for local residents.

The proposed development will be built on land at high risk of flooding. During the past few years, the existing Howes Lane, and the neighbouring Greenwood housing estate has suffered from severe flooding incidents which resulted in residential homes being damaged by excessive amounts of flood water. I understand that the underground culverts and pipes under Howes Lane were blocked. The flood flows from upstream were unable to pass through it with the result that the watercourse surcharged across the highway. To repair the culverts and pipes will entail the temporary closure of Howes Lane which would clearly cause very significant traffic congestion and delays. The repair works cannot be undertaken until the new realignment of Howes Lane has been built. As indicated in the report there is no idea as to when the new road project will get underway, meaning that local residents face a future of uncertainty and further risks of flooding to their homes.

The adverse impact that the proposed development will have on the infrastructure such as the Secondary School site, sport pitches, shops, health (G.P. Surgery's & Dental Practices) and community centres by marginalising them from the residential development. The proposed development site creates previously agreed access routes to become unsafe for school children to use.

The key priority to unlocking the full potential of the 6,000 home ECO development on the NW Bicester site is to get on and build the A4095 Strategic Link Road (new re-aligned Howes Lane) without any further delay.

The proposal to build storage and distribution units on a site zoned for housing is unacceptable and would unnecessarily and unjustifiably erode the ambitions of the Local Plan.

There are more suitable employment locations for industrial warehouses & storage buildings such as the brown field site at the ex MOD site at Graven Hill Bicester, which is the perfect location for this type of activity. Current Warehouses in/around Bicester are struggling to recruit staff. Oxfordshire County Council's vision is to reduce current vehicle movements building additional warehouses in Bicester is contrary to this vision and will increase journeys.

Cllr Donna Ford

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