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Ms Clare Whitehead  
Development Management  
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**Date 20<sup>th</sup> January 2020**

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

Dear Ms. Whitehead,

Although I do not live in Chesterton I regularly visit my son whom lives adjacent to the proposed development. I wish to object on the following planning grounds:-

**Ecological Impact**

The planning proposal is for a built-over area of 500,000 ft<sup>2</sup> including a 4-storey residential block and large areas of ground covered in hard surfaces for parking and pedestrian/service access. Remaining green areas will be intensively managed using herbicide weed control, lifted tree canopies, removal of ivy from trees. The impact of this in the existing rural environment will be to break existing links with natural habitats e.g. animal trackways; deter wildlife due to increased human activity and noise, light and air pollution; destroy microhabitats for native plants (including wildflowers) and insects (including pollinators). Extreme revision and management of the rural landscape is contrary to Cherwell Local Plan policies EN27, EN30, EN31, EN34 and EN35. The proposed, re-modelled landscape projects a sanitized pastiche of an English countryside and will do nothing to preserve natural species.

**Unsustainable 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 highly sustainable locations adjacent 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 will 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 open space. This is totally the wrong location for such a proposal and whatever gestures or promises the applicant provides in terms of improved access, bus services or cycle routes, the site is inherently unsustainable and not appropriate for such a development.

### **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 or 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.

### **Traffic Impact**

The Transport Assessment submitted to support the application uses data and assumptions that we state have significant flaws:

- Great Wolf has advised that the average stay is currently 1.6 days and this leads them to assume that they will see relatively even turnover levels through the week.
- It confirms that the proposed site will act as a family resort and the majority of guests will be families with children.
- Signage from the site will direct visitors to J9, A34 and the B430 but then suggests only 50% of car visitors will use this route.
- The traffic data only includes 5 planned development schemes and fails to take into account other significant developments with planning permission.
- The comparisons are made to Center Parcs who operate a significantly different model with fixed changeover dates and longer stays of 3-7 nights.
- Construction traffic will not be directed through Chesterton leaving the only option as the B430.

As Great Wolf have confirmed that the average stay is likely to be 1.6 days and that the site will act as a family resort it is unlikely that changeovers will be spread evenly through the week. Most visitors will be coming for the weekends with arrivals focused on Friday and departures on Sunday/Monday. Families with children are unable to take their children out of school and so will have to travel on a Friday afternoon arriving in the middle of peak rush hour. This will significantly impact peak travel traffic, which is already notoriously bad on this part of the road network. The proposal suggests that signage will be advertised solely for access using the A34 from J9 and along the B430 to junction with B4095. Despite this, the traffic data within the proposal only assumes that 50% of journeys will flow down the B430 to the A34 when in fact this proportion will be significantly higher. The majority of visitors will follow the signage and it will be much higher than 50%. The traffic charts within the Traffic Assessment assume that virtually no one will use Church Lane/Road in Weston on the Green as a route to access the site. On the numerous occasions that there is an issue at the A34 / M40 J9 junction we see volumes of traffic utilising this small village road as a cut through to avoid A34 gridlock. This will increase danger to residents in the village with it being the main road through the centre of the village. The traffic data in the proposal fails to recognize this and the impact that this proposal will have on a small village and rural roads. The assessment uses comparisons to Center Parcs to justify its traffic assessments. At the same time it confirms that the model is very different and so should not be used to justify likely arrival/departure times for the proposal. Within the current proposal OCC had only identified 5 planned development schemes which should be included in the analysis. It fails to include the 700 homes being added at Kingsmere Phase 2. Vehicles from this site will utilise Chesterton and the B430 as a cut through to the A34 and increase traffic through the villages. It also fails to include the distribution centre / business park, Axis J9, which may also utilise Chesterton, Middleton Stoney and the B430 to access the A34 / A40 / A44 and areas West. In the application absolutely no traffic is projected to cross the B430 at the A4095 junction and continue further west on the A4095 towards Witney / Blenheim Palace / Cotswolds or to cut up other west leading roads at Weston on the Green, Akeman Street, Bletchington (via A34 and Islip Road) or Middleton Stoney trying to tourist areas via A40, A44 and the Cotswolds, which is clearly wrong and misleading with modern satnavs.

