

Response from Stratton Audley Parish Council opposing application 23/01085/F

Stratton Audley Parish Council is very disappointed with this retrospective application as it highlights the complete disregard that Bicester Heritage has shown towards local residents and the planning process. The Parish Council is very concerned that this wilful flouting of rules will continue into the future, especially as the longer term vision of Bicester Motion for the site expansion comes ever closer to our quiet, rural village.

Stratton Audley Parish Council has to date not opposed the planning applications for Bicester Heritage but has raised the issue of noise repeatedly and this application would exacerbate an already unacceptable situation.

Parish Council Representatives recently met Bicester Motion's management in an attempt to reach a consensual solution to continue to allow the former to operate its successful business and at the same time respect our community's rights. Sadly Bicester Motion were unprepared to offer any compromise. Stratton Audley Parish Council therefore opposes the application in the strongest terms on the following specific grounds:

Failure to assess noise impact on Stratton Audley

The village of Stratton Audley was not included in the baseline noise monitoring that took place in 2019. No assessment was made of the baseline levels in our community, so whilst this may have been agreed with the relevant Officers for Cherwell & S Northants, we would contend it is a significant omission. In particular it failed to recognise that the prevailing wind direction is SW. Stratton Audley lies directly to the NE of Bicester Heritage, separated in the main by open ground.

The modelling by Messrs Hydrock makes no mention of this aspect, and seems not to have taken it into account, and the concern of our community is that we will be subject to noise levels well in excess of their model. It is notable that their expert report describes their own model as only reasonably accurate (para 5.4):

'With slight adjustments the model can be used to extrapolate the levels at other locations around the site with expectations of reasonable accuracy.'

It is imperative that the noise study is undertaken anew and with accurate data from Stratton Audley, not merely theoretical modelling of the potential impact.

Notwithstanding the lack of an Assessment, Vehicle Noise Limits Proposed are Excessive

The new increased 108db limit requested in Category C is plainly excessive, as evidenced by the Applicants' own report.

Messrs Hydrock's Report says that noise levels of 12db or more over ambient have a very high impact (a 10db increase represents a *doubling* of perceived loudness). The Category

C events proposed, with unrestricted numbers of participants with this significantly increased drive-by noise limit would routinely generate such impacts on our community.

We therefore particularly strongly object to the Category C events due to the significant additional 'high impact' noise for periods of 90minutes. We also note that this application does not take into account the additional noise from preparation and starting of the vehicles involved, through to the vehicles being turned off.

The other two Categories of track activity (A&B) seek an increased sound level of 100db - raised from the current 98db.

This flies in the face of the trend elsewhere in the UK - almost every circuit has a lower noise level than proposed here, and similarly almost every circuit is working to lower noise limits than even 5 years ago as the balance changes, correctly, to favour of the rights and utility of local residents.

For clarity, existing case studies clearly illustrate that imposing lower limits do not constrain operators, who have a variety of methods to mitigate noise - put simply, users and circuit owners can and do manage to adhere to lower limits now being routinely imposed. Higher limits are not needed in any way, and Stratton Audley PC urges CDC to take this opportunity to reduce the limits to a maximum of 90db drive-by.

See resource here (note that static tests have significantly higher db limits than the drive-by limits used in this application):

<https://maphub.net/LucyHoadMarketing/uk-track-noise-limits>

In summary this is a very significant increase in both operating hours and noise levels. There is not a single day proposed as respite for the community from this nuisance. Any noise levels proposed are completely at odds with WHO guidelines for the impact on health from noise. It is not the actions of a business which wishes to maintain a good relationship with its close neighbours - of which there are many.

Aviation

We also note that whilst the application also requests retrospective permission for 'aviation', there is zero mention of aircraft movements or their impact in the application itself. We would therefore request that this be rejected pending greater clarity being provided regarding this aspect, which is something that has previously caused nuisance to our village via overflying.

Whilst our community has no expertise in these matters, there is significant concern that the airfield is not correctly and proactively managed to ensure compliance with CAA rules and this is endangering people and property. In recent years a light aircraft crashed into flats in Upper Heyford having taken off from Bicester Heritage – the pilot parachuted out and the plane hit the residential buildings, and a glider has crashed into a house in Caversfield, only just missing the busy A4421.

Significant Expansion of Large Events on Site

Notwithstanding assurances from Bicester Motion that they have no intention of running them, it is completely unreasonable to add the ability to run up to 25 extra events which could all be large live music and other festivals with 12,000 attendees. This will involve

significant numbers camping/overnighting on the site. This is a huge change from the current 'day events' with no overnight stays (it is noted that Bicester Motion has not commenced build of its hotel for which it obtained permission some time ago)

Whilst we take Bicester Motion at their word, once granted, the potential use is there for any future operator, were this facility to change hands.

