

West Green Cottage
Kirtlington Road
Chesterton
Nr. Bicester
Oxfordshire
OX26 1UQ

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

23rd January 2020

Dear Ms Whitehead,

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

I wish to strongly object to the proposed development at Bicester Hotel Golf & Spa, situated in the village of Chesterton, for the reasons outlined below.

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, and 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 in my opinion there is no overall mitigation that would justify planning permission being granted.

The proposed site is not located within any defined settlement boundary, and thus is within the open countryside. The site isn't 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 water park is to be housed in a building approx. 80 feet high (the equivalent of a seven-storey block of flats) and, given the artist's impressions, is not designed to blend in with, or compliment, local architecture. The addition of outside water flumes protruding from the building cannot by any stretch of the imagination be considered an aesthetically pleasing addition to the north Oxfordshire countryside. Furthermore, a four storey high, 500 bedroom hotel, while acceptable in the vicinity of a large airport or city, would be of an overbearing nature in this context.

Transport

The proposal is not in a sustainable location in transport terms. There's no public bus service and the site is not conducive to walking or cycling, making it car dependent and therefore contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework, Local Plan and Local Transport Plan policies, which require development to be suitably located to maximise opportunities for sustainable travel.

A resort that's hoping to attract 500,000 visitors a year and maintain a staff of 600 people will generate a huge increase in traffic locally. The roads in the area already struggle to cope with the large volumes of traffic they currently experience; they are frequently little more than car parks when problems occur on the M40 or A34 and traffic needs to be diverted. Regardless of 'designated routes', if this development is permitted, the roads in Chesterton and the surrounding villages (many of which are minor roads, poorly maintained and are already used as 'rat runs'), will experience levels of traffic that they weren't designed for and can't sustain. The huge increase in traffic will also have a significant impact on air pollution levels at a time when we all desperately need to reduce our carbon footprint.

Economic Benefits

The proposal does not align with Cherwell's strategic aim of prioritising Research and Development based Business Investment and associated spin offs, thereby improving the quality of job opportunities available to the local working population.

Cherwell enjoys a very low unemployment rate and the existing retail and leisure sector struggle to recruit the staff they need. If this proposal were to go ahead, Great Wolf would either take away employees from established businesses, which would result in a negative economic impact, or they would need to recruit from outside of the local area which would further increase traffic movements.

It is difficult to foresee any economic benefits to restaurants, pubs, shops and similar leisure-based enterprises in the local area, as it will be Great Wolf's aim to keep all guests on site to use the resort facilities that will be provided.

Hotel rooms on the complex will only be available to Great Wolf Resort guests, which will not assist growth of other businesses in the area by providing visitors or employees with overnight accommodation when required.

Ecological Impact

At present, nine holes of the existing golf course are covering the proposed area for the resort. Currently this is open ground where flora and fauna thrive; if this development were to go ahead their natural habitat would be destroyed. This is green field habitat that can never be replaced.

Conclusion

Great Wolf are predicting 500,000 visitors per annum, which would have a huge impact on the area. Bearing this in mind, they should have worked with Cherwell to be allocated a site through the correct local plan process which they failed to do. This is a speculative application in the wrong location, which I hope will be refused.

Yours sincerely,

Cassandra Peter