## **50F**

Construction traffic will be directed to use the B430 and not the Chesterton route. There is a weight limit on the bridge crossing the A34 from the B430 to head South, which means that lorries exiting the site will need to travel back up to the J9 M40 roundabout to go South on the A34. This will put further pressure on a junction that Highways England, in its latest report have admitted is failing. The Transport assessment suggests that this junction will still be within its theoretical limits, however traffic on this junction already exceeds the capacity for this junction. Alternatively HGV's will try to use Church Lane/Road, a tiny village road, as an exit point to join the A34 further south towards Islip.

### **Lack of Economic Benefits for Cherwell and Local Area**

This proposal is contrary to Cherwell's strategic aim of prioritising Knowledge Based business investment as a priority, thereby offering employment supporting the 'Knowledge Economy'.

The proposed hotel rooms are only available to Great Wolf resort guests. This does not assist the growth of other businesses in the areas providing employees with a place to stay overnight and therefore does not add to 'rooms' in the area. There is no local businesses support in Weston on the Green to the scheme that would reinforce Great Wolf's suggestions of economic benefits. Great Wolf aims to keep all guests on site to use their restaurants, bowling alleys, retail shops etc. so economic benefits would be retained by Great Wolf and not shared with local businesses in the local area. Local businesses are already finding it hard to recruit Hospitality industry employees that Great Wolf will be targeting. As such, Great Wolf will either take scarce employees away from local businesses, which will have a negative economic impact, or they will have to bring in employment from other areas therefore increasing traffic movements.

### **Design**

It is an inefficient and therefore bad design. The building is a 3 and 4 storey design but considered to be relatively not visible. The buildings and car parking are spread across the site having significant urbanising impact on this rural location. This scheme comprises of a total floor area of 500,000 sq. ft. in overbearing large blocks, not in-keeping with the local area. If CDC were to allow schemes in such a location they should be of small scale, detached buildings at low height (similar to the existing Golf Club), enhancing the character of the local area as outlined in Cherwell Council's Countryside Design Summary, 2008. (This square footage is twice the size of Bicester Village) and similar to the proposed Jct 9 development. The proposed public outdoor space on site will be right next to a major motorway (unhealthy due to noise and fumes).

### **Lack of Consultation**

With potentially over 2,000 visitors each day, this proposal will have a significant impact on the area therefore Great Wolf should have worked with Cherwell to be allocated a site through the correct local plan process. This is a speculative planning application in the wrong location and should be refused on this basis.

### **Air/Noise Pollution/Quality/Water table**

There will be a resultant deterioration in air quality and noise pollution from additional traffic, construction and service vehicles. An enormous amount of water will be used from Cherwell's already short supply, whilst drainage of water treated with chemicals could pollute our already overwhelmed waste system. Cherwell's own consultant (Tyrens) refers to the need to "reduce water demand in this highly water stressed area". We see that the Thames Water Report supports only 50 of the 500 rooms from the existing water supply. How will the huge use of water affect Weston on the Green? We don't know because a study has not yet been done. This is not something that can be sorted after outline permission is granted but we believe instead must make up part of any initial

### **Local Development Plan**

This proposal is contrary to the Cherwell Local Development Plan and to its strategic aims for

- i) sustainable development in an historic landscape;
- ii) preservation and enhancement of biodiversity;
- iii) reduction in the use of private motor vehicles and their effect on climate change. The impact of this development on the extended local area (including several neighbouring parishes) is so large that there is no overall mitigation that should allow planning permission to be granted. We note that the proposed site is not located within any defined settlement boundary, and thus is within the open countryside. The site is not allocated for any development in the adopted Development Plan and thus is contrary to an adopted and up to date plan, which commands full weight in the decision-making process. The site is also shown on the Green Infrastructure theme map (maps at Appendix 5 of the Local Plan) as an existing 'Outdoor' Sports Facility (protection of existing sites falls under Policy BSC 10). The proposals would be contrary to Policy ESD 13 in as much as they would cause, at the very least, undue visual intrusion into open countryside. The preamble to this policy also highlights Bignell Park and the Roman roads around Bicester as features of value; the proposals would affect the setting of the park and these roads.

On so many levels this proposal fails to meet the planning requirements. The developers have produced flawed and inaccurate data to bolster their weak arguments. The council should see through this as merely smoke and mirror tactics to achieve an audacious punt at building the wrong development in the wrong location. I also note that there is a campaign of obtaining signatures to a single, standard and generic letter of support for the proposals, many from outside the area. I would hope that you view these accordingly and note the lack of credibility that they convey. In summary, I urge the planning committee to stick to their principles and heed the groundswell of objections and robustly dismiss this application. We need to save what little there is of the countryside and character surrounding this charming historical village and protect the environment from this monstrosity.

## **D Templeton**