

CAVERSFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Mrs Jane Olds, Parish Clerk

13 Oak Close, BICESTER, Oxfordshire OX26 3XD

01869 247171 clerk@caversfieldpc.org.uk www.caversfieldpc.org.uk

17 June 2021

Caversfield Parish Council has considered Bicester Motion's planning application reference 21/01224/OUT for Land at former RAF Bicester, OX26 5HA with the proposal "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".

The Parish Council objects to the proposals on the following grounds:

1. Loss of the protected airfield within a conservation area
2. Lack of a defined, detailed, Master Plan
3. Change of use
4. Noise nuisance to nearby neighbours
5. Traffic impact
6. Disturbance to the quarry and associated wildlife
7. Potential light and air pollution

1. Loss of the protected airfield within a Conservation Area

The Parish Council welcomed the announcement of the Conservation Area designation in 2008. It was understood that this covered and protected, not only the (at that point "At Risk") historic buildings, but also the historic grass flying field.

When the applicants purchased the site in 2013, the Council believed it was clear that the omnidirectional grass flying field was included in the Conservation Area. To see the current proposals is hugely disappointing.

The Parish Council believes that the continuance of flying should be the primary function of such a historic airfield and fully supports and endorses Historic England's strong objection to the proposals.

The views across the historic flying field, from many angles (including from above), will be hugely harmed by the imposition of the proposed motor circuit tracks into the flying field.

2. Lack of a defined, detailed, Master Plan

While a Master Plan is referred to in some of the supporting documents, the Parish Council has noted that there still does not appear to be a formal Master Plan covering the entire site – simply a map.

It is not possible to make informed consideration of the current plans without a greater understanding what is likely to be put forward in the future.

3. Change of use

The Parish Council presumes that the significant change of use which the application outlines will require additional permissions. The use and noise emanating from cars on an airfield is very different from aircraft noise.

4. Noise nuisance to nearby neighbours

Contrary to Stratton Audley's assertion, Caversfield is actually the closest rural village to the airfield, and particularly to the areas which this application relates.

This application is likely to have a detrimental impact on the village in terms of both noise and traffic impact.

The Parish Council is concerned about the noise impact from this three-circuit proposal. The current experience of 'small' events and regular vehicle testing around the present circuit has already had an impact on the villagers living closest to the airfield (particularly on Turnpike Road, Manzel Road and the residents at the eastern end of Thompson Drive). With the current requirement for many staff to work from home and the future likelihood of this continuing to some extent, it is known that some villagers have felt they had to move because the noise level was already too intrusive (for instance there have been days when it has been impossible for villagers to hold virtual meetings because of the current volumes).

5. Traffic impact

The Parish Council is very concerned about the local highway infrastructure. The proposals will have the highest impact on the Buckingham Road but the impact on the volume of traffic entering and exiting the site, particularly on event days, has a huge bearing on both Caversfield, the other surrounding villages and the town of Bicester.

While the number of vehicle movements appear to have been calculated on 'normal' days, there does not appear to be a traffic management strategy for one-off or larger-scale events included in either the Framework Travel Plan or the Transport Assessment.

These larger scale events already cause disruption to the village.

To mitigate the impact of the traffic movements and car parking on the village, the Council requests that additional clauses in the Travel Plan are included to prohibit people (both customers and staff) using the Experience Quarter or other areas of the Bicester Heritage / Motion site parking on the roads around Caversfield. It is requested that if the Committee is minded to approve the application, provision and funding via S106 should be agreed to pay for a traffic management scheme within the village (including, but not limited to, double yellow lines – with siting to be agreed) and to agree that during events, the Traffic Management Plan must include stopping visitors impeding the day-to-day lives of the villagers.

The proposed uncontrolled right filter on the Buckingham Road (A4421) to access the site from the south has caused concerns about safety; furthermore, it does not appear to make any mitigation on the impact of the residents of Thompson Drive attempting to leave that road. The Parish Council believes that there should be a permanent traffic management proposal, including traffic lights and pedestrian access, for this entrance.

Section 3.4 of the Framework Travel Plan mentions that the pavement on the western side of the Buckingham Road is 2.5m wide. While the area may be that wide in some limited places, the actual path is not, and while it is suitable for the village's current needs it would not be suitable for additional traffic. If this pavement were used, it would need a great deal of upgrading together with a fully controlled crossing near the new entrance to enable pedestrians and cyclists to cross the 50mph road.

It is understood that parishes to the north of the airfield, particularly Stratton Audley, would welcome a safe cycle route towards Bicester along the curtilage of the airfield so that it avoids cyclists having to use the busy A4421 roadway. A shared pedestrian / cycle way all along the east side of the Buckingham Road would be of great benefit and would encourage more sustainable methods of access to the site.

Following responses to previous applications, the Parish Council requests, yet again, that the speed limit on the A4421 be reduced to 40 from the Stratton Audley turn to the roundabout.

6. Disturbance to the quarry and associated wildlife

The Council joins Stratton Audley Parish's concerns about the disturbance to the wildlife at the quarry. The impacts on the environment should be considered in much greater detail.

7. Potential light and air pollution

The village of Caversfield is, essentially, a dark place apart from a small amount of street lighting installed by the MoD. Light pollution should be avoided at all costs and the Parish Council, therefore, requests that modern techniques of movement sensors in the external lighting will ensure that lights are only used when needed.

Concern was also raised about the environmental suitability of running old, fossil fuel powered vehicles around the circuits and the impact that this will contribute to the environment and air pollution in the village.

Additionally, the Parish Council was concerned that much of the Experience Quarter would effectively become a series of car show rooms and would be grateful for clarification on how this would differ from an out-of-town car show room.

While the Parish Council acknowledges that the site must be economically viable, it should not be to the permanent loss of the historic nature of the setting, particularly as it was known at the time of purchase what the constraints were.

The Parish Council is in favour of restoration of the airfield, but not to its detriment.

The Parish Council trusts that this is of help to the Planning Committee.