

THE BOURTONS PARISH COUNCIL

Great & Little Bourton, Banbury, Oxfordshire

Cherwell District Council

Bodicote House

Bodicote, Banbury

Submitted electronically via CDC Planning Portal : January 8th 2024

Copy sent by email to :

Re : Planning application : 23/03428/OUT : Outline application for the construction of up to 140,000 sqm of employment floorspace...

This Council wishes to **OBJECT** to this application on the following grounds :

- Landscape harm
- Access & traffic implications
- The need for further warehousing?

Landscape harm

As far as this Council can ascertain, the area in question has never been included in Local Plans as an area suitable for such warehouse development, or indeed for any development at all. It was always understood that the M40 Banbury provided a visible boundary to development, which was enhanced by the historic rolling landscape and ridge and furrow drainage arrangements. Unfortunately, this understanding was breached earlier by the inappropriate actions of Officers ignoring the very strong objections to the development of land on the west of the Daventry road by permitting the application for 3 warehouses, all of which remain currently unoccupied.

This action was made considerably worse by them not insisting on significant landscaping, and a much softer exterior design to soften the landscape harm that their decision inflicted. Now, the approach to Banbury has become industrial when approaching from the Daventry direction and destroyed the previously high value landscape. While this harm cannot unfortunately ever be undone, it would seem particularly vindictive and destructive to considerably worsen the harm by allowing this application for a large scale industrial and warehouse park in a rural landscape that should absolutely be preserved.

Indeed, CDC has existing policies, to be further extended and enhanced following the outcomes of the current review of the Local Plan, these being specified in Policy ESD 13 which states that “opportunities will be sought to secure the enhancement of the character and appearance of the landscape, particularly in urban fringe locations”. This application, were it to be granted, would ride roughshod over this policy and destroy any credibility when challenged in the future. The policy goes on to say that “... the enhancement of existing landscapes, features or habitats ... will be supported by the planting of woodlands, trees and hedgerows”. This application destroys such landscapes, many trees and multiple hedgerows, and the inclusion of a commitment to plant new trees does nothing to counter this irreparable damage.

The Policy goes on to state that proposals will not be permitted if

- “they intrude into open countryside”. This site is a perfect example of such an intrusion.
- “cause undue harm to important natural landscape features”. The historic ridge and furrow is a typical such feature.

- “be inconsistent with local character”. The land east of the M40 was always expected to remain rural, and provide a welcome to an historic market town, establishing its place in the countryside. While it is accepted, as stated above, that the 3 warehouse development has partly destroyed this policy expectation, it must not be used to further continue such rural desecration.

It would seem that the applicant wishes to continue the damage caused further south on the M40 in CDC’s district and in southern Oxfordshire, to ensure that the motorway becomes an industrial route, surrounded by ugly, inappropriate and out of scale warehouse development. We can only hope that CDC Officers recognise the damage being inflicted and do not fall prey to the applicant’s promises of compensating planting that would take years to become fully developed, in which time all environmental benefits would have been totally lost.

On these grounds alone this application should never be permitted.

Access & traffic implications

The M40 Banbury junction is already seriously beyond capacity, evidenced by the long queues at rush hours. To propose an application that does nothing to mitigate the further increase in congestion, predominately by HGV’s servicing the site, is incomprehensible. But it can perhaps be understood as the very extensive enlargement of the existing roundabout to enable it to cope with the expected traffic flows would require acquisition of a very large area of additional land, thereby reducing the opportunity for a development of the scale proposed.

Additionally, as there are no local facilities nearby, all employees on the site would need to travel into Banbury town for shopping, eating etc. This would worsen the already completely unacceptable chaos on Hennef Way, which cannot handle the existing traffic flows.

Further the significant impact of HS2 construction traffic, now increasingly significantly as construction speeds up and likely to be an issue for at least 10 years, will be added to by the vehicles servicing the building of this site. And, of course, by its occupants once it were completed.

Access to Banbury by local rural village residents will be further disrupted, encouraging them to migrate to other local towns for their requirements, further speeding up the damage to the town centre businesses. The considerable investment being promised by the Banbury 2050 plan will be worthless if local communities have already moved their shopping journeys to other locations.

This damage to town centre trade, will be further enhanced by the loss of shoppers from other local towns, as they seek out more friendly and welcoming centres, with less traffic challenges. In short, the end of Banbury as a shopping destination!

The need for further warehousing

This Council questions the need for further massive scale warehousing in this area on the grounds that :

- There are many empty industrial warehouse type buildings around Banbury, including some recently built ones not yet occupied.
- Such developments actually bring little benefit to the local community as they employ relatively few people versus their size and scale.
- Banbury already has a low rate of unemployment, so new employees will have to relocate to the town in order to fill the potential vacancies.
- This will require further housebuilding on a significant scale which is neither wanted nor required by existing Banbury residents. If there are other towns willing to lose their rural environment by the building of such warehouse estates and the resulting additional houses,

then this Council believes that is where such applications should be sited. Banbury has already received new houses on a massive scale, has already built a significant number of these ultra large warehouses and does not need more. The very things that attracted people to want to live and work in our rural town have nearly been lost due to the current scale of construction.

You do not see other important rural centres, such as Warwick or Stratford hosting such industrial eyesores; they understand that the value of maintaining their rural standard of life is more important than ever more warehouses.

Finally and in summary, we believe that the future of Banbury as an established rural community is far more important than continual unnecessary, unwanted and inappropriate industrial development. It brings little or nothing to the town :

- damages the community
- inflicts considerable congestion that swamps access to the town centre and destroys traditional rural landscapes which should be protected, as recognised by the local planning authority's own policies.

If further industrial activity is desired by the District Council, then it should be encouraging the redevelopment of significant brownfield sites, so that the redevelopment proposed by Banbury 2050 vision can draw visitors into the town to boost town centre trade and protect the commercial viability of the businesses which are still operating in the town centre.

Clerk to the Council
For and behalf of The Bourtons Parish Council