

PLANNING APPLICATION REFERENCE 21/00517/F :

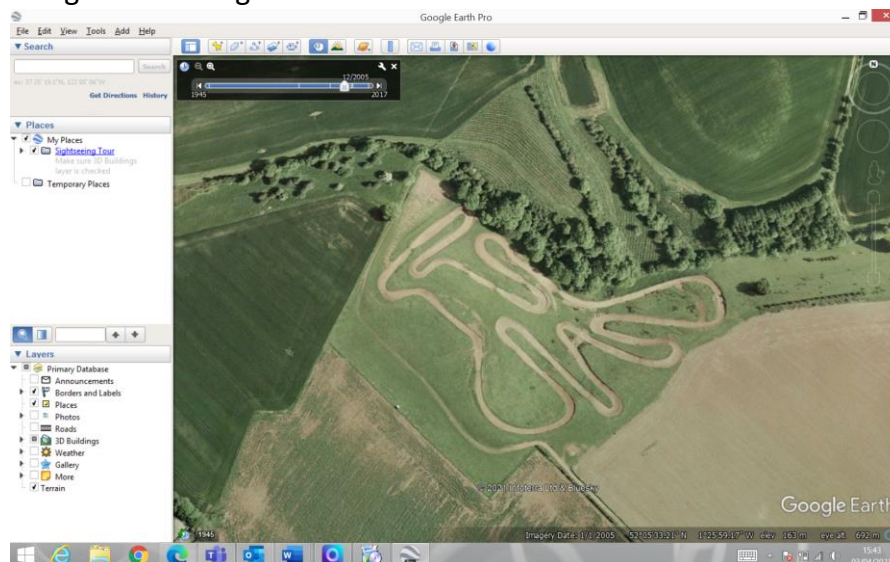
*“CREATION OF A MOTOCROSS TRACK AND SOFT LANDSCAPING SCHEME AND THE CHANGE OF USE OF AGRICULTURAL LAND TO HOLD MOTO-CROSS EVENTS INCLUDING SET-UP, TAKE DOWN AND PRIVATE PRACTICE SESSIONS, WITH ASSOCIATED CAMPING SITE, FOR UP TO 65 DAYS PER YEAR AND AGRICULTURAL GRAZING (RETROSPECTIVE)”*

I have become aware that Wroxton Motocross Track has applied for planning permission to utilise the track that has been developed, in clear contravention of planning laws, for a commercial venture 65 days per year. My understanding is that currently, the activity has no planning permission and is conducted under the 14 day ‘permitted use’ rule. I believe that if the District Council is seriously considering approving the application there should be a full consideration of the following concerns.

