

Comment for planning application 21/04275/OUT

Application Number	21/04275/OUT
Location	Part OS Parcel 8149 Adj Lords Lane And SE Of Hawkwell Farm Lords Lane Bicester
Proposal	OUTLINE - with all matters reserved except for Access - Mixed Use Development of up to 3,100 dwellings (including extra care); residential and care accommodation(C2); mixed use local centre (comprising commercial, business and service uses, residential uses, C2 uses, local community uses (F2(a) and F2(b)), hot food takeaways, public house, wine bar); employment area (B2, B8, E(g)); learning and non-residential institutions (Class F1) including primary school (plus land to allow extension of existing Gagle Brook primary school); green Infrastructure including formal (including playing fields) and informal open space, allotments, landscape, biodiversity and amenity space; burial ground; play space (including Neaps/Leaps/MUGA); changing facilities; ground mounted photovoltaic arrays; sustainable drainage systems; movement network comprising new highway, cycle and pedestrian routes and access from highway network; car parking; infrastructure (including utilities); engineering works (including ground modelling); demolition
Case Officer	Caroline Ford
Organisation Name	
Name	Anthony Coogan
Address	44 Barry Avenue, Bicester, OX26 2DY
Type of Comment	Objection
Type	neighbour
Comments	<p>Bicester is now disappearing under an urban sprawl - whether warehouses or housing. Calling this proposal a "village" may well be useful device for selling houses but the reality is that it is a suburban housing estate attached to Bicester. With such growth, the possibility of taking a walk in the countryside directly from anywhere in Bicester (i.e. without having to use public or private transport) is diminishing rapidly. The proposal is for a greenfield site. Should Cherwell District Council respond positively to such a suggestion, that would clearly be at odds with the sentiments expressed on page 10 of its Community Nature Plan 2020-2022, See https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/downloads/file/8122/community-nature-plan-2020-2022 The natural environment is increasingly being recognised as an important asset for supporting health and wellbeing. The importance of access to green spaces and connection with nature for physical and mental health and resilience has been starkly highlighted by the Covid- 19 pandemic. Green space has a key role to play in the drive to increase levels of physical activity and there is a wealth of compelling evidence that time spent in green environments promotes a positive outlook on life and enhances our ability to cope with, and recover from, stress, illness and injury (Public Health England, Improving access to greenspace: A new review for 2020). So, which is more important, the well-being of residents or the profits to be generated by this proposal? In particular, the proposal does nothing to address the risk to one of the best green resources in Bicester, namely Bure Park Nature Reserve. The River Bure is its central feature. In recent years, it has tended to dry up during summer for reasons which do not appear to have been investigated thoroughly. The sources of the river emerge within or close by the site and merge to flow into Bure Park. At the moment surface water drains into these streams down from the surrounding fields. Under the proposals most of these fields will disappear with only a narrow tract of open land on either side of the watercourses. If water drains from these tracts only there will therefore be less water draining into the river, making it still more liable to drying up. This would be a serious loss to the reserve and indeed to the town which has had the river flowing through it since its earliest days. Alternatively, water will also drain from the built-over area, bringing urban pollution to the river which will flow down to Bicester. The fact that lengthy reports are included among the proposal's supporting documents should not be used as an excuse for their uncritical agreement and acceptance on the part of Cherwell District Council. For example, FPCR Environment and Design Ltd has been employed by Hallam Land Management for this work and its conclusions and those of other companies employed by Hallam may be influenced by this relationship. Although these reports speak of retaining features, water courses and wildlife habitats "wherever possible", the fact remains that, under the proposed scheme, most of the site will be built over and the impact of the buildings, vehicles and humans on the wildlife is conveniently omitted. Building a so-called eco-town on farmland which has been productive for centuries is frankly bizarre. It is argued that new housing is vital; true enough but agriculture is also vital and every encouragement should be given to local agriculture as a means of reducing the carbon footprint arising from</p>

