

From: Susan Hall
Sent: 06 October 2020 14:24
To: Bernadette Owens
Cc: Caroline Ford
Subject: Reference:Scoping report 20/02469 (with address)

Bernadette Owens, Senior Planning Officer
Cherwell District Council
5th October 2020

Dear Ms Owens,

Apologies, I am resending this as I omitted to include my address.

The campaign welcomes the scaling down of the quantum of housing to a level more appropriate to the ecological sensitivity of the Bicester 13 site. We suggest that the density of housing on Bicester 13, west of Langford Brook, could be increased to compensate for any reduction. There is a precedent for small blocks of flats as well as 3-storey houses in adjacent Langford Village so this type of development on the west of the Bicester 13 site would be compatible.

We welcome the commitment to provide a wildlife management plan. This is because despite the demonstrably incorrect comment in Section 1.4 of the report that the site 'lacks a wide range of environmentally sensitive receptors', the wet meadowland ecology combined with ridge and furrow formations is now extremely rare in the UK, as 98% of such land has been lost. Gavray meadows is the most biodiverse area of natural green space within Bicester. Therefore an EIA is required.

Major issues:

There is no reference in the report to the effect of any development on the Upper River Ray Conservation Target Area (CTA) which is protected by policy ESD 11 in the Local Plan 2031. The CTA within the site is of considerable significance as it is the urban terminus of the wildlife corridor from the wider countryside through the Bicester 12 site and Bicester 13 to connect with the floodplain of Langford Brook through Langford Village. In this time of ecological crisis, CTAs should not be reduced in area or degraded by development and the effect of the proposed development on it should be assessed.

The two blocks of housing east of Langford Brook which are north of the footpath and ancient boundary hedge (shown on the Constraints and Opportunities Plan, Appendix 2), encroach within the CTA and we would not accept development here. The effect on the CTA of the construction of an access road for construction vehicles, as well as land remodelling, laying of services and alteration of drainage, should be determined. Any housing encroaching on the CTA will reduce the buffer zone between any housing south of the footpath and the Local Wildlife Site which lies within the CTA. Development in the CTA will increase the negative effects of the increased proximity of the resident population such as light and noise pollution, trampling, littering and vandalism.

The developers of the Bicester 12 site (Wretchwick Green) have pulled back the housing they originally planned from the northern section of the CTA in order that the wildlife corridor should not be narrowed. We suggest that development in Bicester 13 should follow the same principles and align with the development boundary of Bicester 12 to ensure the width of the wildlife corridor is retained.

Depending on the detail of the Wildlife Management Plan and other matters, we could possibly be convinced to accept development on the east of the Bicester 13 site along Gavray Drive but consider that the ancient parish boundary hedge and the footpath form a natural limit to any proposed development further north.

Other matters:

A previous application estimated the amount of fill material to be brought into the site as 22,700 cubic metres in order to raise the proposed development out of the floodplain. The earthworks programme was indicated to last 29 weeks resulting in 14, 20-tonne tipper trucks visiting the site per day. Thus we consider that the noise and dust to existing Langford residents will be considerable and the effect of these and measures to reduce them should be scoped into the EIA.

We note that two crossing places are considered over Langford Brook to allow people to pass round the site. We suggest that this route is restricted to pedestrians in order to keep the path as a footpath rather than cycleway, and reduce the impact on the local flora and fauna.

Yours Sincerely,

Susan Hall, 22 Woodfield Road, Bicester. OX263HN
On behalf of the Save Gavray Meadows campaign

To Bernadette Owens
cc David Peckford

Save Gavray Meadows is an umbrella organisation covering a group of Bicester residents and their supporters who since 2012 have campaigned tirelessly for a secure future for a series of ancient wildlife-rich meadows on the edge of the town. Their local mandate is significant: a petition to protect the meadows raised 1500 signatures in 2014. The meadows include damp hay meadow grasslands, ancient hedgerows, ponds and mature trees and are home to rare butterflies, great crested newts and other protected species. They are highly valued by the local community as a green lung in the rapidly expanding town. Photographic evidence has been compiled and continues to be produced. Working alongside experts in ecology and planning, the group has achieved notable successes in preventing inappropriate development of the site and continues to push for housing on the adjoining land to be designed sensitively and to provide a means to fund essential habitat management for the site.