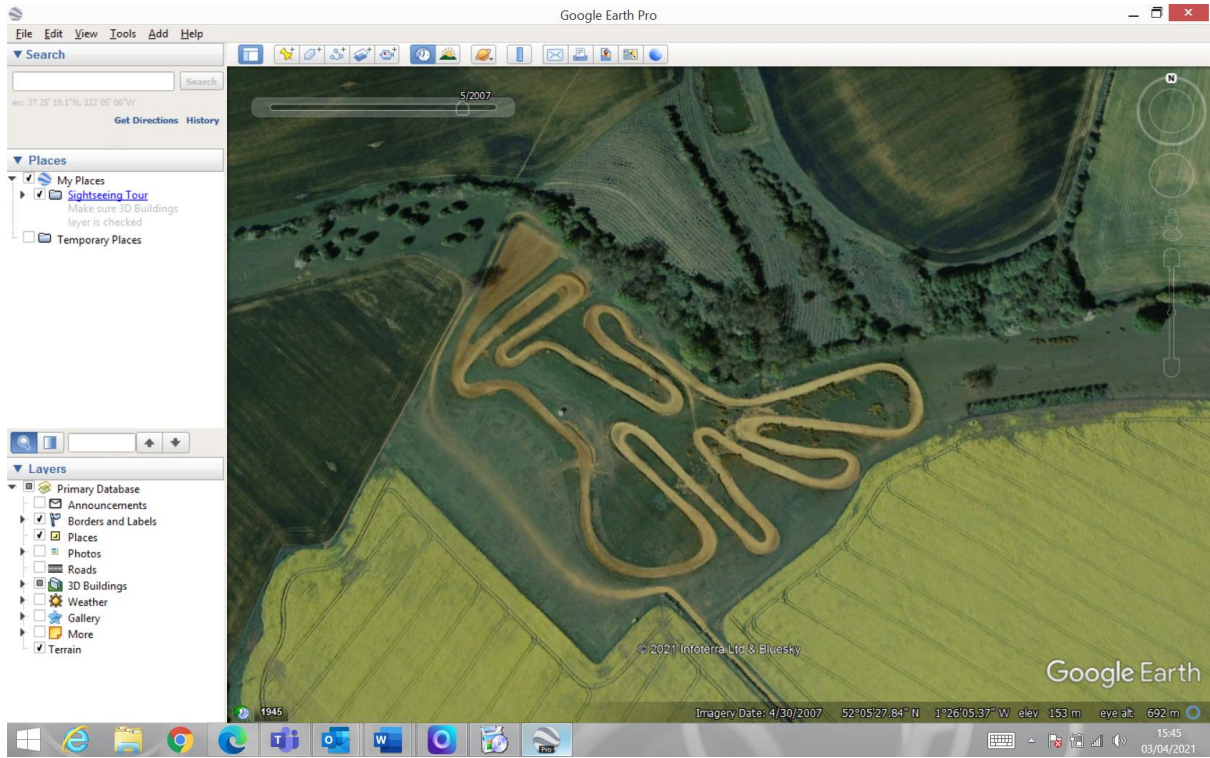
### **Development of the site without planning permission**

A track has been on the site for a number of years but certainly not the present track. I have lived at Birchwood House, Pages Lane, Hornton for 17 years and over the last 4-5 years the noise level from what was originally a small scramble track has increased markedly, with the frequency and scale of the race meetings transforming beyond recognition. The development of the track is clearly demonstrated by Google Earth Historical Imagery below. The cynical upgrade of this track over time into an international motocross venue is only now being addressed by Cherwell District Council because of complaints over noise and loss of amenity. Approval of this planning application would make a mockery of the Council’s oversight of the planning rules and it would reward those that work around the planning laws to avoid oversight and enforcement of the rules. This would only encourage the applicant to go further in their disregard of the planning rules, a behaviour which I feel has already been demonstrated, and take the site to the next level of commercial exploitation.

