

Response of Middle Aston Parish Meeting to Planning Application 21/01123/F

1. This application concerns the replacement of seven existing buildings at Hatch End Industrial Estate, in Middle Aston Parish, with seven new buildings divided into 25 units. The application is for Class E use (22 units), Class B8 (2 units); one unit (the Hub) does not have a use class specified.
2. We oppose the redevelopment of the site on the basis proposed, for two key reasons:
 - a. The increase in road traffic, and risk to pedestrian and vehicle safety, which would result from the scale, intensification and nature of use of the redeveloped site;
 - b. The urbanisation of its location and its visual impact on the rural space separating the parishes of Steeple Aston and Middle Aston
3. **Road Traffic:** The assessment by Mode consultants of the impact on traffic is, in our opinion, seriously erroneous in several respects:
 - a. Travel Demand, Business Units: This has been calculated by factoring up the floor area currently occupied to the floor area post-development. It applies no weighting to the increase in number of business units; currently each of the seven buildings is a single business unit, whereas the developed site would comprise 25 units, which will significantly increase the potential number of employees on the site. Allowing a very reasonable 12m² per person, the site could accommodate, fully let, around 180 people. This means that both the on-site parking requirement and the estimation of traffic flows relating to employee arrivals and departures in this application are greatly understated, even if the travel mode share assumptions were reasonable, which they are not (see below)
 - b. Travel Demand, Nature of Business: Permitted business uses within Class E include retail sale of goods, sale of food or drink, indoor sport, recreation or fitness, provision of medical or health services, and creche/day nursery. Each of these activities involves arrivals and departures of customers, and some additionally require significant goods deliveries. **No account whatsoever has been taken of this – the travel demand in Mode's document relates almost exclusively to employee arrivals and departures at the start and end of the working day**
 - c. Mode Share: The document predicts that 18.6% of employee arrivals and departures will be by bus, train, bicycle or on foot. Consider the facts:
 - i. Bus: From the North, there are just three arrivals in Steeple Aston (0.5 miles from the site) in the period from 07.00 to 10.00; from the South, there are also three arrivals in the same period. At the end of the working day, in the period 16.00 to 18.30, there are likewise just three departures in each direction. There are no bus connections East or West at any time.
 - ii. Train: There are just two arrivals at Heyford (1.5 miles, 32 minute walk) between 07.00 and 10.00 from the North, and three from the South. At the end of the working day, in the period 16.00 to 18.30, there are two departures to the North, and just one to the South
 - iii. By bicycle or on foot: It might be reasonable to assume that employees would arrive by bicycle from no further than, say, 10km away. The pedestrian range is limited to Middle Aston and Steeple Aston. Both factors greatly limit the number of potential users of these modes. Given the lack of cycleways and footways, and the increase in vehicle traffic, the significant risk to personal safety will be a strong deterrent to their use.
 - iv. Items i to iii demonstrate, in our view, that the level of non-car modes of transport used by employees will be very much lower than assumed
 - v. **It is a reasonable assumption that all visits by customers and suppliers will be by car, van or truck. No cognisance of this has been included in the traffic estimates provided. It would not be unreasonable to assume that such visits could outweigh the number of employee arrivals and departures by a factor of three, depending on the split of actual uses of the units within the Class E designation**
 - d. On-site parking: 79 car parking spaces are proposed. If only 81.4% (presumed, but unlikely) of 180 employees travel by car in single occupancy, that would require 146 spaces. The employees, suppliers and customers unable to find a parking space will resort to parking on the already narrow road, creating a major safety hazard for children and parents, and serious congestion for through traffic

