

Objections to Building on the designated local wild-life site situated to the north of Gavray Drive and to the south of the Chiltern Railway (but east of Langford Brook).

We object to houses being built on the land to the north of Gavray Drive Bicester, to the east of Langford Brook and to the south of Chiltern Railway. The land is a valuable local wildlife site : (see <http://www.tverc.org/cms/content/local-wildlife-sites> Cherwell number 52W01) which is unimproved farmland. It is neutral damp marshland of type MG4. There are not very many areas such as this left in England. Gavray contains many different species of meadow flowers which are the food of butterflies and their caterpillars. Last summer I photographed 16 species of butterflies and 3 of daytime flying moths. The different species of the rare hairstreak butterflies are all present. There are hares, deer and buzzards and many small birds. There are also huge numbers of reptiles (lizards, grass-snakes and newts in the ponds). The hedges are still the same ones as on the Ordnance survey map of 1881 and are older than that date. They map the past activity of generations of farmers which have shaped our land and its wildlife. Without farming our countryside would look completely different. The site provides a marvellous educational resource for children where they can learn about English wildlife and its conservation, and where they will actually see it, rather than on a computer screen.

In the developer's plans the areas set aside for wildlife are far too small to be sustainable. The developer has just recently submitted a new scoping plan (14/00001/SCOP) to Cherwell which does leave more space for wildlife. However, the plans show houses to be built each side of the very old boundary footpath 129 and the old boundary hedge which has demarcated Launton Parish from Bicester since mediaeval days. The hedge also contains six old oak trees which are protected. Indeed, the footpath will be bounded on both side by buildings which destroys its character as a countryside walk for people and their dogs and turns it into just another thoroughfare for getting from A to B between buidings. Also, the land on the north side of the old boundary hedge, (scheduled by the developer for building, on their new submission 14/00001/SCOP), is actually part of the Ray Conservation Target Area designated by Cherwell District Council on their new Local Plan 2014.

The developer has now conducted new surveys (the previous ones were out of date) which includes plants, insects (butterflies and moths), reptiles (lizards, grass-snakes and newts) and bats and birds. All of these species were found to be present, some in large numbers (see <http://www.publicaccess.cherwell.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=externalDocuments&keyVal=N1K37YEM0K200>

and click on associated documents. The scoping report 24 Feb 2014 Part 1 and Part 2 are the relevant documents and contain the developer's outline plans and the results of their new wildlife surveys. These show just how valuable Gavray Meadow is as a wildlife site.

If Bicester is an Eco-Town, as it claims, how can it destroy a local wildlife site? In winter the site reverts to a marshland and is not suitable for housing. It acts as a huge sponge, absorbing excess water, helping to prevent flooding of Langford village downstream. In order to raise the level of the Gavray site above the water-table, many tonnes of rubble will have to be transported to the inconvenience of Langford residents. I live in Langford and every winter my garden becomes a quagmire and I cannot walk on the lawn. On the Gavray site the impact of marshy soil will turn it into a lake. Let us think of a more suitable application of this land which would benefit the Bicester Community in general. I have met many families walking on the Gavray site who have said how much they like looking at the wild flowers and hearing the birds sing. Old inhabitants of Bicester especially feel nostalgic for the lost meadows and the wildlife of their youth. Their voices should be heard also. 1,200 Bicester people have signed our petition supporting the conservation of Gavray local wildlife site. We hope that you will listen to us, the people of Bicester.