

Hornton Parish Council

[Planning application: 21/00517/F - Planning register | Planning register | Cherwell District Council](#)

Response to revised LVIA - 15/5/2021

Overview

This is yet another remote agent's report based on limited local knowledge, out-of-date maps and only the applicant's version of the facts which, in many instances, we have already demonstrated to be inaccurate or misleading.

The author of this desktop study, Vince Steele of Steele Landscape Design, leads a "design-led practice" which lists its expertise as being in "Experience at leading projects for residential developments, gardens and estates, public realm (parks), educational grounds and commercial office complexes". Their ability seems to focus on *new* development projects, not retrospective attempts to 'greenwash' and mitigate a vast, unlawful rural motorsport venue. We could find no mention of outdoor/rural motorsport experience on their website.

The errors, omissions and blatant inaccuracies in this report speak volumes for the low level of care and attention applied, to date, in conserving the landscape and managing the visual impact of this inappropriate commercial enterprise. We believe this late-arriving report reads as what it is – a hastily-produced, inadequate attempt to retro-fit an LVIA rationale to a gross disfigurement of a protected rural site.

Details

Here is a selection of our comments. Numbers refer to the Steele Landscape Design document (024 110 LVA):

1.4 *"The only infrastructure is the stoned access track into the site from Bells Road."*

Infrastructure refers to basic physical and organisational structures and facilities. So, what about the steel retaining walls sunk into the earth? And the access tracks around the circuit perimeter, plus the motorhome camping areas? And the other *permanent structures* and infrastructure features like the enclosed loo block, extensive wooden and metal fencing, the marshals' huts, the incinerator skips and so on?

And where on earth is Bells Road? We have never heard of it. It appears again, later in this report.



1.5 *"...events are strictly control to a prescribed number per year."*

They may be 'prescribed', by the 14/28 day rule, but this rule – like numerous others – is ignored and broken. The applicant and her track management team (led by the Pounder family) ignore the prescription. To say they are 'strictly controlled' beggars belief – see previous submissions in response to the LDC application and this application – and, once again, shows how little confidence one can have in the applicant's, or her agent's, statements. The 'control' is their definition of control – ie. to choose to do what they want, when they want with this money-making venture and piece of rural land.

They have been exceeding the 14/28 day rule in recent years and freely admitted this in a previous application when they thought it was expedient to do so. In recent years they have also added in an extra winter season and extended the season of commercial hire-out days to paying, large events and clubs which, typically,

means people are on site for up to five days over a weekend, racing, preparing and clearing up the track after the event.

We have already submitted extensive public evidence to this effect, elsewhere, for this planning application. This substantiated data, in earlier versions, was first produced in autumn 2020 for the ill-fated LDC application for this site.

1.8 *“The motor X track uses the natural landform...”*

This wholly disregards the huge topographical changes made by massive re-engineering since 2017 and stretches the definition of the word “use”. The height profiles and contours of the circuit have been totally transformed to provide additional racing thrills and challenges. This has been thoroughly documented and demonstrated in numerous ways by Hornton Parish Council and by the Chris Cox professional aerial survey of 2020, already submitted.

In addition, as CDC's officer Tony Brummell has highlighted in his land drainage assessment of 29/3/21, the track team have completely altered and illegally exploited the natural watercourse, damaging it to a huge degree. The 'natural landform' is almost unrecognisable in this regard and neighbouring landform has been infringed. (Bear in mind that the applicant's property ownership ends at the bank of the brook, on her side, and does not extend into the watercourse itself.) Areas have been silted up, banks dug away and reformed, ponds dammed and expanded, fences flooded, water siphoned off. Again, there is plenty of factual evidence, with photographs, on the portal to prove this.



3.1 “there would be little difficulty returning the field back to agricultural grassland.”

