

Objection to warehousing proposal

I would like to object to the proposal to build substantial warehousing to the North East of the ancient woodland at Stoke Woods and adjacent to the A43 on the following grounds:

Logistical Infrastructure

The B4100 is the proposed access road and does not have capacity to support this development. There are frequent queues along the B4100, beyond our drive, of traffic backing up from the Baynards Green roundabout. These queues of over 1 mile would be made even worse if more HGVs were trying to access the roundabout. Pre-covid the traffic was worse and we expect it to return from today's relatively subdued levels.

There are no bus routes to the proposed site. It would be difficult to walk to the site (along a fast road without a pavement, where there are frequent accidents) and cycling would be dangerous - note the sad accident involving a cyclist's death on the B4100 just south of the proposed site within the last 2 years.

Section A25 of the Cherwell Local Plan states "*There is a need to reduce dependence on travel by car and to manage traffic congestion*" This proposed development would contravene this planning objective.

Economic impact

Cherwell District currently has a lower unemployment rate than both the national average and for Oxfordshire as a whole (latest published census data from 2011). There is no economic argument for building here. Furthermore section B44 of the Local Plan states that "*To ensure employment is located in sustainable locations, to avoid problems such as traffic on rural roads and commuting, employment development in the rural areas will be limited.*" Building in this rural environment, where logistics on the B4100 are already an issue contravenes this Planning Policy (SLE 1)

Local Plan zoning contravention

- a. From a personal perspective, my family made our largest investment ever, by buying our house just over two years ago. Part of our due diligence was to analyse the Cherwell Local Plan, consider the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway (since cancelled) and other infrastructure changes. We were reassured that the current Plan has a large amount of land still undeveloped for employment purposes (currently 52 hectares), and that these areas would be developed first, in line with the Plan.
- b. Section A11 details Cherwell's Spatial Strategy, stating that "*Development in the open countryside will be strictly controlled*". Developing this area of open countryside would be in breach of the Cherwell Local Plan's Vision Strategy and Objectives.
- c. Section B87 of the adopted Local Plan states:
"*Cherwell's countryside, landscape and green spaces are important natural resources. They form the setting of our towns and villages, contribute to their identity and the well-being of Cherwell's communities... ...The countryside's intrinsic character and*

beauty is important to the quality of life in Cherwell and remains an economically important agricultural resource."

This proposal would contravene this policy by eliminating an important area of countryside and agricultural land.

- d. Furthermore, when purchasing our house, article C44 of the Cherwell Local Plan reassured me in that it states that

"The proposals for North West Bicester will however need to consider the impact on the surrounding area including the villages of Bucknell and Caversfield."

I understood this to mean that the character of these villages would need to be maintained by not sandwiching them between new developments and the expansion of Bicester. Building a large industrial complex just north of these two villages would further go against the local development plan by leaving these villages between a growing Bicester and a new Industrial Complex.

My understanding is that the council published this plan so that people such as our family could have reassurance about how the locality would be developed. Approving the development would be a breach of that plan and of our trust in Cherwell District Council.

Environmental impact

- a. Suitability. The site is in open countryside and is not suitable for this type of mass industrial development. It will be noisy, which will impact our property, particularly if there is a light breeze from the north. We are adjacent to two grade 2 listed cottages and this development would undermine the setting for the buildings that makes them so special. The development will be visible from many angles and properties as well as from the numerous footpaths that make up the character of the area and encourage health and well-being through exercise in attractive surroundings near the town of Bicester. The proposed development sits adjacent to a Target Conservation Area and protected ancient woodland. These are protected environments and as such should not be adjacent to large industrial development. The proposal would contravene the Local Plan Strategic Objective 15 (Section A: Strategy for Development Cherwell). Section B240 of the plan states that *"Addressing habitat fragmentation through the linking of sites to form strategic ecological networks can help species adapt to the impact of climate change, and therefore Conservation Target Areas can also contribute to the achievement of Strategic Objective 11. Conservation Target Areas represent the areas of greatest opportunity for strategic biodiversity improvement in the District and as such development will be expected to contribute to the achievement of the aims of the target areas through avoiding habitat fragmentation and enhancing biodiversity."* In the above, I note the importance of linking biodiverse sites within the Local Plan. Placing a large development between the Target Conservation Area to the South (encompassing Stoke Woods and beyond) and North (encompassing Park Farm and beyond) would be in contravention of Section B240 of the Local Plan and Policy ESD11.
- b. Ancient hedgerows, which provide homes to a wide range of invertebrates, birds and mammals would also be removed and eliminated.
- c. As mentioned earlier, there is a lack of sustainable transport to the area.

- d. Flood risk: In the 1970s the only flood plain in Stoke Lyne was drained. This destroyed habitats and has also increased flood risks downstream. Increasing the speed of runoff from land that is often saturated after a heavy downpour is likely to lead to increased flood risk downstream including in places such as Buckingham.
This goes against Cherwell's Environmental Strategy for a Changing Climate (2008), which notes "*the need to minimise flood risk, and to be resilient to the impacts of climate change.*" (Section A26 of the Local Plan).
- e. There is an increased risk of pollution of the water table. We have a bore hole just south of the proposed development and are concerned about contamination both from fuel leaks from a proposed development of this scale and also from the large amount of sewage that will be produced. We note that the proposal does not include connection to a mains sewer.
- f. Light pollution will increase, particularly at night, which would be a great loss to the local community as well as impacting any nocturnal animals, such as owls and bats in the adjacent Stoke Woods.
- g. Air and noise pollution will increase and impact both the biodiversity of the area and our children's health. There are alternative, brownfield sites earmarked in the Local Plan that should be developed rather than this area of pristine local countryside.
- h. Environmentally, this proposal would go against the COP26 agreements that the government recently signed, and as such the development is against broad government policy.

Conclusions

As outlined above, this proposed development does not comply with the Cherwell Local Plan, has no economic justification, does not have the infrastructure to implement it and has alternatives - it would be suited much better to one of the areas ear-marked in the Local Plan. Bicester and its environs have accepted a large amount of Oxfordshire's expansion in recent years, and the success of that has been dependent on careful long term planning. Breaking from that plan would damage the local environment, biodiversity, be logistically infeasible, unsustainable, polluting and add more traffic onto an already dangerous road (B4100). Furthermore, this proposal would create a dangerous precedent for further expansion in this locale. I object strongly to this proposal.

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