These extra events will mean the potential to hold events most weekends of the year – with attendant traffic and noise issues day and night. This is not an airfield or racecourse site located far away from communities, it exists alongside them. The necessary balance of interests is being skewed by this totally one sided application which gives no thought for the local residents.

We urge the CDC Planning Committee to reject this expansion - which Bicester Motion states it will not use anyway.

Traffic & Community Nuisance

The additional level of traffic to the site has not been given due consideration. Access to the A4421 from Stratton Audley is already challenging when events are held and increasing usage of the site will further exacerbate the situation. Traffic Lights and roundabouts must be installed at the entrances/exits to Stratton Audley to mitigate the impact.

Radio controlled aircraft

Radio controlled aircraft flying appears unregulated at the site. These are very noisy jet and petrol radio controlled aircraft being flown evenings and weekends, which are very intrusive and do not appear to be being operated in accordance with the Code of Practice on Noise from Model Aircraft 1982. Again this exhibits a clear disregard for neighbouring communities.

Summary

In summary, whilst Bicester Motion seeks to paint this application as simply a regularisation of existing practice, it is far from that. It is almost completely open-ended in nature, and would legitimise the potential for a huge expansion in the number of events, and attendant noise and nuisance from them, as well as legitimising a significant increase in the noise from vehicle movements on track.

In particular, Bicester Motion appears to be moving into a new market with this July's Vegan Camp Out - a full c12,000 attendee camping festival over 3 days. This is a site whose location militates against this type of use, and we hope CDC will agree with this perspective.

Necessary Conditions if Granted in full or part

Notwithstanding Stratton Audley PC's opposition, should CDC approve the application SAPC would wish a number of Conditions to be imposed by way of mitigation & to ensure future relationships and collaborative working improve, and return to their pre-pandemic levels of regular communication. Stratton Audley wishes to be a good neighbour to a successful Bicester Motion site, and in return, for due consideration to be shown by Bicester Motion to our community and its peace and enjoyment by residents.

It is the case that Bicester Motion does not appear to adhere to its own existing rules. Their current rules say only 1 car on track at a time, unless with prior approval, no tyre squeal and a 98db limit. Their own promotional video for the upcoming Flywheel Event shows wheel spinning and there are routinely several cars on track at the same time.

A local resident made a noise complaint in 2021 – Bicester Heritage admitted to him the cars were 120db that day and expressed surprise that they were didn't hear it for longer and that they have been racing cars for 5 years, back to 2015.

Against this backdrop, Bicester Motion must be compelled to adhere to laid down conditions, with independent monitoring.

Noise mitigation

There would need to be a much better plan to physically limit the noise escaping from the site - a plan developed with expert advice to mitigate noise impact on the local residents by using bunds, barriers and suchlike on the perimeter of the site. Were there to be trust in Motion's adherence to any rules in place this would not be necessary, but absent this trust, and with significant breaches of the rules in place now, it must be compelled by CDC.

Area of the Application

We note that the application marks the site as involving the entire perimeter boundary of the Bicester Motion site. If granted, notwithstanding Bicester Motion's reassurances, we would request that it is a clear condition that Planning Approval in respect of vehicle movements applies solely to use of the area marked as the experience and demonstration track, and specifically excludes the perimeter road. Use of the latter would bring noise nuisance much closer to Stratton Audley, and result in increased vehicle speeds and track capacity, with attendant noise increases.

Similarly, the applicants' planning statement clearly marks the area typically used for events at the site. If this is the typical area used, then SAPC requests that this is a condition for future events, rather than the 'whole site event' boundary, which encompasses an area roughly double that typically used. We would contend that c220 acres is enough for any current or potential use, and there is no need to demarcate the entire c450-acre site - particularly as the additional area is all much closer to our village.

Ecology

There should be mitigation of the proposals' impact on an SSI, nesting birds, the protected grassland, the Hunt kennels, and local bee hives. All have potential to be severely affected by the noise pollution, constant events and testing of cars on this grass airfield. Specialist advice must be sought and acted upon.

Model Aircraft

Spot checks to ensure adherence to the Code.

S106 Mitigations for Stratton Audley Village

1. The requirement for Bicester Motion to hold monthly meetings with representatives from Stratton Audley and other adjacent communities
2. The purchase of noise monitoring equipment for the village, to be used to ensure compliance is able to be accurately monitored & measured
3. Noise mitigation measures for affected properties where measurements demonstrate nuisance is greatest. To be based on expert advice from specialist contractors, and to include, but not be limited to triple glazed windows and other recommended measures to protect properties
4. The provision of a cycle link from Bicester Road parallel with the A4421, to link with the Bicester Shared Use Footpath Network
5. Traffic calming measures at entrance/exits of Stratton Audley Village