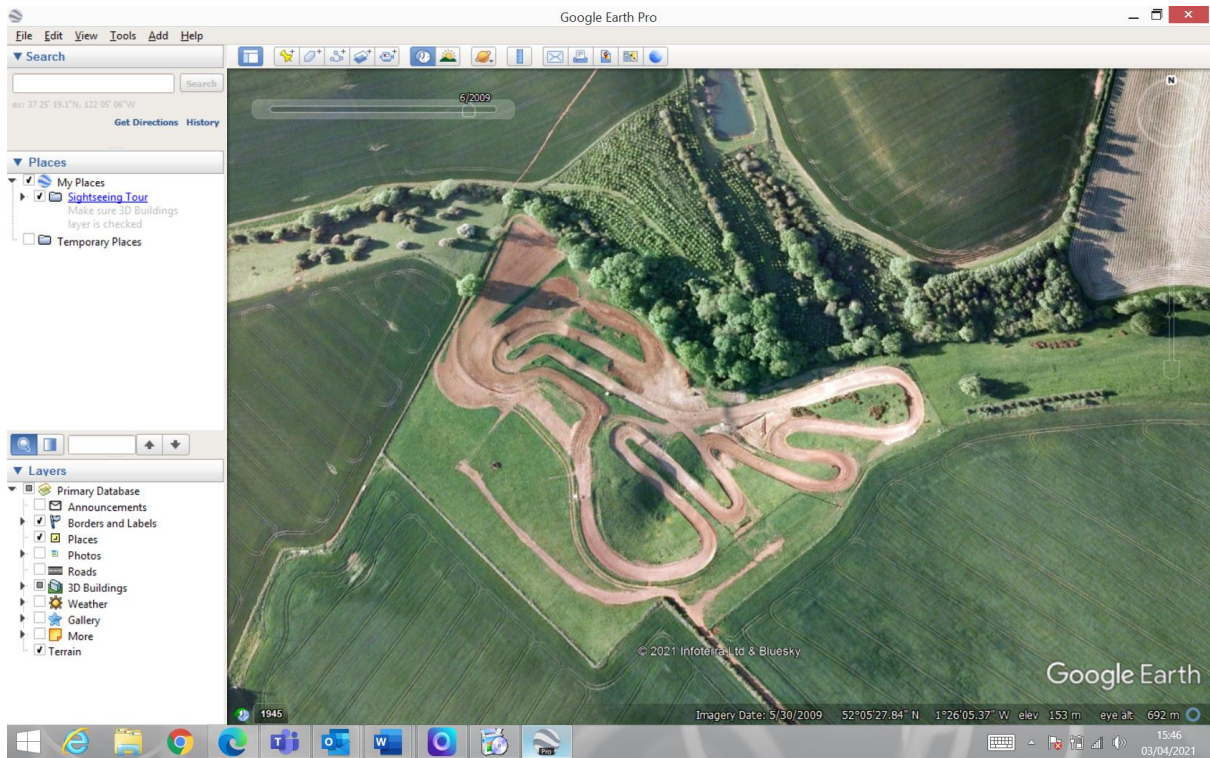
Google Earth Image 2005



Google Earth Image 2007

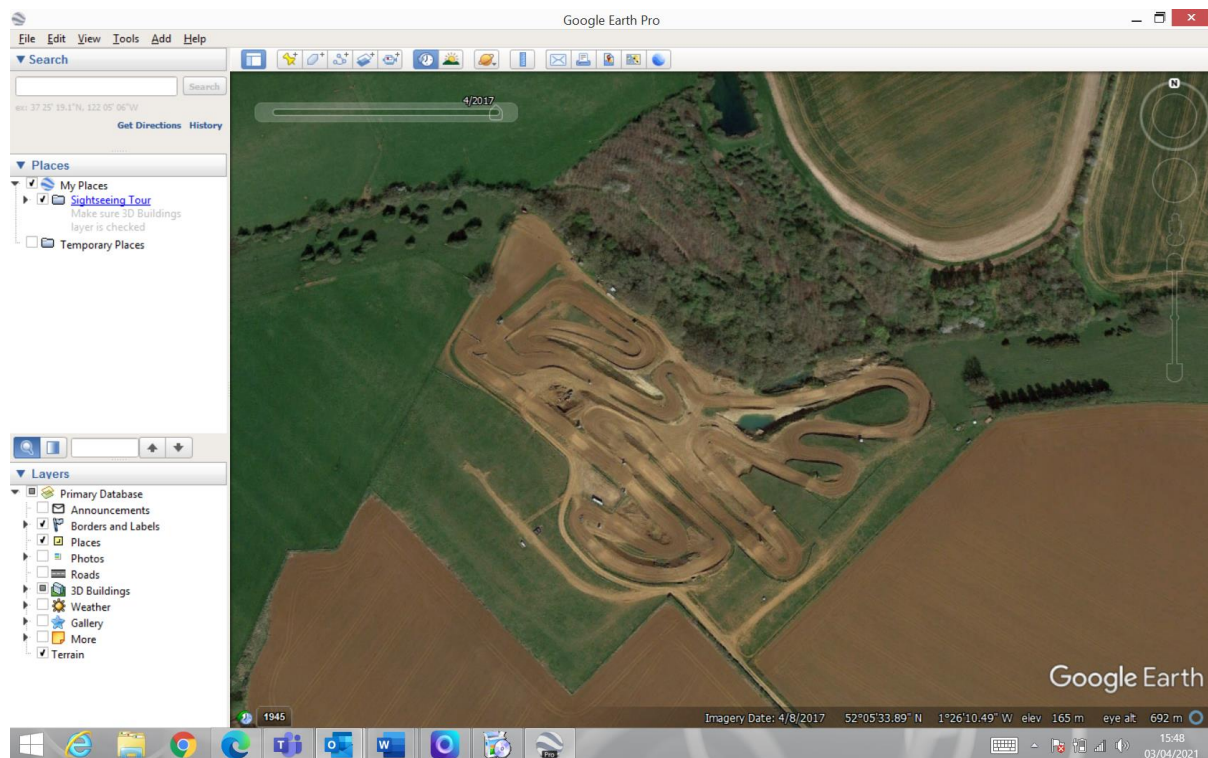


## Google Earth Image 2009





## Google Earth Image 2017



### Loss of Amenity

The loss of amenity if this planning application is approved would be considerable. On race meeting days it can be difficult to hold a conversation outside in the garden and the noise can easily be heard from within the house with all windows and doors closed if there is a warm, dry day and the wind is in the right direction. Note in summer this is particularly vexatious as it is often necessary to keep windows and doors open to keep the house cool. I believe that this level of noise surpasses the Government's 'significant observed adverse effect' level where action should be taken to mitigate the noise. The activity of these major track events has had a real impact on our enjoyment of our house and garden on race weekends. The incessant noise, which had seemingly been almost every weekend from May to September, continuing throughout the day with races from 9am to late afternoon, makes living in Hornton on these weekends highly stressful. The frequent noise disturbance has deterred me from inviting family and friends to our garden during the spring and summer, especially over the last couple of years. The formal extension of the track's activity to 65 days could represent 32 weekends and, with the Motocross season appearing to run from March to September, would be over 90% of the weekends during this period. This would represent a considerable blight on the lives of individuals living in Hornton and the surrounding area. I believe that the Motocross activity should be curtailed within the current guidelines as a scramble track only for a maximum of 14 days per year.

The accuracy of the noise assessment submitted by the applicant has to be questioned as the key measurements were conducted outside of the usual race season. The key conclusions are based on modelling which is highly dependent on the assumptions used within the model and the sophistication of the algorithms themselves. The measurements occurred in winter on a practice day, whereas, in our experience the noise is loudest on warm summer days, especially with the wind from the south and when it is a major event (such as a bank holiday weekend) and meetings are considerably larger and louder. Temperature and wind gradients can result in measured