

To whom it may concern,

We have become aware that Certas Energy Limited has applied for Development of Hornton Grounds Quarry as a Fuel Depot. We would strongly encourage Cherwell District Council to reject this application for the following reasons:

- Hornton Grounds is just outside the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Historically, this particular location has been used for stone extraction, which has disrupted its biodiversity. Despite this previous large-scale environmental disturbance, it is notable that the preliminary environmental report submitted with the application comments on the site's "identified ecological suitability". It is a recovering ecosystem that is very promising with potential for Great Crested Newt. Indeed, the value of these recovering quarries is best typified by Balscote Quarry which is a Banbury Ornithological Society Reserve noted on its website for Curlew. The UK's breeding population of Curlews is recognised as being of international importance and their IUCN status is Near Threatened and the bird is a UK BAP priority. The site also has other rare declining species such as Brown Hare, a priority species, as well as Lapwings. It would seem to me that the best way that Cherwell District Council could support the National Planning Policy Framework would be to continue to allow these quarried areas to regain their natural levels of biodiversity, helping isolated pockets such as Balscote Quarry to expand outwards to form networks and wildlife corridors. The alternative is to commit the land to an industrial development, based on hazardous materials, which seems out of step with the surroundings.
- We understand that one of the main ambitions of Cherwell District Council is to encourage tourism based on a number of conservation villages such as Hornton. Partly as a result of the proximity of Upton House, there are increasing numbers of walkers, rambling clubs and parties of teenagers, doing their Duke of Edinburgh awards, in the village, often using the D'Arcy Dalton Way. This long-distance path passes extremely close to the proposed development, which will handle flammable and hazardous materials. Having large numbers of young people passing this facility could pose a risk. It was not clear to me what steps would be taken to secure the site 24/7 and how this might disrupt the wildlife corridors mentioned in the environmental report.
- The planned use as a petroleum fuel depot for 20 years also seems to be completely at odds with the UK government's strategic goal to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. A decision has already been made to phase out petrol and diesel cars by 2030. The governments targets are very clear in terms of reduced oil use and more effective land use – therefore this depot would have a very limited lifespan. It was not clear to me what end-of-life remedy would be made as a condition of any approval – would this be in accord with the "polluter pays" principle. Recognising that many investment houses are not financing oil related industries, is the Council confident that when the time comes and the business closes it would not be faced with having to fund the clean-up itself. Alternatively, will this site be another contaminated area in the countryside with underground tanks slowly rusting away.

- Inevitably, there will be spillages that contaminate the land around the loading and unloading areas. The fact that the most significant volume of material planned to be stored is Kerosene which is mostly used for aviation might also suggest that the best location for such a site, if it was needed, was at an airfield where contamination is likely to have already occurred..
- Finally, the planned volume of heavy tankers on the narrow roads around Hornton Grounds will almost certainly increase the risk of road traffic accidents. It is already extremely dangerous to follow a tanker along the A422, up the very steep Sunrising Hill with its sharp hairpin bend. On many occasions, we have witnessed, the tankers lose forward momentum and roll backwards. Indeed, we have had to take evasive action whilst driving behind a tanker with our family, with significant personal risk, to avoid a collision. Thought should be given to either upgrading the road infrastructure around the site or prohibiting vehicles over a certain weight from such high-risk routes.

Fundamentally, we are at a loss to understand the basis for granted planning permission for a facility storing hazardous materials in an area that is being promoted as attractive countryside to encourage tourism.

Yours sincerely,

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