

Planning and Development

David Peckford, Assistant Director – Planning and Development



Cherwell

DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

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Please ask for: **Caroline Ford**

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18th May 2022

Dear Hannah

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

Application No.: 21/01630/OUT

Applicant's Name: Firethorn Developments Ltd

Proposal: Outline planning application for up to 530 residential dwellings (within Use Class C3), open space provision, access, drainage and all associated works and operations including but not limited to demolition, earthworks, and engineering operations, with the details of appearance, landscaping, layout, and scale reserved for later determination

Location: Land at North West Bicester
Home Farm, Lower Farm and SGR2
Caversfield

Parish(es): Bicester and Bucknell

I write with reference to the above application which remains under consideration.

The Council wishes to acknowledge the application represents a proposal for major residential development on land allocated by Policy Bicester 1 of the Cherwell Local Plan Part 1 2011-2031. In addition, it is acknowledged that many of the objections and comments received through the application process have been or are in the process of being overcome.

The purpose of this letter is to set out the following key matters which we believe remain outstanding and need to be resolved:

- Oxfordshire County Council as Highway Authority have raised an objection which I have forwarded to you. There are a number of key matters including that OCC cannot support the interim mitigation scheme proposed and the recent modelling demonstrates that there would be a severe congestion impact on the local network. OCC also advise that there are outstanding matters relating to the suitability of Charlotte Avenue as a main access to the development and the need for cycle improvements on Braeburn Avenue.

- We acknowledge the receipt of your response to the first draft HLD work forwarded to you on the 23rd March 2022. Having discussed your response with HLD (Nigel Simkin), I can advise that we envisage there are broadly two options to move forwards; (i) either Nigel takes on board the comments made as far as he is able, completes his baseline report and recommendations and reports into the Council his position later in June (Nigel is unable to look at this until after the 06 June 2022 as he has commitments for the next two weeks); or (ii) viability discussions continue based upon the information submitted and the further information which Rapleys have indicated is still to be submitted (such as a revised Cost Plan and updated appraisal and viability position), to resolve some of the issues to see if further agreement can be reached on the inputs and assumptions to reach an agreed position on viability. The latter option would require a further fee proposal and commitment to cover HLD fees (and RLF's fees, given your request to re-open the cost debate) and the agreement of a new timetable moving forward which would have an impact on timescales.
- We acknowledge that you are awaiting information from the Council on S106 Heads of Terms and confirmation of the suitability of housing mix.
- We are awaiting a broad indication from you as to the offer that might be made to close a viability gap following the initial draft proposal put to us by letter dated 14 March 2022. This means that we have not been able to commence work in discussing priorities and what is required to conclude that the development could be considered acceptable because it appropriately mitigates its impact with our Consultees.
- The viability work is linked to work around standards and sustainability. We need to resolve what standard the development would be built to and how this complies or otherwise with the definition of True Zero Carbon as set by Policy Bicester 1 of the Cherwell Local Plan Part 1 2011-2031.
- There is an outstanding matter relating to the Great Crested Newt assessment. Please see the separate email from the Council's Ecologist on this matter.
- I wish to also record a point that has more recently arisen which is not necessarily a matter that requires resolution now but which you should be aware of. The indicative masterplan appears to show play areas within areas of flood risk; however, this is not specified within the parameter plans so is an indicative matter only at this stage. The Council would not accept play areas within areas at risk of flood because it could result in periods of time where play areas are not useable and would result in more regular repairs and cleaning and there could be risks to children's health.

The Council would be grateful for your comments on the above listed matters to be resolved.

I look forward to hearing from you. Please accept that this advice is provided without prejudice.

Yours faithfully

Caroline Ford

Principal Planning Officer