

Comment for planning application 19/02708/OUT

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| Application Number | 19/02708/OUT |
| Location | Bicester Heritage Buckingham Road Bicester |
| Proposal | 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 |
| Case Officer | Rebekah Morgan |
| Organisation Name | |
| Name | Gary Hope |
| Address | 32 Old School Close,Caversfield,Bicester,OX27 8TW |
| Type of Comment | Objection |
| Type | neighbour |
| Comments | <p>Bicester Heritage was I understand originally set up to save the historic airfield for future generations. Indeed, its own website still states that, and I quote: the former RAF Bicester site on which Bicester Heritage is now based is of national historic importance. Neglected for the best part of 40 years, it was added to Historic England's 'At Risk Register' in 2008 and designated the most 'at risk' of all Defence Estates in the UK. Since Bicester Heritage's tenure, over 92% of the buildings have been delicately restored or re-activated for modern business use, with the site now held as a national exemplar of constructive conservation by Historic England. To convert the historic site into a motor racing site would not be in keeping with this aim - which should obviously be to keep the site as an active airfield for as long as is possible. Over the years the planning authority has gone to a lot of trouble to ensure that the layout and feel of the areas which have been redeveloped are in keeping with the original purpose and layout of the site (e.g. the Garden Quarter) - and that anybody visiting the site can get an overall view of what it looked like when it was an active RAF base. However, the primary purpose of the current plan appears to be to expand its operations to make more money rather than to conserve the site as an historic airfield. It's ironic, and rather frustrating, that the sites owners are moving away from their original 'Bicester heritage' badge and have instead switched to a 'local motor racing heritage' - that has nothing to do with this site or the town I would also question whether the plans put forward comply with the Government's ambitions to be carbon neutral given the environmental impact a motor racing circuit would have. I think it is also wholly inappropriate to be considering a race track so close to the current housing, especially given the vehicles likely to be using it would no doubt be some of the noisiest and polluting still in use. Supporters of the plans may however say that aircraft using the site present similar issues - which of course they do - however they are in keeping with the site - and the noise is restricted to short bursts rather than what I would expect to be a prolonged and constant noise from a racing circuit (when in use). Whilst there are clearly some events and sports that are more sustainable than others, have a lower environmental impact, and bring more positive outcomes for social and economic welfare - which should obviously be encouraged - motor racing is obviously not one of them, and is instead at the other extreme of that spectrum. Indeed, it requires the use of fossil fuels in the manufacture of the equipment and use of the racing circuits, produces local pollution as well as greenhouse gas, and involves a major transformation of the landscape wherever it is held. Motorsport influences environment in a short-term perspective at the local level (e.g. water/air/soil pollution) and in a long-term perspective at the global scale (e.g. global warming); and influences spectators' choices and behaviour including the encouragement of behaviours that have adverse environmental consequences, such as increased use of cars at a time when we should be educating our children against their use. I would be interested to understand what assessments (as far as I can see there are none in the documents made available) have been made to support this application in terms of environmental considerations, and what guarantees the planning authority can provide to assure local residents that the increased levels of air pollution and noise (caused by the motor racing and additional traffic) will have no detrimental impact on their health and wellbeing. I understand that at times the good of the many should be put ahead of those of the few - but I seriously doubt whether these plans will have a positive impact on the town - and would be interested in seeing any economic analysis that has been submitted to support it (there doesn't appear to be anything of this nature in the supporting documents provided) - which I think should a consideration at the forefront of the planners' minds. Also, I think it is really important that we don't have a repeat of Bicester Village - which is an enormous tourist attraction / shopping destination - which is just a matter of</p> |

minutes' walk away from what appears to be dying town centre, full of charity and empty shops - i.e. you / we must ask ourselves 'what is the benefit to the residents of Bicester of this becoming a top tourist attraction - and do they outweigh the many downsides?' - rather than simply get sucked into thinking that a 'top tourist attraction' is a good thing - as is portrayed in the application. It should be noted that the tourist attraction that was ranked 20th in the UK in 2019 (for paying visitors) had an estimated 775,000 visitors in that year - which equates to about 15,000 visitors per week - which one assumes will have little interest in visiting the town centre and will further gridlock roads. As far as I can see the site in terms of its current form and use is preserved in what appears to be a sustainable position - with perhaps some potential for further heritage conservation through re-purposing some of the remaining abandoned buildings, such as the bomb stores - rather than erecting new structures around them as it this plan. And although likely more expensive, and perhaps less profitable, I would strongly argue that this would be the right thing to do in terms of preserving the site for future generations - which would have the added benefit of not inflicting any harm or nuisance on local residents, for no apparent local gain. Given the above, I confirm that I strongly object to this planning proposal

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Attachments