



Reference Planning application 21/01630/OUT

Elmsbrook Community Organisation (ECO) does not directly oppose the planned development adjacent to the Elmsbrook Exemplar site, however we have concerns over certain elements of the proposals including access, density, movement of traffic, suitable sustainable travel provision, visitor parking and drainage.

We have concerns regarding the 130 homes planned for the eastern parcel of land, primarily that this is too many for the space and will lead to the homes feeling crowded. Phase 1 of the exemplar has a feeling of open space in the layout of the housing and we feel this feeling of open space should be continued across the development.

The entrance/exit for these homes is through a residential parking area for a number of homes on Charlotte Avenue and having potentially 260+ traffic movements per day through this small area could make the allocated parking spaces for these residents dangerous, if not completely unusable.

It is also my understanding that this is the proposed route for construction traffic from the eastern parcel of land to the west, this will also cause major disruptions to those residents being able to safely use these spaces and the two electric car charging spaces. An alternative proposal would be to utilise the already existing farm track and gateways that exist from the eastern to western parcels.

We support the plan for construction traffic to enter the site via the temporary access point directly from the B4100 into the eastern site rather than using the existing estate roads. The proximity of existing houses to the road along Charlotte Avenue (less than 2 metres) would mean major disruption would be caused to residents for an extended period of time.

We also have concerns regarding the 530 homes using Charlotte Avenue and Braeburn Avenue as access. We do not believe that the existing roads will be able to cope with the potential 1000+ additional traffic movements per day. We are already seeing queues form at peak times of the day to exit the site and believe the addition of the traffic lights at the roundabout at the bottom of the B4100 and at the entrance to Charlotte Avenue will make exiting the estate at peak times extremely difficult.

Traffic movements in and out of the estate have been grossly underestimated and have been developed using outdated data, this underestimation will mean that the additional traffic flows around the estate will have a severe impact on the existing estate roads.

Data has been provided by Elmsbrook Traffic and Parking Group which outlines major areas of concern across the existing development, in particular Gaglebrook Primary School and the children's play park on Braeburn Avenue. ECO fully supports the findings outlined by the group and request that the Transport assessment is redone using the most up to date data.

Bicester Bike User Group (BUG) has submitted a consultation response which outlines how the current plans would fall short of attaining the policy goal of a 200% increase in cycling and a 50% increase in walking which was committed to in the Oxfordshire County Council Local Walking and Cycling plan for Bicester 2020.

ECO fully supports all points raised by Bicester BUG and requests that dedicated cycle lanes/safe cycle pathways be introduced across the entire NW Bicester development to encourage active travel and help residents achieve the aims of the EcoBicester Planning Policy Standards – namely to enable at least 50% of trips to be made by non-car means.

In order to help alleviate the severe impact the additional traffic will cause, an additional access point into the estate should be considered. Preferably one that does not exit directly onto the B4100. There is an existing farm exit from the Western Parcel of land onto the Bainton Road, this should be considered as an additional access point into the development.

The Bus Gate would also need to be enforced to prevent vehicles from using it as a rat run through from Charlotte Avenue to Braeburn Avenue. Vehicles, especially delivery vans, have been seen to use this shortcut at speed which will have a negative impact on residents using the access roads situated at either end of the Bus Gate.

Consideration should also be given to the potential impact future developments could have on the volume of traffic using the B4100 and resident's ability to turn right out of the development. In particular the impact on usage from the Bicester Motion expansion plans, the Great Wolf Resort at Chesterton, the Rail Freight Depot at Ardley.

Visitor parking needs to be sufficient for residents to be able to enjoy family life while still keeping to the ECO principles of the development. All visitor spaces should include an electric vehicle charging point to ensure the estate is future proofed and in line with encouraging sustainable transport. There should also be provision for electric bike charging and secure visitor cycle parking.

The exemplar phase has shown that parking provision for visitors is inadequate leading to on road parking becoming the norm and causing issues for accessibility. Parking enforcement has had to be introduced to ensure the spine road is passable and the bus can move freely across the development. This has had a knock on

impact to the side roads within the estate meaning some routes have been made difficult to access, especially for bike and wheelchair users. Adequate visitor parking provision would stop this practice being repeated,

The lack of visitor parking has been exacerbated by the majority of allocated parking spaces being 'stacked'. This has meant that it is difficult for residents to allow others to utilise 'spare' spaces for visitors as cars would then become blocked.

Allocated parking spaces should be built side by side to allow more flexibility amongst allocated parking. All parking spaces should be 'Charge point ready' allowing people to install electric car charging points into every space without the need for cables to lay across pavements.

If properties include garages these should not be included as an allocated parking space as this limits the possibility of space sharing between residents, if they are included they need to be big enough to house larger vehicles and a charging point. Some estate size vehicles on the exemplar phase do not fit inside the garages.

The nearby village of Bucknell is in the school catchment area for Gaglebrook Primary School, however there is currently no safe walking or cycling route from the village to the school. A safe cycle path should be provided from the existing public right of way that exists across part of the western site to enable better connectivity to the school. This would also enable older children in Bucknell to safely access wider Bicester and secondary schools safely by bike or by walking.

There is no mention of a Contribution to Elmsbrook Bus service while the site is under development. A contribution to the service should be considered so that the provision of the service can be extended to provide a Sunday service making the bus an even greater alternative mode of sustainable transport.

There is currently no mention of whether the 530 properties will be connected to the District Heating network and at a prior meeting with Firethorn it was mentioned that the developers were not keen on using the network and favoured a different source of heating to the gas currently used by the existing plant.

The district heating network has been designed to supply up to 1200 homes and currently supplies 270 homes. If the 530 homes do not connect to the network then it will never be fully optimised and the full benefits of the system will not be realised. If a more affective and environmentally friendly system is being considered this should be developed in conjunction with the existing network so that the full benefits can be made available to all.

The proposed walking routes from the eastern development into Wintergreen Fields seem to exit onto a roadway close to a blind bend used by vehicles to access allocated parking. These access points should be reconsidered for the purposes of safety.

Firethorn have taken steps to preserve views over to St Lawrences Church located in Caversfield, however there is currently no safe crossing point from the development to the church, which is currently used by a number of Elmsbrook residents. Parking is currently provided, very generously, by Home Farm, however

this goes against the principles of sustainable travel as there is no safe walking route so residents have little choice but to take the car for what is a very short journey. Part of the ethos of the ECO town is to reduce car movements and encourage active travel, however access to a local amenity is currently unsafe.

Provision of a crossing point from the development to the church would enable residents to reduce traffic movements and choose more sustainable modes of travel such as walking or cycling.