

Clare Whitehead
Cherwell District Council
Bodicote House,
Bodicote,
Banbury
OX15 4AA

Mayfield House
256 Banbury Road
Oxford
OX2 7DE

By email

Clare.whitehead@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

09 March 2020

Dear Ms Whitehead,

Planning application: 19/02550/F – Land to the east of M40 and south of A4095, Chesterton.

Redevelopment of part of golf course to provide new leisure resort (sui generis) incorporating waterpark, family entertainment centre, hotel, conferencing facilities and restaurants with associated access, parking and landscaping

Further to my letter of 29 January, as you know Carter Jonas LLP has been instructed by Chesterton Parish Council with the support of others as listed previously. The Parish Councils note the letter sent to you by DP9 Ltd on 10 February and would now wish to comment on that letter. The DP9 letter does not change the Parish Councils' view in any way. The proposals are outwith the development plan and planning decisions should be made in line with the development plan unless material conditions dictate otherwise. There are very limited material considerations that would suggest that the application is acceptable. The harms to landscape, character, loss of golfing facilities and transport are not outweighed by the suggested benefits.

The Parish Councils have also read your report to Planning Committee and support the assessments and recommendation therein. The Councils' thank you for reading their letter and reporting its contents to the Planning Committee.

The Parish Councils would also like to make the following specific observations in response to the latest comments received from DP9:

Sustainable location

The proposed location for the resort is remote from Bicester and beyond the recognised limits of Chesterton. The site is in the open countryside. It is not a sustainable location and cannot be easily accessed from the M40, without the need to travel through the neighbouring villages and/or on minor 'back roads.'

Transport

The Parish Councils note the significant objections from the County Council as the Highways Authority, specifically in respect of the severe congestion at the Middleton Stoney junction. Furthermore, in response to the technical note provided by Motion (appended to the DB9 letter) the Parish Councils remain concerned that it has failed to address key concerns, such as:

- the lack of crossing facilities across the A4095;
- the nature of site-users and their likely distance travelled to the site means that there is no realistic prospect of them walking or cycling to the site;

Your ref:

Our ref:

- the infrequency of the proposed shuttle bus service and irregularity of public bus services; and,
- that the proposed level of parking provision makes unsustainable modes of travel a more convenient and attractive option for future site-users.

In addition, the Parish Councils also note that there is limited detail relating to safe access to the site as might be required through a stage 1 Road Safety Audit. It is unclear what level of cumulative impact has been assessed and some committed development is not included in the modelling and there is a lack of appropriate mitigation measures offered to address the traffic impact of the development on both the A4095/Vendee Drive and the B430/B4030 junctions.

Landscape, Built Environment and Heritage

The Parish Councils remain unconvinced by the applicant's arguments that the resort would have a limited adverse effect on the landscape. The Parish Councils are of the opinion that regardless of mitigation measures any built form which is introduced into the currently undeveloped part of the golf course will fundamentally change its character and that this will not be for the better.

The concerns relating to the heritage value of the area are as much related to increased traffic movements through the Conservation Area and its setting as they are to direct visual impacts. This is not the headline concern of the Parish Councils, but it weighs against the proposal and cumulatively will increase the reasons to resist its development.

Natural environment and the Nature trails / Public Right of Way

The Councils acknowledge that the applicant has undertaken surveys in accordance with an agreed scope. This however does not resolve the concern that this scope has potentially undervalued the biodiversity quality of the golf course and that the scale of any replacement nature reserve or trail is limited compared to what the Parish Councils believe currently exists.

Drainage, Flood Risk and Water Availability

The Parish Councils note the objection from Oxfordshire County Council as the Lead Flood Authority and are still of the view that there is the potential for significant downstream effects that have not been considered in the application.

The Parish Councils remain acutely concerned that, in a time of raised awareness regarding resource stress and scarcity, a proposal such as the Great Wolf Resort can be proposed in an area where there is a seriously limited water supply. Swindon and Oxfordshire (SWOX) is an area where the standing advice from Thames Water is that water usage should be carefully managed. Local Authorities have adopted the highest levels of building control relating to domestic water usage and this too, must be transposed into sustainable and responsible commercial uses.

Golfing Facilities

The Parish Councils remain unconvinced that the loss of 9 holes of the golf course can be absorbed locally. There is a lack of local alternatives and the District Council's evidence points towards an increased need, not a decrease. Moreover, the loss of 9 holes is likely to reduce the local patronage of the existing golf course. Whilst the Parish Councils are not suggesting that there is an explicit proposal to develop over the land currently comprising the whole 18-hole golf course, the Parish Councils are of the opinion that the viability of the whole of the course is threatened by the loss of half its offer. If 9 holes are lost, then the other 9 are likely to follow particularly as there will be a significant drop in membership of the golf club.

Needs and benefits

The Parish Councils acknowledge that there might not be a policy that requires the identification of need for the 'resort,' however, the applicant has set this out in their application material and the Parish Councils have sought to respond. The Parish Councils also accept that the 'resort' is not a disaggregated proposal for a hotel and other uses, however, each of these uses will have an impact and the hotel *will* affect others recently consented and planned. Should the need for a resort of this nature become part of the District Council's strategy, then its consideration is most appropriate as part of a comprehensive plan making exercise and not a speculative planning application.

In conclusion, the Parish Councils strongly support the recommendation for the refusal of this application. The proposal is poorly justified; is in the wrong location as matter principle; and, is unsustainable.

Yours sincerely,



Peter Canavan MRTPI
Associate Partner

E: Peter.canavan@carterjonas.co.uk

