

RICHBOROUGH ESTATES PLANNING APPLICATION 24/00245/OUT

I am most concerned that this “project” has arisen like a phoenix from the ashes of application 13/01056/OUT.

This is not being brought forward to benefit the village of Caversfield or its residents, or of Bicester, or even of Cherwell DC’s responsibility for housing in the area, but purely for the benefit of the current owner.

I STRONGLY OBJECT to the present Application on the following grounds:

1. The Application is not significantly different from that of 13/01056 other than a 50% reduction in the number of proposed dwellings. This was not allowed on appeal, and I am disgusted that the Applicant considers the Planning Inspector’s reasons are not valid. They continue to be fully appropriate, especially those concerning the coalescing of the village into Bicester. This MUST not be allowed to happen.
2. The site is an Equestrian Centre built in the grounds of Caversfield House, and all earlier planning approvals were based on this premise. If this business use is no longer viable (and I don’t believe the current owner has investigated a sale on this basis) then the land should remain as pasture or agricultural land.
3. By building on the land the historical connection between Caversfield House, The Lodge and the The Gatehouse will be lost forever.
4. There is no requirement for additional building land in or around Bicester.

The sites available, should the Applicant so wish, are NW Bicester, SW Bicester Phase 2, SE Bicester and Heyford Park, the sum total of which exceed the housing delivery test published by the Government (February 2023 review of CDC 2015 Local Plan).

5. Caversfield is currently a Category 3 / Category C village, and is destined to be redefined as “Open Countryside” in the upcoming planning iterations. In neither of these categories is building allowed other than for very minor additions or conversions.
6. Despite the efforts of the Applicant’s agents (Zebra) to argue to the contrary, this development will be a substantial visual intrusion into the open countryside and “close off” the green separation between the Village and NW Bicester.

As an aside, Zebra cannot even proof read their “cut and paste” comments. Para 2.16 refers to “Balsall Common”. How can we have confidence in their technical expertise when they cannot get the factual statements correct?

7. I am concerned the Flood Risk Assessment (prepared by MEC) for the site is not satisfactorily concluded, requiring “deeper investigation” (MEC ref: 5.7 and

Appendix E). Attenuation ponds are being proposed to accept surface water from just 2 ha of the site, whereas the whole 7 ha site provides enough surface and ground water to flood the SW boundaries (as existing residents can confirm). The Plans envisaged the site being raised by 50mm at its southern boundary, but nothing in this assessment explains how this will affect the overflowing ditches and pooling that occurs in that area. I would suggest the attenuation pond(s) should be immediately behind the houses on Fringford Road, as this is the lowest point where water collects.

The problem is exacerbated by MEC's Soil Infiltration Test SA01 borehole (Appendix E) being too full of water to measure and having insufficient drainage to derive an infiltration rate. They conclude by saying

“Tentative infiltration rates have been derived for SA02-SA04 ranging between 1.53 and 3.79 x 10⁻⁵ m/s, however these cannot be used for design purposes due to the presence of groundwater at shallow depth and only reflect infiltration into the pits sides within the stated depth ranges. The results suggest that the limestones near surface are underlain by impermeable clay strata which is allowing the ponding of percolating water. Further deeper investigation is required, possibly involving rotary drilled boreholes, to confirm the potential for infiltration at greater depth.”

Which I believe indicates further work is needed before they can satisfactorily “sign-off” the site as being suitable for building. This needs to be sorted before Planning is given.

I also have concerns that *“the risk of flooding will be managed at the development site post-development”*. Since the development will stop any natural drainage on the greenfield site, then the flooding at the Fringford Road (SE) edge of the site has to be controlled before and/or during development. Waiting until all 99 houses are built (or sold) would create an unacceptable risk in the meantime.

8. I am concerned at the veracity of the Transport Assessment and Travel Plan (Hub transport Planning). Table 3 showing the Local Facilities do not even include Bicester School (to which children in Caversfield are required to attend). Most attendees from Caversfield go by car as public transport is not at convenient times, which adds considerably to the vehicle movements, both here and in an already crowded Bicester. The times chosen for traffic census conveniently did not include school runs, but more importantly was taken during school holidays, so is substantially flawed.

Table 3 also includes “Caversfield Park” as a local facility. This is owned by the MOD, and made available for USAF children. Non-service personnel have no rights of access nor enjoyment. Further Bicester Heritage is a place of work, and again residents have no right of access. Neither should be included as a Facility.

This table conveniently shows schools, GP surgeries and dentists. At present all such existing facilities are full. More are planned at NW Bicester but these will not become available for a substantial length of time, and therefore any development outside NW Bicester whose residents are expected to use these facilities should not be allowed.

Table 4 shows the Accessibility by Bus. Service 500 does NOT run on a Sunday and offers a very inconvenient timetable both in the morning and evening. It is subject to OCC funding so a S106 contribution is imperative. The proposed footway down the narrow Aunt Em's Lane to connect to this service in Elmsbrook is both dangerous for pedestrians and road traffic, and damaging to the local floral and fauna, and should not be allowed.

Access to both the bus services highlighted will be along unlit roads, in places very narrow, and are not suitable for schoolchildren (let alone the general public) especially after dark.

I can't begin to understand the traffic flow data and calculations, suffice to say I believe 99 houses will have a minimum of 99 cars, though I suspect some affordable housing may have none; 3, 4 and 5 bedroom houses will certainly average more than 1. Consequently, the calculation of 1 extra movement per minute (especially during commute and school times) is substantially under estimated and the extra vehicle transits will cause havoc at the village junctions with the main roads around it, and on the local Fringford Road, Skimmingdish Lane and Aunt Em's Lane, all of which are not built for such capacity.

Finally, the A4095/Banbury Rd/Lords Lane/B4100 roundabout is being converted (contrary to the public consultation result) to traffic lights, which will affect traffic flow significantly into Caversfield from the A4095 and other directions. This change has NOT been taken into account in the Traffic Analysis, and therefore all data and results are surely significantly flawed.

9. The Utilities for the area are not up to standard now, so adding another 99 houses in the mix can not only add to the existing residents' misery and create complaints from any new residents.

Thames Water have indicated a shortfall of 50%, but I wonder if this includes allowance for the 50 or so USAF houses currently uninhabited? I believe it is imperative that no approval can be given until TW have completed their appraisal for improvement, and all conditions and costs are acceptable to the applicant and/or the developer. It would also be expected that such work will once and for all provide sufficient pressure for the remainder of Caversfield.

I would also like to see a S106 sum be allowed to upgrade the foul sewer network on the adjacent Fringford Road and provide for connections for those properties to the south of The Gatehouse who do not have Foul Sewer access.

10. The Ecological Appraisal by EDP accurately identifies the existence of bat, bird and reptile and hedgehog activities. It can also be confirmed locally that badgers, deer and rabbits inhabit and use the area and suitable mitigation must be provided.

To SUMMARISE:

There is so much wrong with this Application, both in its purpose and desired outcome, including matters that others have raised which I have not included above. It needs to see the same result as the previous attempt, and thrown out as not being acceptable to the Village nor its surrounding environs.