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OX26 1DH



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

21st December 2019

Dear Ms Whitehead,

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

Thank you for the work you're undertaking relating to this application.

I am writing to object, strongly, to the above planning application – in summary it seems fundamentally at odds with the local development plan, and I can identify no material considerations that would mitigate this or justify granting planning permission.

At a detailed level I have many concerns. First, I am troubled by the apparent **lack of consultation** between the applicant (Great Wolf) and Cherwell District Council. Surely, with the potential for more than 2,000 visitors each day, Great Wolf should have worked with Cherwell, following the correct local plan process, to identify and be allocated a proposed site? This application seems **opportunistic, speculative, and in the wrong location** and should accordingly be rejected.

Second the proposed development is fundamentally **unsustainable / in opposition to sustainable strategies** for Cherwell:

- It's on the edge of a village and includes 900 car-parking spaces. This clear reliance on car travel is at odds with the Cherwell strategy of reducing car usage
- Golfers looking to play on an 18-hole course will have to drive to alternative courses, thereby inevitably increasing car mileage driven – again in conflict with the Cherwell strategy
- This, golf course site, is by definition a 'green field site' – to put 500,000 square feet of built development will forever destroy significant green landscape and ecological habitats

Third, flowing from the lack of consultation and selection of an inappropriate location, the **traffic impact** of the proposed development seems certain to create

road safety and quality of life issues by increasing levels of traffic to those far in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure. Specifically:

- The road network in the Bicester area is already over-stressed by residential, commercial and retail developments (eg Bicester Village, Kingsmere, Bicester Gateway – and even Upper Heyford). To add an extra 1,000+ traffic movements is folly and surely beyond the capacity of the network
- During and after construction routing plans will not just impact the problematic A34 and A41, but also see increases in traffic volume in villages such as Wendlebury, Middleton Stoney and Weston on the Green. These increases will impact air quality, safety, and quality of life
- Most especially, Chesterton will be impacted. Much of the traffic to and from the site will go through Chesterton with its dangerous A4095 bend, narrow roads (eg The Hale) and parked cars. Even now, Chesterton functions as a 'rat run' and problems on the M40 or A34 see increased levels of traffic in Chesterton. This proposed development can only exacerbate safety, quality of life, and air quality issues.

Fourth, this development will have **significant ecological issues**, removing large swathes of **green field habitat for a varied abundance of wildlife**. In a world that is concerned about mass extinction, in which bird and insect (eg bee) populations are plummeting, this is just the wrong thing to do.

Fifth, just as the local population continues to grow (Elmsbrook, Kingsmere, Chesterton, Upper Heyford), so this proposed development would **remove recreational facilities**. On the surface that seems a strange claim given that the proposed development is entirely recreational. But the reality is that the proposed development is not aimed at ad-hoc or frequent short-term use (hours) by local residents, but at residential stays (days) by those traveling to the site. For the increasing number of local residents, the proposed development sees the removal of a much-loved and (as per filed accounts) seemingly commercially viable 18-hole golf course. Yes, nine holes remain, but for how long – what will keep that viable? With the recent loss of the North Oxford nine-hole course, to grant permission for this development would show a flagrant disregard for the recreational needs of local residents by Cherwell District Council.

Sixth, the **proposed design is just poor and inappropriate**. A low-rise design (to make it less visible) merely means a larger ground area is subject to development and urbanisation in a rural location. The two-three (very) large proposed blocks are not remotely in keeping with the character of the local area. Cherwell's Countryside Design Summary (2008) makes clear that new development schemes in locations like the proposed site should be small scale, detached buildings at low height (like the existing golf club) and should enhance the character of the local area. Thus, if Cherwell District Council were to grant planning permission it would be fundamentally at odds with its own stated policy.

Seventh, and similarly, **anticipated economic benefits are not aligned to Cherwell District Council policy, and / or are too limited to justify permission being granted**. The Council's strategic aim is to prioritise 'knowledge-based' business investment. This is a hospitality business, of a totally different character. While the development would offer employment, this is likely to be predominantly in lower-paid, anti-social split-shift roles, often with zero-hours contracts. This is thus fundamentally at odds with Cherwell's strategy. Worse, because Great Wolf's business model is based on keeping guests on-site, in the proposed development's restaurants, retail outlets, and leisure activities, there will be minimal or no spill-over of economic benefits to local

businesses – just extra traffic. I understand there is very little or no support for the development among local businesses, and would urge you to take note of that.

Eighth, and finally, for those using the proposed development, and for local residents there would be **air quality and pollution impacts**. Additional traffic driving to and from the site will impact on air quality for local residents, and for those using the proposed facilities a site adjacent to the M40 is hardly offering healthy air quality and a quiet ambient environment.

So, again, I consider that the planning application has been done badly, does not align with published Cherwell policies and strategies, and is of significant dis-benefit to the local community. Please do recommend the rejection of the application.

Yours sincerely,

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of Nicholas Smith.

Nicholas Smith