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22nd November 2021

RESPONSE TO PLANNING APPLICATIONS: 21/03266/F, 21/03267/OUT and 21/03268/OUT

OS PARCEL 2636 NW OF BAYNARDS HOUSE, ARDLEY, AND OS PARCEL 0006 SOUTH EAST OF BAYNARDS HOUSE, ADJOINING A43 BAYNARDS GREEN

OUTLINE PLANNING PERMISSION (ALL MATTERS RESERVED EXCEPT FOR ACCESS) FOR THE ERECTION OF BUILDINGS COMPRISING LOGISTICS (USE CLASS B8) AND ANCILLARY OFFICE (USE CLASS E(G)(I)) FLOORSPACE AND ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE; CONSTRUCTION OF NEW SITE ACCESS FROM THE B4100; CREATION OF INTERNAL ROADS AND ACCESS ROUTES; AND HARD AND SOFT LANDSCAPING

Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan Forum wishes to **OBJECT** to these applications.

Application 21/03268/OUT for the western of the two sites is wholly within the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) designated area, while 21/03267/OUT for the eastern site is immediately adjacent to the NP area.

Our reasons for objecting are as follows:

1. MCNP Policy PC1: Local Employment deals with the conditions under which establishment of new **small businesses** would be supported. This wording was deliberately chosen to exclude support for large-scale business development, such as that proposed in these applications. However, it is useful to consider the criteria that MCNP Policy PC1 requires to be fulfilled for support of small business development, namely:

a) provide diverse employment opportunities for people living in the neighbourhood area or otherwise benefit the local economy, or enhance agricultural production.

b) do not have an adverse effect on the surrounding built, natural or historic environment that is not clearly outweighed by the economic benefits of the development.

c) are unlikely to generate a volume of goods traffic that would have a significantly harmful effect on road safety or congestion or cause unacceptable noise and disturbance for local residents or to the rural environment and would not adversely affect on-street residential parking.

Commentary: It is not clear from information provided by the applicants that the employment opportunities created by the development will be of a diverse nature, or that they will be opportunities for people living in the NP area. The loss of agricultural land will do the opposite of enhancing agricultural production. The scale of the proposed warehousing development, with ridge heights of 24m., will certainly have an adverse effect on the surrounding environment. It is also evident, although insufficient detail has been provided, that the volume of goods traffic will have a harmful effect and cause noise and disturbance to the residents and the environment. Therefore, even if this proposal were a small-scale business, it would not have met the criteria for support by policy PC1. It follows that the intent of the policy certainly does not allow for support to a large-scale development that equally does not meet the criteria.

MCNP Forum fully supports the requests submitted by Highways England and by Oxfordshire County Council for the applicants to carry out much more detailed analysis of potential traffic impacts of the scheme.

2. MCNP Policy PD4: Protection of Important Views and Vistas. This policy states, inter alia, that: *“The development should not harm the Conservation Area and its setting, other heritage assets, or historic street and village views and longer distance vistas.”*

Commentary: there are two Conservation Areas within the MCNP designated area that are close to the application sites – namely Fritwell, and Ardley with Fewcott. The applicants have provided ES Vol II Part 26, which contains a plan showing the Zone of Theoretical Visibility of the proposed development, assuming that warehouse ridge heights are 24m. Both the Conservation Areas are entirely within this zone, and therefore – theoretically – the development could cause harm to the setting of the Conservation Areas. The applicants should be required by CDC to carry out detailed analysis of views and vistas in order to ascertain the extent of visibility affecting these Conservation Areas. Only then is it possible to determine whether the requirements of Policy PD4 can be met.

3. MCNP Policy PD6: Control of Light Pollution. There is serious concern that the scale and height of the proposed development will make it unable to meet the criteria - in particular c) and e) - of this policy:

c) proposals should not have a significant adverse impact on the character of a village and its setting or of the wider countryside;

e) particular care should be taken to avoid light pollution where the development is in a remote rural location, or where it might adversely affect the setting of the Oxford Canal.

4. Previously rejected Appeal for a similar development on an adjacent site (18/00672/OUT).

A much smaller but otherwise similar application adjacent to the present sites was refused by CDC in 2018 and the Appeal dismissed in 2019. The Inspector’s conclusion includes the following:

“16. in the absence of adequate evidence, the location of the site close to the strategic highway network is insufficient to justify the location of the proposal.

17. On the evidence before me, the proposal would be sited in an inappropriate location. As such the scheme would conflict with Policies SLE1 and ESD1 of the Local Plan....”.

Commentary: we consider that the same conclusions can be drawn regarding development on these adjacent sites, while the current Local Plan 2031 remains in force.

5. Prematurity. We consider that unless and until these sites are identified in the forthcoming Cherwell Local Plan 2040, as suitable for large-scale commercial development, these applications are premature. They are of a highly strategic nature, and - taken together with other nearby and large-scale development proposals such as the Ardley SRFI and the Great Wolf leisure development at Chesterton – must be considered as part of an overall strategy for logistics and transportation in the County of Oxfordshire and regionally, and as such should be addressed in the forthcoming Oxfordshire Plan 2050. Without this important overview, any decision about these applications is premature.

6. Unproven demand. We consider that no convincing case has been made for demand for warehousing of this scale in this location. Only one potential user of the four buildings has so far been identified. This is insufficient to avoid the accusation that the development is entirely speculative, and as such cannot outweigh the very considerable harm that is likely to be caused to the local environment for the reasons set out above.