Again, this statement shows an ignorance of the site. The under-track drainage system and “ramming” of earth on the track, plus embedded steels and man-made ramps, mean it would be a considerable job to return the site to its rightful agricultural use, as stipulated by the purchase restrictive covenant held at the Land Registry. We have had this degree of difficulty corroborated by the neighbouring farmers who run sheep and cattle on adjoining pastureland that still looks like this track once looked.

3.5. Presumably by “Bell Street” the report author actually means the Wroxton Heath residential road. And he entirely omits “The Indian Queen” (bar and restaurant) on the A422 Stratford Road who have written, on several occasions, to very clearly and strongly object to the application and directly counter the applicant's claims. The track is in full view of this restaurant and its live-in management team.

Contrary to what is stated here, there are a string of low-level timber buildings and areas of hard-standing on the site, most notably the loo block.

3.6 Alkerton and Wroxton Heath are entirely missed: again demonstrating no local knowledge.

3.10 The report states that the site is “considered to remain in agricultural use when not used for MotoX events”. Wrong and untrue, as we have demonstrated on many previous occasions. The applicant may well “consider” this to be the case but, in so “considering”, is actually not reflecting the facts, as witnessed by numerous neighbouring residents who have testified – and will continue to do so – to this effect. Indeed, the applicant herself has stated, in her LDC application, that this is a permanent track and that this field is excluded from Single Farm Payments.

No mention is made of the adjoining AONB, nor the protected Ironstone Downs in which the site sits and which Cherwell District Council identify, in their own Local Plan, as being a valued tranquil area to be given special protection.

3.16 The footpath runs *directly* alongside the track - forget the 500m claim.

And, vitally, there is no mention (we assume another deliberate omission in briefing of the author and/or

inadequate research) of the new, OCC re-routed footpath to run, very worryingly, directly *alongside* the only access track to the circuit.

The applicant herself, as the landowner of this section of path, was consulted and approved this re-routing last year. This is a matter of public record. See Figure 1 below.

How will health and safety be managed for walkers and their families and dogs who are forced to walk right next to hundreds of thundering motorhomes throwing up dust and mud as they enter and exit the camping areas?

Unbelievably, this new footpath route will run precisely along the edge of the site's access track

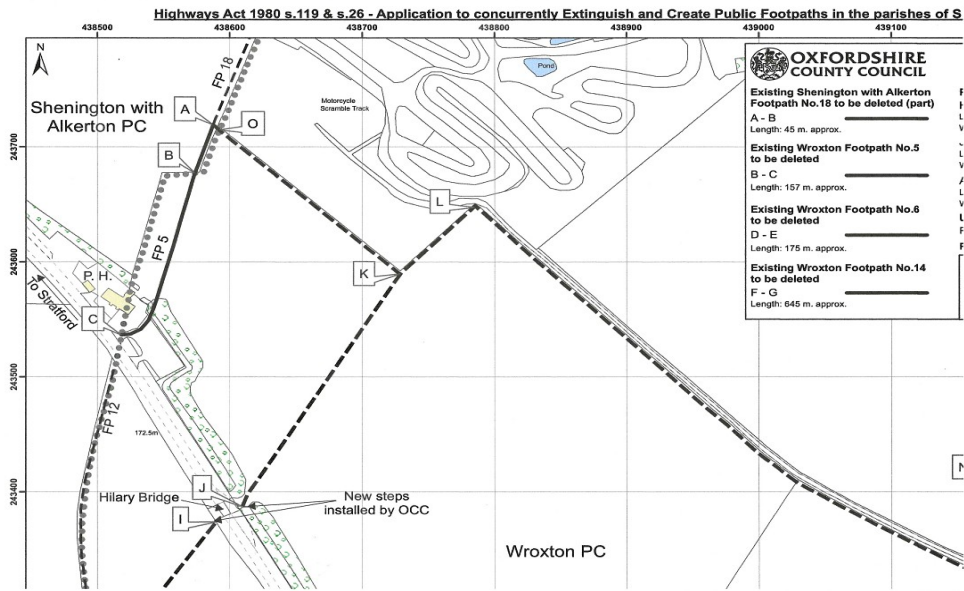
route – see picture below. What kind of visual amenity or impact is that? Not to mention the unpleasant effects for walkers of MX engines roaring on the track, which they tolerate already on race days, of course.