importing foodstuffs when it is possible to produce them here. It is worth noting that the importance of retaining agricultural land and of preserving greenfield sites were reasons for refusing the Weston Otmoor planning application - why should this not be the case here? Among the comments on the plan, Natural England does little other than to claim that "the proposed development will not have likely significant effects on statutorily protected sites". and to assert that it "has no objection to the proposed development". This is despite its affirmation that its "statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development". How the proposal will assist it in achieving this statutory purpose is not stated. However Natural England also states that, Your authority has a duty to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of your decision making. It draws attention to the UK Biodiversity Action Plan which includes, for example, Priority Terrestrial Mammal Species such as the West European hedgehog and the Barbastelle bat (a rare species which has been reported in the Bicester area), together with birds, herptiles, fungi, plants amongst other. See <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/uk-bap-priority-species/> Cherwell District Council must state clearly what steps it is taking to fulfil its obligation in this matter and should provide a detailed report for public examination and comment. An organisation with suitable expertise such as a Wildlife Trust Consultancy should be appointed to carry out a comprehensive, objective survey, at the applicant's expense. If the site is converted to a housing estate as specified in the proposal, this large tract of wildlife will disappear for ever. Cherwell District Council also acknowledges its "duty under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006", quoting the Act to the effect that "Every public body must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as it is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity". Converting farmland to a housing estate will destroy biodiversity not conserve it. See A Natural Environment for Wildlife and People - Community Nature Plan 2018 - 2020 on <http://modgov.cherwell.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=42080> The few token green bits in the plan are an attempt to claim ecological credentials and will do nothing to mitigate the loss. Does anybody really believe that hedgerows in an urban development will provide habitats for wildlife which are as good as those in the existing fields? Are bats better off with bat boxes or their natural environment? Indeed the only wildlife species to benefit from the estate will be rats, mice, house flies and others which flourish in an urban environment and which will migrate to the estate without difficulty across Howes Lane. The most glaring omission in the application is the impact on the local infrastructure and, in particular local roads, transport and shopping. There is nothing in the plan which deals with this. It is insufficient to concentrate on access to motorway and major trunk roads such as the A34. The proposal talks about 3,100 houses which would suggest an increase in the local population of 7,440 if the average household size of 2.4 quoted by the Office for National Statistics is applied. In terms of additional cars, 5,000 would probably be a conservative estimate. The network of minor roads would not be able to cope with this. It should also be remembered that there are other, substantial housing estate developments either proposed or underway, e.g. a proposal for Himley Village (like Hawkwell Village a suburb of Bicester) refers to 1,700 more houses while Heyford Park will eventually contain 1,600 new houses. Eventually, if all these schemes go ahead there could easily be 10,000 or more additional cars in the Bicester area. Also, it is all very well making provision for cyclists within the new estate but cycling between, say, Bicester and Bucknell will become decidedly more hazardous. Does anybody seriously believe that people living in these outer suburbs will shop by bike or on foot? How will shops in Bicester cope? Where will people park their cars? As far as car parking is concerned, there is currently nothing like sufficient provision to cater for this development. Cherwell District Council should refuse the plan on these grounds alone. The centre of Bicester is essentially that of a small market town and cannot be expanded to cope for such a development. What will the impact be on the police, fire and ambulance services when responding to emergencies? As for public transport, what evidence is there that a good service will be provided? The plan does not seriously address this issue as the comments from Stagecoach West dated 17 February 2022 and listed under public comments on the Planning Application webpage demonstrate. Anyone wishing for a glimpse into what sort of estate Hallam develops should look at some of the "successes" shown on its website. Of course, it has to comply with regulations regarding open spaces and the like but basically the developments consist of row upon row of little boxes with miniscule gardens. Still this approach serves to maximise the profits of the planners, builders and those who assist them so some people benefit. Dr Anthony Coogan

Received Date

09/03/2022 15:22:44

Attachments