

# LAUNTON PARISH COUNCIL

*Mrs Jane Olds, Parish Clerk*

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Dear Rebekah,

Launton Parish Council met on 9 January and considered planning application reference 19/02708/OUT for Bicester Motion at Bicester Heritage, Buckingham Road, Bicester for “Outline:- Provide new employment units comprising B1 (Business), B2 (General Industrial), B8 (Storage) and D1 (Education) uses with ancillary offices, storage, display and sales, with all matters reserved except for access”.

Whilst the Parish Council recognised the stand-alone nature of the application, much was made within the documentation of the applicant’s Master Plan which, the Parish Council considered, would damage the Heritage Asset of the protected flying field and would significantly limit potential use for its designated purpose of flying.

The Parish Council had the following objections.

The proposal is for development within the previously undeveloped area of what the Parish Council considered ‘greenfield’ scrubland overlooking the protected airfield and would have a detrimental impact on the street scene and the visual amenity of the protected flying field.

The additional entrance onto the already extremely busy 50mph Skimmingdish Lane (A4421) would be dangerous, both inwards and outwards. If the Planning Committee were minded to approve the application, the Parish Council requests that a condition be included where vehicles exiting the site must only turn left; however, much more highways investigation work should be completed on the entrance before it should be considered.

The Parish Council recognises that this is one of the very few omni-directional grass airfields available in the country and there was concern that if more buildings were erected outside the perimeter track, as well as spoiling the important views across the flying field, this would reduce the safety and flexibility of the aircraft in take-off and landing.

The report prepared for the applicants by ASA attempts to suggest that this reduction in safety would be slight, and therefore acceptable; however it was noted that ASA do not appear to have any particular experience of gliding operations, and that they did not have any discussions at all with the current airfield users, who would have been able to provide additional information that might have affected the conclusions of the report. Much is made in the report of the three "runway" directions, and ASA's estimate that the prevailing winds means that "probably around 80%" of flying activity could use the 060/240 direction, which would ostensibly be largely unimpacted by the proposed development. But the wind rose for the Oxford area clearly shows that winds from the South are still quite likely (only around 30% less so than those from the South-West), requiring use of the 180/360 direction: take-off and landing in this direction is definitely affected by the proposals. While ASA claim that the reduced length of this "runway" would still leave it "suitable", any reduction in the safe options available to a pilot trying to land is highly undesirable.

It should not need stating, but safety is for both the pilots and the residents who live, and workers who work, below the flight paths. The proposed development would introduce employment on the edge of the flying field, directly under an approach path, and would inevitably reduce the safety of the airfield as a whole.

The documented success of the gliding club and the use of the airfield in national competitions should be celebrated and preserved.

Additionally, as gliding was recognised as the most appropriate aviation use of the airfield in Policy 8 (page 160) of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan, the Parish Council considers that anything which reduces the capability of gliding should be rejected as against the policy.

Policy 8, section C.90 outlines the work between CDC, the MoD and English Heritage and recognised that there was a need to maintain and re-use the historic buildings and airfield, all of which are within the Conservation Area. The Parish Council considers that the current proposal (which is for new buildings in an undeveloped part of the setting, not re-using old ones) does not come within the remit of this policy.

I trust that this is of help to you and the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

*Jane Olds*

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