

Planning Application: 20/02469/SCOP

Location: Land on the North East side of Gavray Drive, Bicester

Proposal: Scoping Opinion – Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the allocated Gavray Drive site in Bicester.

Comments from Bicester Town Council Planning Committee who OBJECT to the proposal as it stands and offer the following comments including those in support of a letter submitted by Dr Pam Roberts.

The above report concerns plans for 202 houses to be built on farmland on the west of Langford Brook as well as on a highly constrained set of ridge-and-furrow fields dating back to before medieval times on the east of the brook. These fields are also a nature conservation area. The housing plan is shown in Appendix 2 along with the area likely to flood.

We are concerned that some development is proposed within the boundary of the nature conservation area which is part of the Ray Conservation Target Area and is protected specifically by Cherwell LP policy ESD11. It also encloses the smaller Local Wildlife Site called Gavray Meadows which is designated for its rare wet grassland and dependant plants and animal species such as bats, birds, reptiles, hairstreak butterflies and moths. These can be evidenced by the many sightings by Dr Pat Clissold as documented on Facebook 'Gavray Wildlife News'. The larger nature conservation area is also valuable for its rare grassland and the way it acts as a green buffer for the wildlife site.

The land east of the brook has become well known and loved by local people who have sent in over 70 responses to the scoping report showing concern for the loss of green space, as well as the negative effects on the wildlife and the increased likelihood of flooding. The Environment Agency's response confirms the worry of local residents about flooding and the loss of biodiversity. We object to any development to the east of the brook.

Our concerns are that the scoping report fails to consider the effect of the development on the Conservation Target Area. The local wildlife site is to be kept free of development, but LP Policy Bicester 13 requires a developer-funded Wildlife Management Plan. This is promised in the scoping report but a funding mechanism for its implementation and monitoring should be established for the long term (minimum 25 years) to ensure that any remaining biodiversity will have the best chance of surviving at the site.

We suggest that the density of housing on the west of the brook should be increased as opposed to development on the nature conservation area to allow for overall numbers on the development to be maintained. This is a pragmatic solution protecting the borders of the CTA whilst meeting the requirements of policy Bicester 13. Density increase could be achieved by building some smaller units in terraces or 3-storey properties or some flats as is now typical in the surrounding area.

Apart from the increased risk of flooding due to building on floodplain land, residents are concerned about the negative effects of building out the site over several years such as noise and air quality. We note that these receptors have been scoped out of the report, erroneously in our view. Previous planning applications indicated a prolonged period of lorry movements because significant amounts of materials will need to be transported in to enable the raising of the land out of the flood plain. There is also concern that the amount of stone proposed to be introduced to the site could cause pollution to and have an adverse effect upon the brook, thus leading to an environmental detriment.

The proposal will in addition have a negative effect on the existing public footpath which is popular with local residents.

When considering the proposal, Bicester Town Council would wish CDC to make restrictions to the hours of work allowed on site.

Ensure that road cleaning and wheel washing is in place but important that any effluent does not wash back into the brook.