sound levels being very different to those predicted from geometrical spreading and atmospheric absorption considerations alone. Although the surveyor tried to model the impact of wind and weather, the topography of Hornton is complex, especially combined with the additive effects of the weather. These parameters are particularly important where sound is propagating over distances greater than a few hundred metres. Temperature inversions and winds can also result in the effectiveness of any barrier being dramatically reduced. There exists an extensive scientific literature regarding this. For example, "Temperature and wind gradients can result in measured sound levels being very different to those predicted from geometrical spreading and atmospheric absorption considerations alone" taken from Uno Ingard, "A Review of the Influence of Meteorological Conditions on Sound Propagation," *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, 25, p. 405. Also, "Sound propagation outdoors can be strongly affected by ground topography. The existence of hills and valleys between a source and receiver can lead to the shielding or focusing of sound waves. Such effects can result in significant variations in received sound levels. In addition, wind speed and air temperature gradients in the atmospheric boundary layer also play an important role" taken from Van Renterghem Timothy, 2017, Sound propagation from a ridge wind turbine across a valley, *Phil. Trans. R. Soc. A.* **375**, 2016 p105

If there is still a view that approval should be granted consideration should be given to enforcement of the requirement that all machines using the circuit comply with static noise test limits stipulated in the *Noise Council's Code of Practice on Noise from Organised Off-Road Motor Cycle Sport*, published in 1994, and measured in accordance with the protocol devised by the Auto-Cycle Union. The maximum number of machines allowed on the track could also be limited with entry onto the circuit limited to one machine at a time, thereby reducing noise levels rather than the current 20+ bikes all starting at the same time. Furthermore, an effective noise barrier could be erected such that the bike jumps do not result in the bikes surpassing the level of the barrier. Finally, the configuration of the circuit should be designed to minimise noise levels. These interventions have been explicitly adopted by other councils to prevent undue noise pollution.

