

# Comment for planning application 21/01224/OUT

<b>Application Number</b>	21/01224/OUT
<b>Location</b>	Land at former RAF Bicester Bicester Oxfordshire OX26 5HA
<b>Proposal</b>	Outline planning application for Automotive Experience Quarter comprising Commercial, Business and Services uses (Class E), Light Industrial (Class B2), Local Community and Learning Uses (Class F) and vehicle circuits (Sui Generis) with all matters reserved aside from that of access).
<b>Case Officer</b>	Rebekah Morgan
<b>Organisation Name</b>	
<b>Name</b>	Professor Robert A. Spicer
<b>Address</b>	Orchard Cottage, Mill Road, Stratton Audley, Bicester, OX27 9BJ
<b>Type of Comment</b>	Objection
<b>Type</b>	neighbour
<b>Comments</b>	<p>I am a resident of Stratton Audley, and I am writing to lodge an objection to the application submitted by Bicester Motion 21/01224/OUT. Stratton Audley is a designated conservation area valued for its tranquillity. The village is rural in character with deep historical roots. It lacks street lighting and hosts a rich local wildlife that includes many bird species and bats. For most of my 21 years in the village I have experienced little noise and what we do have is currently intermittent apart from light road traffic. This quiet environment is highly valued by me, my neighbours and the livestock (primarily horses) who share this special place. However, in recent years there has been an increase almost exclusively associated with activities at Bicester Motion. This includes increased through traffic since they began operations, road testing of 'antique' vehicles that do not conform to modern pollution standards (based on my own observations this often involves driving through the village in pairs - one camera car and the car being filmed), antique vehicles driving to and from events at Bicester Motion, and increase in the frequency of low flying aircraft. Previously most flight operations have been gliders with their tug planes, but in the last few years there has been an unwelcome increase in very noisy high performance 'aerobats', antique planes such as Tiger Moths and even what sound like small jet engines. The current proposal you have before you from Bicester Motion can only increase further such activity and degrade the environment, not just of Stratton Audley but all those living near the airfield in Bicester. Based on projected visitor numbers there will be increased noise, light and particulates pollution. I also fear that the increased traffic on the site itself (cars and potentially off-road vehicles/karts as well as increased aircraft movements) will eventually degrade the grass field and lead to downstream planning applications to further change the character of this historic site by, for example, installing all weather runways. The impact of increased 'traffic' on the grassland is not addressed specifically by the Ecology Solutions report, which makes little mention of impact in relation to the anticipated visitor numbers. Also, please note that when the airfield was originally operational it was not surrounded by Bicester housing, as some of the old photographs in the application show. Now, when it is adjacent to recent housing developments, is not the time to increase operations with its associated pollution load. The proposal documents make much of the fact that the site is an exceptionally good example of a wartime grass airfield, and yet the proposal seeks to destroy the very heritage that it celebrates. Putting in demonstration driving, 4 x 4 and karting tracks around, and in some instances through, special grassland community that has been maintained for many decades by a regular cutting regime and limited impact use will introduce levels of mechanical and chemical pollution that will change/destroy the ecology of the area. These driving tracks represent a substantial alteration of use. If lighting is installed this will impact the dark night skies that are so special to the village and numerous studies have shown that light pollution interferes with the wellbeing of both humans and wildlife. Lighting was a not a feature of the wartime airfield, quite the opposite. In principle there is nothing in the proposal that prevents it being used both day and night for 'driving experiences'. In this respect the 4x4 and karting proposals are particularly worrisome and karts usually have noisy exhausts. This noise is part of the 'experience'. We can already hear vehicles being driven on the airfield and find it intrusive and stressful. If the Covid pandemic has taught us anything it is to value rural tranquillity. Inevitably at some stage night driving and karting will be too attractive to ignore for the operators and their clientele. The approval of the planning proposal will run counter to the future development of a greener UK, particularly as Bicester Motion mostly celebrates technologies based around the combustion engine; technologies that are being phased out because they are so environmentally damaging.</p>

Despite the ambiguous 'greenwash' that runs through the proposal, this proposal seeks to increase and perpetuate fossil fuel pollution at a time when we need to eliminate it. The proposed new operations on the site can only impact negatively on the wildlife that is present on the airfield and in the surrounding regions such as Stratton Audley. The Ecology Solutions report confines itself to within the boundaries of the airfield and makes only limited reference to designated conservation sites external to it. It notes that these other areas are separated from the airfield by roads and housing developments. This is not the case in respect of Stratton Audley where we do have a number of bat roosts, but the impact on the village was not part of the Ecology Solutions report. This omission renders the report inadequate for assessing the full impact of the planning application. Of course, wildlife foraging does not respect human boundaries except for infrastructure that fragments habitats such as busy roads. No limitations exist between the airfield and the village and both are connected by green space. Activities on the airfield therefore impact directly on biodiversity within the surrounding areas, including Stratton Audley. The Ecology Solutions report also seems to imply that low biodiversity in some habitats is a negative quality and thus of no consequence. As someone who publishes on Asian biodiversity I can say with some authority that some habitats are by their nature, species-limited, but that is part of their special value which is defined by the particular species present, not by the numbers of species. The Ecology Solutions report seems predisposed to favour the applicants. Much is made of the views (vistas) relating to the airfield and there are proposals to clear hedges and wild growth to improve those. However, these are now valuable wildlife habitats and should be viewed as such. Recent clearing of some brush during the bird nesting season shows a complete disregard for wildlife by Bicester Motion. The 'views' argument seems to be just an excuse for site clearance. I would like to see the outline planning permission rejected because of the range of negative environmental impacts that it will generate. However, if it is approved it needs to come with binding conditions, which would include no increase in overall noise levels and durations, operations limited designated hours (e.g. between 9.00 to 17.00), where driving days amount to no more than 100 days per year, no additional lighting and no night time vehicle movements of any sort on the airfield or driving tracks. This conditions would afford residents of Stratton Audley and the local wildlife some 'breathing space'. I am sure that with a bit of thought Bicester Motion can come up with some innovative ways of making money that are less environmentally damaging.

**Received Date**

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**Attachments**