

Comment for planning application 24/00245/OUT

Application Number	24/00245/OUT
Location	South Lodge Fringford Road Caversfield Bicester OX27 8TH
Proposal	Outline application for demolition of existing structures and erection of up to 99 dwellings, access, open space and associated works with all matters reserved except for access
Case Officer	Andrew Thompson
Organisation Name	S R Hughes
Address	Cuckoo Cottage, Fringford Road, Caversfield, Bicester, OX27 8TL
Type of Comment	Objection
Type	neighbour
Comments	<p>I object to the above application for the following reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Eroding Green Space Around Bicester. The land North of Southwold Lane between Banbury Rd and Buckingham Rd was expressly designated as a green buffer zone when the development of NW Bicester was decided. It separated Caversfield from the expanding edge of Bicester and gave an appropriate setting to the heritage assets of Caversfield House and Church as well as the conservation area known as the Garden Quarter. In addition, Fringford Rd runs through this rural corridor between Banbury and Buckingham roads and is very popular with walkers, runners and cyclists from Bicester, being the only safe route out into the lanes and villages to the north. It acquires its rural feel from its southern end and should be considered a precious health and leisure resource for the whole of Bicester. The NW Bicester development is still in its early stages with most of the designated area not yet built on. It would be highly detrimental to the local landscape and recreational facilities to encroach on Caversfield, particularly before the full NW Bicester development has been completed and its impact evaluated.2. Contrary to Local Plan 2030. If the application were granted it would appear to be completely contrary to the CDC strategic plan. The current local plan is clear as to where housebuilding will be encouraged and no sites in Caversfield are identified. The village's category c designation reinforces this site allocation and the intention to have a green buffer zone as described above. While the plan is being reviewed, the Local Plan Review documents available so far do not identify sites in Caversfield and in any case the current plan determines policy until it is replaced or expires.3. If this application is allowed many others will follow and Caversfield will inevitably become part of a huge characterless Bicester. CDC will be aware of two or three other expressions of interest in Caversfield (The Plain, Stratton Fields, Dymocks Farm). Approval for this scheme would probably lead to applications from these and perhaps other developers amounting to a total of 800 or more houses. Having approved one scheme outside the local authority plan it would be difficult to justify refusing the others. If this application is approved, CDC will either have to be ready to approve the others, negating the concept of a green buffer altogether and effectively absorbing Caversfield into a sprawling Bicester, or have good reasons for refusing the rest.4. Erosion of Caversfield's distinctive qualities. Specifically, the character of Caversfield is rural lanes (including Fringford Rd and Aunt Ems Lane), agricultural land close by and dark skies at night as well as the RAF and USAF legacy. This development would seriously erode all these characteristics. A new estate would be clearly visible to the public from three sides (changing the rural views from the public footpath to the north of the site and from the roads to the south and east to suburban}. Fringford Rd and Aunt Ems Lane would not be rural, but suburban. There would be an increase in light pollution. The level of motor traffic increase is difficult to assess until the Banbury Rd roundabout work has been completed and its impact on traffic along local side roads measured. In addition, we do not know how viable good active travel links will be.

5. Lack of local amenities to support a large development, poor links to amenities further afield, speculation by applicant about amenities which do not yet exist. Caversfield's classification as a category c village in the current 2030 local plan reflects all the above but also the fact that it possesses very few local amenities. Given that the application proposes no new resources, residents will be obliged to travel into Bicester for schools, shops and most other amenities.

The application overstates the amenities in Caversfield itself and overstates connections to Bicester:

a) the park is owned by the MoD and may not always be available.

b) Bicester Heritage hosts mainly occasional special interest events that would not be of regular interest to local residents

c) the bus stop at Bicester Heritage is a long walk from the east entrance to the new development along an unlit road and buses run only once per hour.

d) until a full planning application for the "Firethorn Site" to the west of Banbury Rd has been submitted, the timing and nature of any potential link from the proposed development to NW Bicester is uncertain. Walking distance to the bus stop on Charlotte Ave is not known, as are most of the employment, shopping and leisure opportunities envisaged in the application. The roads and buildings do not yet exist. If they are built we do not know when that will be.

e) it is not clear whether adequate active travel routes can be created along Fringford Rd and Aunt Ems Lane. Given the long distances likely to be involved, such routes would need to make cycling as well as walking safe and convenient. The current plans do not make adequate provision for cycle tracks and it is not clear whether there is enough space for improvements.

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Attachments