

Painswood House
Chesterton
Bicester
Oxon
Ox26 1uf

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

Date 3rd January 2020

Dear Ms. Whitehead,

Objection to Planning Application Ref: 19/02550/F – Proposed Water Park by Great Wolf

I wish to object to the above-mentioned planning application. The proposal is not in accordance with the development plan and the negligible benefits of the scheme are not sufficient to outweigh the significant and demonstrable impacts the scheme will have on the local area. The applicant is clearly seeking to deliver what is an urban style development in a rural location outside of the settlement boundary of Chesterton village. The objection is on the following grounds:-

1. Unsustainable form of development

This is a significant development that will attract high levels of visitors every day and Cherwell District Council's (CDC) Policy SLE3 states that such developments should be located in highly sustainable locations adjacent to a multitude of transport modes to reduce the reliance on car usage. Policy ESD1 also seeks to distribute new developments to sustainable locations to tackle Cherwell's commitment to climate change. The site is on the edge of Chesterton village in an inherently unsustainable location with low accessibility to public transport and the scheme provides for 900 car parking spaces (therefore promoting car usage) and is therefore contrary to Policy SLE3 and ESD1.

The site is currently greenfield, open space and policy BSC10 seeks to ensure there is sufficient quantity and quality of open space, sport and recreation provision by protecting and enhancing existing provision. The planning system should be supporting the redevelopment of previously developed, brownfield sites, or allocated sites in sustainable locations adjacent to public transport modes, not on a greenfield site that will irreversibly remove valuable open space. This is totally the wrong location for such a proposal and whatever gestures or promises the applicant provides for in terms of improved access, bus services or cycle routes, the site is in an inherently unsustainable location and not appropriate for such a development.

2. Landscape Impact and Design

The proposed scheme is not in-keeping with the local area which is characterised by 2/3 storey buildings which are detached and in clusters. The Countryside Design Summary (2008) published by CDC provides guidance for developments in locations such as this and supports developments of small scale, low height and detached. Also saved Policy T5 of the Cherwell Local Plan 1996 states that new hotels in rural locations will only be approved where they would largely be accommodated in existing buildings of totally replace an existing commercial operation.

Policy ESD13 states that successful design should contribute to an area's character representing the traditional form, scale and massing of buildings. Paragraph 170 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

The development consists of a large bulk of 500,000 sq.ft of built form and mass and at a significantly greater height than any of the other buildings in the vicinity of the site and this is all to be delivered on what is currently greenfield site with no buildings on it. The proposal is therefore contrary to the Countryside Design Summary, saved Policy T5, ESD13 and paragraph 170 of the NPPF.

3. Traffic

Policy ESD1 supports new developments that reduce the need to travel by car and Policy SLE4 states that new developments should facilitate the use of sustainable modes of transport. CDC's 1996 saved Policy TR7 states that developments that will attract a large number of vehicles onto minor roads will not normally be permitted.

The existing road infrastructure cannot cope with the projected extra 1000 – 1,500 daily car movements. Chesterton is already a 'rat-run' and experiences major congestion as an escape route during the many traffic issues on the M40 and A34. The applicant is seeking to re-route traffic down the A34 particularly and doesn't appear to appreciate the issues that we already encounter on the A34. The slip road at Weston on the Green is notorious for accidents due to the short length of the slip road. Great Wolf is directing traffic to use this slip road so will exacerbate the already significant issues. There is no reference or consideration for this aspect in the Applicant's Transport Assessment.

The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies SLE4 and saved policy TR7.

4. Loss of Golf Club

Cherwell is already losing a well-used golf club at North Oxford for housing and this proposal will result in the loss of another 18 hole course. We need these types of facilities in Cherwell and Bicester to support the new housing growth. If we lose this course, there will yet again be a reliance on car travel out of Bicester or Cherwell to find alternative courses further creating unnecessary and additional car travel. In addition, this positively contributes to the open space around Bicester and will be lost forever.

The Bicester Golf Club is well used and having reviewed Bicester Hotel and Spa's company accounts, that are publically available at Companies House, there are no signs of viability issues with the current 18 holes operation. In the published 2019 accounts it states:-

REVIEW OF BUSINESS

The company saw a slight reduction in turnover over the previous year yet increased profitability through greater efficiency. The local rooms market had levelled out during the year following the introduction of additional rooms to the area in the previous period and that allowed the company to re-establish itself as a leader in the local market. Occupancy levels have recovered, and with a growth too in average rate, RevPar has increased. Golf subscriptions have followed national trends, with a continued decrease in membership numbers, however additional income from other golf segments have partially compensated for this and the contribution from golf operations has increased tremendously. The Health Club performance was comparable with last year with both sales and contribution seeing little change. However there are significant development plans for the coming year in this area which will see the offering greatly improved with some very unique facilities.

An increase in the National Living Wage was absorbed within an overall reduced payroll spend, compared to the previous year. This saving, along with other operational cost reduction initiatives, resulted in a net profit for the year of £264,860, a significant increase over the year ended October 2017 despite the reduced turnover.

So in summary the Bicester Hotel and golf resort has publically stated that:-

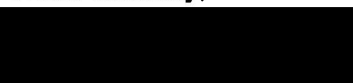
'The company saw a slight reduction in turnover over the previous year yet increase profitability through greater efficiency' and 'Golf subscriptions have followed the national trends, with continued decrease in membership levels, however additional income from other golf segments has partially compensated for this and the contribution from golf operations has increased tremendously.'

The above suggests the current business is performing well and there are no viability issues to warrant the removal of 9 or the 18 holes and no justification has been provided for by the applicant to demonstrate viability issues.

5. Conclusion

The proposal is not in accordance with the development plan and represents an unsustainable form of development delivering 500,000 sq.ft of built form on a greenfield site whilst also putting significant pressure on the existing road network. It is totally the wrong location for such a significant development and as such this planning application should be refused.

Yours faithfully,



Tom Brewerton