- e. The local road network: The roads that run through Middle Aston are not well suited to the likely significantly increased levels of traffic, either from goods vehicles or increased commuting and customer journeys. The road into the village from the A4260 to the west is narrow, designated as unsuitable for HGVs (as noted at paragraph 5.2.6 of the Construction Traffic Management Plan) and has several pinch points. Middle Aston Lane, the road entering the village from the north, is a single track lane with high verges and few passing places. The road between Middle Aston and Steeple Aston has sharp bends and one blind summit, and beyond the village boundaries is subject only to the national speed limit (60mph). There are no cycleways, footways or streetlighting in our village
 - f. Our concerns therefore relate to this proposal's potential impact upon the safety of pedestrians, and most particularly, our children. We consider that this proposal would have an unacceptable impact on road safety, noise and disturbance, in conflict with Policy PC1 of the Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan and paragraph 109 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
 - g. The proximity of Dr Radcliffe's Primary School: As noted, the school is 310 metres from the site. Oxfordshire County Council has recently launched a School Streets initiative. The website states that "the aim of the programme is to create a safe, welcoming and attractive environment where children, parents and teachers can walk, cycle, scoot or park and walk to school with less risk of air pollution and traffic congestion". The increase in traffic that this development will cause is in direct opposition to those laudable objectives. Traffic congestion close to Dr Radcliffe's at the start and end of the school day is already a matter of great concern – this will make it very much worse and extremely hazardous
 - h. **In summary, the proposed development will, in our view, create a substantial and totally unacceptable increase in vehicle traffic on the inadequate local highway network in and between Middle Aston and Steeple Aston, greatly threatening the safety and welfare of pedestrians, cyclists and other road users**
4. **Urbanisation:** The Hatch End site currently has a strong rural feel, due to its agricultural origins. We would not want any development to detract from that character, or create a ribbon of continuity between Middle Aston and Steeple Aston. . Appendix K of the Neighbourhood Plan includes a character assessment of Middle Aston which lists among its key features "the rural approaches to the settlement". The saved policy C15 of the Cherwell Local Plan 1996 seeks to prevent coalescence of settlements. Our particular concerns are: a) that the boundary of the site (marked in red on the design and access statement) for which permission is requested, extends far beyond the current built footprint, leaving open the possibility of future building on green fields, expanding a modest industrial estate into one totally out of keeping with its rural location; b) that all the on-site parking is proposed to be on its eastern boundary, plainly visible from Fir Lane; we feel it would be more appropriate for this area to be a green space, as it is now, as this would reflect the requirements of Policies ESD13 of the Local Plan and PD5 of the Neighbourhood Plan, that proposals should be consistent with the local landscape character; and c) that the likelihood of parking overspill on to the road will fill the green rural space that separates the two settlements
 5. **Permitted Use:** We would request that Cherwell District Council give close consideration to excluding permitted uses of the units beyond those in the scope of the old classes B1, B2 and B8. As demonstrated by our comments, we believe that the breadth of Class E would have a seriously deleterious effect on the site, turning it from a modest industrial estate to a retail/leisure/public service centre, greatly increasing traffic volumes and seriously threatening the safety of pedestrians and other road users. We are also aware of the forthcoming new Class MA permitted development right which would permit change of use from Class E to C3 residential use subject to the satisfaction of prior approval requirements. Given the future mixed industrial use of the site (Class E and B8) and issues described above in terms of poor access for non-car modes of travel, we consider the site to be unsuitable for residential use
 6. **Mitigation:** If, despite the objections raised, this proposal is allowed to proceed, we think it essential that mitigating measures are implemented and enforced as conditions of approval, to include:
 - i. Removal of Class MA permitted development rights from the Class E buildings
 - ii. Limitation of the area to be developed to the current built footprint
 - iii. Absolute prohibition of all construction vehicle movements between 08.30 and 09.30, and between 14.45 and 16.00, on Mondays to Fridays in school term time

- iv.** signage at the northern end of Middle Aston Lane (Somerton Road junction) prohibiting all construction traffic
- v.** similarly, signage at the Middle Aston exit from A4260 prohibiting all construction traffic in addition to the existing advisory notice on HGV unsuitability