### **Environmental Impact**

Any upgrade should require a full assessment of the environmental impact of the site – the potential risk to contamination from fuel leaks, chemical toilets and general waste of the Sor Brook, including the potential downstream impact to wildlife. Thames Valley Environmental Centre identifies the area downstream of the stream running next to the Motocross site as an important wetland area.

I have also observed at a distance what appear to be high levels of emissions from individual machines and a brown haze hanging over the course. It is noticeable that there is also a strong smell of vehicle fumes when using public footpaths that pass nearby. We would suggest that particulate levels are measured to determine whether they comply within the safe limits as set down by DEFRA. New regulations from Jan 2020 require all new bikes to be Euro5 with a bike's emissions equivalent to Euro6 automobiles (<https://www.acem.eu/new-euro-5-environmental-standard-for-motorcycles-and-mopeds-to-enter-into-force-in-2020>), ie motorcycles are polluting, especially when accelerating. It seems inconsistent for the District Council to be allowing the increase in emissions for a non-essential sport whilst at the same time the County Council is looking to enforce a low emission zone in Oxford to encourage the conversion to electric vehicles. This application 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 Government's own website highlights the importance of the impact of noise on wildlife. "Where noise adversely affects wildlife and ecosystems. Particular consideration needs to be given to the potential effects of noisy development on international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity." It should be noted that a breeding ground for Curlew, Balscote Quarry, which is a Banbury Ornithological Society Reserve, is situated only 0.5km from the noisy motocross site. 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. The site also sits within priority conservation areas for Corn Buntings and Lapwings which will almost certainly be disturbed by the proposed activities. The impact of the noise from the Motocross on this important site and the potential disturbance to breeding Curlews and other priority species should be further assessed as it appears that the report commissioned by the applicant misses a number of key species.

### **Provision of Services**

One of the arguments that could be made is that proponents of Motocross should have somewhere to enjoy their sport. However, there already exists a Motocross site in North Cherwell at Arnott Moto Parc near Bicester, one in Warwickshire at Moto 45 Coventry and two near Northampton – Weedon Motocross Track and Milton Park MX. The stated aim of Cherwell District Council is to develop the ironstone villages and surrounding areas for tourism – the approval of this application would be in direct contradiction to the stated objective, whilst the provision of this facility hardly seems a priority with a least 4 other developed and approved sites within easy travel distance.

### **Road Access**

The public roads leading to the Motocross site entrance have been badly damaged by heavy use of camper vans with trailers and have required repeated repair to make them safe for use, especially for cyclists. In addition, a high volume of large vehicles can make the single-

track roads near the site highly dangerous and impassable with a steady stream of vehicles at the beginning and end of the meet. I have personally narrowly avoided a collision when cycling due to a large camper van with a trailer swinging widely to navigate the tight turn from the public road into the field track leading to the site. Therefore, access to the site and the surrounding roads should be reviewed and improved if this application is approved.

### **Summary**

Overall, I believe that a Motocross Track that is used for large race meetings and generates a significant amount of noise is not in keeping with a conservation village such as Hornton and the aspiration of Cherwell District Council to encourage tourism in the area. There are often walkers and rambling clubs in the village and on a number of occasions during race days I have been asked how I bear the noise, "Such a beautiful village. Shame about the noise." The Wroxton MX track adds no value to the local community – sports enthusiasts travel in from elsewhere, stay on site in their camper vans and bring little of value to offset the considerable associated deterioration in the environment and amenity.

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

Yours sincerely,

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