

Akeman Park (Bicester Plan 12 – ref scoping document 15/00094/SO) Public Consultation.

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As part of the public consultation on the Akeman Park proposal, we are writing to you to express our many significant concerns regarding the inappropriate location and design of the massively intrusive warehousing proposed for this site. We are basing our objections on a number of issues but most importantly, the development would make life in our homes completely intolerable. We have tried to express our concerns point by point below but we may send additional objections to you later once we have had more time to consider other implications arising from your plans.

1. Access and traffic issues:

- a.** The Akeman Park proposal displayed at the public consultation shows that this site will have a separate access direct onto the A41 Aylesbury Road. As this is separate to the proposed access routes for the Employment Hub area in the Wretchwick Green development (Redrow and Wates) it means that the combined development sites for the area covered by Bicester Plan 12 will have multi-access points across the site. This conflicts with the Local Plan priority to set aside areas for link roads as planned for both Wretchwick Green and Graven Hill.
- b.** The A41 Aylesbury Road is already at capacity from the Thame Road junction to the Rodney House roundabout. During peak flow periods westbound traffic is regularly stationary, from the Rodney House roundabout back past our properties at N^os 1 and 2 Wretchwick Farm Cottages. Similarly, traffic coming from Bicester and turning right off the A41 onto Ploughley Road towards Ambrosden regularly backs up to form queues longer than road markings allocating space for vehicles turning right. The additional traffic generated by vehicles accessing and leaving the Akeman Park site will only exacerbate the traffic to totally intolerable and impractical levels, especially by turning right to go to the proposed new link road. This additional traffic, particularly slow moving HGVs, will result in stationary traffic heading east towards Aylesbury, blocking both lanes as the Ploughley Road junction, and backing up further going west. Currently during peak traffic flow times, it can take up to 10 minutes for us (the residents at 1 & 2 Wretchwick farm Cottages) to pull out of our own driveways onto the A41, and this often causes near incidents and road rage from other drivers. Traffic coming from Ambrosden on Poughley Road onto the A41 is similarly delayed with queues reaching right back to the village. Any additional traffic along this stretch of road will make life for us and the residents of Ambrosden intolerable. At the present time the A41 Aylesbury Road has three existing road junctions and four property access driveways within the 0.8 mile stretch of road from The B4011 Thame Road junction to the proposed new Bicester perimeter road. The addition of an access road as proposed for the Akeman Park site will negatively impact all of these junctions and driveways. Theoretically congestion on the A41 Aylesbury Road would be less impacted if the Akeman Park site linked into the Employment Hub proposed for the Wretchwick Green site. However, as this would create an

unacceptable amount of HGV traffic through the proposed housing development area, it demonstrates just how inappropriate it is to site distribution warehousing at this location.

- c. During discussions with the planning and transport representatives from Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) at recent public consultation on the proposed route for the new perimeter road around Bicester, it became apparent that they had little or no knowledge of Framptons proposed access point from the Akeman Park site onto the A41 Aylesbury Road. This evident lack of communication between Framptons (and their clients) and the OCC is especially concerning as it demonstrates that no consideration has been given to the integration with plans for the proposed link road from the A41 Aylesbury Road to a new junction on the M40 motorway. A study is currently underway to determine the best route for this link road and the Akeman Park access point potentially impacts this junction.

2. Height and location of warehouses.

- a. The excessive height of the proposed warehouses in such close proximity to Wretchwick Farm Cottages will block significant amounts of light to those properties particularly in the morning. The cumulative effect of this with the Wretchwick Green development blocking evening light will mean that for a significant portion of day, the Wretchwick Farm Cottages will be blighted by shadows and reduced light levels. Any proposal to screen warehousing through use of tree planting between the Akeman Park site and Wretchwick Farm Cottages will only further reduce light.
- b. The A41 Aylesbury Road is an extremely busy road with heavy traffic flow from 6.00am to 10.00pm during weekdays, and 8.00 am to 9.00 pm weekends. Over the last few years, traffic levels have increased at an alarming rate thanks to the ever increasing popularity of Bicester Village retail park, and the constantly increasing amount of residential housing around Bicester. This has resulted in noise levels at the front of Wretchwick Farm Cottages now regularly exceeding 80dB. We, the residents of Wretchwick Farm Cottages have been able to cope with the noise levels, as the rear of the properties give access to the peace and tranquillity of open fields. For this reason, we have main bedrooms at the back of the houses, enabling windows to be open without having sleep disturbed by traffic noise. This is not possible at the front of the house due to the noise. