

Comment for planning application 21/01224/OUT

Application Number	<input type="text" value="21/01224/OUT"/>
Location	<input type="text" value="Land at former RAF Bicester Bicester Oxfordshire OX26 5HA"/>
Proposal	<input type="text" value="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)."/>
Case Officer	<input type="text" value="Rebekah Morgan"/>
Organisation Name	<input type="text" value=""/>
Name	<input type="text" value="Paul Rushworth"/>
Address	<input type="text" value="2 The Bradburys, Stratton Audley, Bicester, OX27 9AS"/>
Type of Comment	<input type="text" value="Objection"/>
Type	<input type="text" value="neighbour"/>
Comments	<input type="text" value="see attached"/>
Received Date	<input type="text" value="19/11/2021 11:44:42"/>
Attachments	The following files have been uploaded: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Objection v1.pdf

Objection – Planning application 21/01224/OUT

My family and I are residents of Stratton Audley and have been living here for over 10 years. Stratton Audley is within a conservation area and is a small village just under 1km from the North East of Bicester Heritage/Motion across open fields. The village has a number of listed buildings, a church and a site of historical importance - there are no street lights in the village. Launton Road (where I live) has no pavements between The Church and the village boundary plus there is a tight 90 degree corner which is single file traffic that is clearly unsuitable for high traffic levels.

I write to object to the planning application 21/01224/OUT for the following reasons:-

Traffic

The levels of traffic appears to have increased considerably in the village over the last 5 years and it's reasonable to assume that it is likely to increase further if approval is given for this development (400,000 visitors per annum). With no pavements or street lighting and only single file traffic at the bend, the walk along Launton Road from our house to the Church is perilous as it is. I have noted numerous vehicles in the village driving around which I can only imagine must be linked to Bicester Motion including a dozen or so old Porsche 911s all in convoy and many vintage cars (which are often loud and have strong exhaust fumes) presumably on parade laps or test drives through the village? Launton Road and Stratton Audley is just not suitable for increased traffic. The large events so far have caused large queues of traffic at the temporary traffic lights set up for their bigger events on the already very busy A41 and this will only increase significantly with the proposed development plans as the site expands and events become more and more frequent. The A41 is a busy and dangerous road with two junctions to Stratton Audley both of which are accident black spots.

Light Pollution

With no street lighting, Stratton Audley is home to a great deal of wildlife including owls and bats for example which we see and hear constantly. The darkened skies are ideal for them and for those of us who use the darkened sky for star gazing etc. No mention is made of any lighting for the race tracks and drift circuit proposed although it is clearly inevitable that there will be light pollution if approval is given to the residential lodges surrounding the lakes on the old quarry site and I would ask that further research and testing is carried out to assess the impact of the potential light pollution on Stratton Audley and full light pollution mitigation plans in place to minimise light bleed towards Stratton Audley before a final decision is made. I have a darkened and relatively uninterrupted view across the fields to the Northern most perimeter of the proposed site.

Noise

I put in a formal complaint both to Bicester Heritage/Motion and to Cherwell District Council Environmental protection about the unacceptable and intrusive noise from racing cars at Bicester Motion using the current test track specifically on the morning of 20th October 2021. The testing of Race cars (Touring cars) on full power to the rev limits and constantly backfiring was highly intrusive and it was difficult to actually hold a conversation in our house and garden. The sound measuring device at Bicester Motion was apparently 200 meters away from the vehicles at the time and, following a meeting with Bicester Motion afterwards I was advised that it would indicate the sound that day was close to 130Db which is clearly an unacceptable level and yet was allowed to continue

unchallenged that day. It does not fill me with confidence that Bicester Motion will actively police noise limits effectively and efficiently (based on my experience thus far) and it will end up being left to the residents to complain as I had to do on this occasion, only to be told initially that 'we've done this for 5 years and I'm surprised you haven't heard it before'.

Our property backs onto open fields to Bicester Heritage/Motion and the prevailing wind from the South West is directly from the site across the open fields to our house. A backfire has a sound of approx 140dB and yet their noise modelling indicates there will be no backfires and indeed no increase in apparent noise with hugely lower dB modelling – this is totally at odds with what I have experienced in reality from their existing track. 130 Db from the racing cars is double the perceived noise of a thunder clap and we all know how far these can be heard – yet the noise modelling which they commissioned suggests hugely lower numbers to conclude that the noise will be barely audible.

I note there are no plans whatsoever to actually physically mitigate noise from the proposed race tracks and low friction drift circuit with noise reducing barriers of any kind (ie earth banks, Sound moderating barriers, or even for planting of dense trees etc) – only day to day management of the vehicles and black flagging offenders (which is reactive rather than proactive so we have to endure the noise of the offending vehicles in the interim). I am concerned that the sound of racing cars 7 days a week is likely to be highly detrimental to our quality of life and why we moved to a village in the first place for the peace and the beautiful countryside.

The tests carried out by BH/BM for the planning application had sound measured predominantly on the western boundary - **not** in the direction of the prevailing wind ie on the North East side and not in the wind direction that day (which was SW as is usual) and using their own selection of unidentified cars . Based on my experience with hearing the noise from the racing cars on their existing test track (which is a lot further away than the proposed race tracks and drift circuit), I am not convinced by their own commissioned report that there will be no perceived increase in noise - it is likely (based on actual past experience) to be highly intrusive.

Low friction/drift circuit

The plans include a proposal for a low friction race circuit – this more commonly known as a drift circuit. The cars will perform drift manoeuvres with wheel spin and the ensuing burning of the back tyres and sliding the car sideways. Bovington airfield for example had temporary planning for a low friction drift track and had over 650 complaints ranging from tyre squealing, to burning rubber smells and back firing & revving engines.

The proposed location of this drift circuit is on the northern side of the site and approx. 0.75 miles away from Stratton Audley and is likely to heavily impact the village with noises and smells being carried on the prevailing SW wind directly from the race tracks across the open fields to Stratton Audley. I am not aware of any noise modelling for the drift track or how noise, smoke and burning smells will be actively monitored and policed from the drift track itself. Is this really appropriate in an area so close to residential properties? There is a perfectly good drift circuit with race track at Silverstone just up the road.

Noise summary

I would suggest further and more extensive and realistic testing is carried out to better understand the real life impact of noise (both on the main racing circuits and the drift track) and how it will negatively affect the residential areas and villages surrounding the site. A better cross section of cars (including those noisy Touring cars) would be a fairer way of assessing the impact and with the noise measured towards the wind (rather than away). This would at least give a better and more realistic indication of the likely impact of actual noise on the local community.

There are at least three elderly care homes surrounding the site, 2 villages and many residential properties and I would question whether race tracks are actually warranted in this location when Silverstone for example is only a short drive away. It's a grass airfield and was home to Bicester gilding club until recently and we should be preserving the heritage and historical importance of this grass airfield- I do agree redevelopment is needed, but in a way that doesn't have such a detrimental impact on the substantial local residential community.

Grasslands

There is an unique historical value of this airfield. As reported by Historic England, it is not only its listed buildings but as or more importantly, the open grass flying field both inside and outside the perimeter track. Areas of the grass aerodrome comprise calcareous grassland which carries statutory obligations under the NERC Act section 40-41 and is very rare in this part of Oxfordshire. Calcareous grassland is a priority habitat for restoration as part of the two National Character Areas around Bicester: Upper Thames Clay Vale and Cotswolds.

The site was always specifically a pristine grass aerodrome without runways, allowing planes to take off and land in any wind direction with the only hard surface being the perimeter track. Reducing the runways to only two fixed directional runways to allow the grass to be dug up for tarmacking three race tracks/drift track seems to be totally at odds with the ecological and historical importance of the open grass flying field.

Aircraft

The Advantage of the historic grass airfield is the ability to land and take off in any direction to suit the wind. Creating just two runways to allow the grass area to be replaced with race tracks/drift track, will mean that with the prevailing SW wind, aircraft will all line up for final approach of the runway over Stratton Audley to land into the prevailing wind. There has been a very significant rise in the number of aircraft flying over the village in the last 5 years and complaints made by the villagers about illegal manoeuvres and low level aircraft over the houses. I have witnessed this myself first hand on numerous occasions. There needs to be better policing of the air traffic and better briefing of visiting pilots so they don't fly over the village at low level as has been reported.. Clearly if approval is given for this development then aircraft traffic will increase and it needs to be much better managed in a more professional and proactive way to minimise the impact and the safety of the surrounding community – this just hasn't been happening from my observations over the last 5 years and it doesn't bode well as this site develops and air traffic inevitably increases.

Conclusion

Whilst I totally agree that the site should be developed for the benefit of the local economy and community, I have significant concerns about the proposed planning of the race tracks and drift circuit and its appropriateness with the surrounding residential areas. The increase in traffic, the noise, light and air pollution (as well as smells from fumes and burning rubber) will all be highly detrimental to the local communities. One has to question really whether an historic grass airfield should really be dug up and turned into race tracks and a drift track in such close proximity to Bicester, Caversfield, Launton and Stratton Audley and how it is likely to negatively impact such a large number of residential properties – why build more race tracks when Silverstone offers the same facilities and it is just up the road. Aren't we trying to minimise our impact on the environment and reduce pollution and our dependency on polluting fossil fuels? The proposed planning application will clearly have the reverse effect.

It will have a very detrimental effect on the local economy if the areas surrounding the planned proposal are all blighted as a direct result of this proposal.