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15 December 2019

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

REF Great Lakes UK Ltd - Planning Application No: 19/0255/F

Dear Ms Whitehead,

I am writing to strongly object to the above noted planning proposal, which does not support the local Cherwell Development Plan for the Chesterton and Bicester area and is totally unsustainable. Basically it is the wrong thing in the wrong place and there are no material considerations that would warrant planning permission being given.

The local exhibitions given by Great Wolf Resorts (Wolf Resorts of Great Lakes UK) did not adequately address local concerns and indeed demonstrated a lack of knowledge and appreciation of the rural area.

My key areas of concern are:

Unsustainability:

The extent of “planned appropriate development” in the Cherwell area, as referred to in the Cherwell Development Plan is already immense and diverse, particularly in the Bicester area. The development plan includes a significant increase in housing development, improvements to rail and road connections, improvements to infrastructure, promotes investment in high technology and innovation providing higher value employment opportunities. All this, with an apparently balanced consideration to quality of life and well-being of local residents, respect for our rural areas and villages, providing future quality long term quality employment opportunities for young people and securing dynamic town centres.

The proposed large private corporate project of Great Wolf Resorts in Chesterton village is not in accordance with these plans and would potentially derail some of the “appropriate planned developments” due to its size and impact on local infrastructure, rural landscape and local communities.

With the existing planned appropriate development supporting infrastructures are already under great strain. Adding a private profit making enterprise with no requirement for local investment in infrastructure (as required for developers), no usage for local residents and no provision for high quality employment and with its decimation of rural areas is unsustainable.

Transport issues, existing water supply and waste issues, air light and noise pollution, potential subsidence in the area would all cause a significant negative impact on the local natural environment and well-being of local residents should the construction of such a resort be allowed.

This is clearly a project for corporate gain with no regard to the local development plans and community needs. In times of limited national economic growth and austere times ahead, a development of this type should not be a priority for the Cherwell area.

Landscape and ecological impact:

The Cherwell development plan states that “development in open countryside should be strictly controlled and rural areas protected”.

Locating the proposed resort on the edge of a beautiful rural village in a rural area would destroy the village of Chesterton, surrounding natural countryside and also significantly impact neighbouring villages. The Cherwell Development Plan states an objective “to avoid sprawl and ensure growth avoids adverse environmental impact”. The proposed resort directly contradicts this objective and others in the development plan including the “need to support woodland and wildlife sites”.

Trees would be destroyed, no matter what assurances are given, the resort will find ways to do as they wish if planning is granted, even if subjected to conditions and fines. Natural wildlife would be severally disrupted as the area is a haven for many country species of animals, birds, amphibians and insects. These would cease to exist in the area under the proposed plans.

The proposal to have 500,00sq ft of buildings on the site would be like having four massive Tesco extras on your doorstep! The size and expanse of the project should not be underestimated. This together with a 900 space car park would totally obliterate the landscape and rural views of the area. In addition, having an unsightly water park structure and tower is not in keeping with existing village and rural structures and would bring an urban and industrial look to what is currently a rural landscape. The proposed size of the resort is too big for the location and countryside setting.

Traffic Impact:

Another significant reason the proposal is in the wrong location is the negative impact it would have on the existing already overloaded road infrastructure.

The current planned appropriate development of residential homes, retail, business and hospitality around the Bicester area already putting a strain on local traffic, community and leisure amenities, which will increase as these developments near completion.

Chesterton and the surrounding villages are already used as a rat run to avoid the overly congested A34, A41 and junctions 9 and 10 of the M40. These narrow country roads are unable to take the existing traffic and with the current developments in the Bicester area the situation will become even more unsustainable.

The proposed Great Wolf resort will exacerbate traffic congestion in Chesterton, the surrounding area around Bicester and the A34, A41 and junctions 9 and 10 of the M40 and have a negative impact on potential investment and visitors.

In fact the impact on the roads would not just affect the local area around Bicester, also have an impact on other counties such as South Northamptonshire with the existing bottleneck at junction 10/A43 and Buckinghamshire roads on the A41. The impact on neighbouring counties should also be considered.

The Cherwell Development Plan also states the “need to reduce dependence on travel by car”. Assurances from Great Wolf that they may initially provide buses for visitors and staff from the Bicester stations rail stations to reduce the impact on local traffic are unlikely to be a long-term solution. Experience would suggest that families with young children and luggage are unlikely to travel by public transport to the resort, as it just isn't practical for many. The proposal plans still include a 900 space car park, so the expectation must be that this is required!

Visitors, staff and deliveries etc from such a large resort would have a definite impact on the local road infrastructure.

Lack of economic benefits:

The Cherwell Development Plan states there is “a priority for economic growth in Bicester to maximise benefits from its location including high value and knowledge based business”. There should be “investment in the high performance engineering sector innovative business investment and creation of high value employment develop a more diverse economy with an emphasis on attracting and developing higher technology industries strengthen the areas profile with performance engineering and support investment for new technology innovation”.

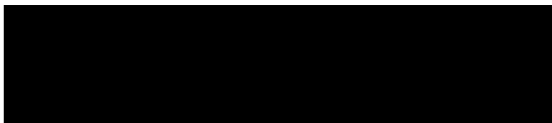
All these strategic objectives would create much stronger and sustainable long-term economic growth in the area. The proposed resort does not provide highly skilled jobs with long-term prospects, but offers only low skilled and low paid opportunities in hospitality and retail. These would not provide the long-term strategic growth required in the area. There already exists in the area opportunities for lower paid hospitality and retail, with more arising with the planned and approved local developments. There is low unemployment in the area and the existing opportunities in retail and hospitality are difficult to fill. The workforce would need to come from outside the area, resulting in even more road congestion.

The proposal for the Great Wolf Resort does not contribute to the long-term economic growth of area and does not fit either the strategic objectives of the Cherwell Development Plan.

In summary, for the reasons above and indeed many others, the proposal for a Great Wolf Resort in this area is unsustainable and not in accordance with local development plans. As I have said above, it is basically the wrong thing in the wrong place and totally unsuitable for the area.

Kind regards

Your sincerely



Linda K Porter