Also in this section, the poor residents of Wroxton Heath are, once again, ignored: ask Andrew Bock, of Stone Edge, if he can't see the track. Or The Indian Queen. Or the families who live and work at Hornton Grounds Farm, for whom the track is a major, large and unmissable blot on the landscape. They have all objected vehemently already.



In addition, parts of the track site can, in fact, be seen, clearly, from three roads – the A422, the Wroxton Heath residential road and the narrow, pot-holed lane leading into Hornton, on which the track's main access gate sits. See pictures below.

Figure 1:



The access track, where the public footpath has been re-routed, with MX vehicles queuing to get onto the site. This queue, typically, also tails back along the narrow lane itself, tailing back into Wroxton Heath and onto the main Stratford Road, the A422, which means villagers accessing Hornton, Wroxton Heath and Horley get stuck in the jam. Surely, this is a serious landscape and visual impact harm?



View from the A422 Stratford Road, 3pm 6 December 2020



View from the narrow lane leading into Hornton, just up from the track's main gate, 2021

3.17 “Residential properties within Wroxton would not be affected by the Motor X track on the site due to intervening buildings...”

Presumably these “intervening buildings” are people’s homes in Wroxton Heath, which appear, elsewhere, to have been forgotten. Residents in Wroxton Heath have made their objections known, notably current and previous homeowners at Stone Edge and the owners of Langley House. Also, proving the total inaccuracy of this statement, many residents in Wroxton have sent clear objections to the public Planning portal, outlining the harmful effects on their homes. Strangely, the author seems to be unaware of these “effects” by claiming that none of these residents are affected. Furthermore, Wroxton is a village, not a “town”.

3.27 “There are two small ponds used as reservoirs to be used to attenuate surface water run-off and catch sediment”.

In fact, there are *three*, created by the track maintenance team and expanded in recent years, and the use is primarily to extract water as can be seen by the pipes and tankers. See photographs above and already submitted. They are not “small” ponds and they are used to siphon off, into tractor-drawn bowsers, many gallons of water to spray onto the dirt track surface before racing.

There is no mention of Hornton Grounds and Manor Farm, again a serious omission.

3.29 The report suggests that the track has existed in its present form for 40 years. Incorrect. The whole point, as previously indisputably demonstrated, is that the track has been hugely expanded and re-engineered. It is like saying the wartime airfield at Heathrow is the same as today’s massive international airport. As evidenced elsewhere, the notion of sheep regularly using the field to graze is utter nonsense.

3.42 “The Queen of India”? There is no such place. It is also referred to on the very out-of-date maps used as The New Inn. For the record, the name of this establishment is The Indian Queen and has been for years.

4.2 *“However, on the race day events the racing teams use the southern and eastern sections of the field to park their camper vans for overnight accommodation. These vehicles are approx. 2.6m high and there is a restriction of numbers to approx. 250 at any one given time.”*

But, sadly, the applicant does not stick to the restriction on numbers and the camping area is often overspilled. Elsewhere, the applicant's reports mention up to 600 vehicles and, as was shown in the evidence to the LDC application, the vehicles are parked beyond the campsite boundaries. Nor do they observe the advised safety distancing for these vehicles.

As can be seen below, from aerial shots at two of the recent, now-routine, hire-out fixtures for big clubs and events, the applicant allows far more than 250 vehicles, including motorhomes, camper vans, trailers, cars and, in addition, of course, the MX bikes themselves.



4.5 The trees mentioned are deciduous, so having limited impact given the applicant has events throughout the year, eg in December 2020 and during their recently-introduced winter season. As the report itself states, these trees would take years to grow to any scale that might mitigate the landscape and visual impact damage done.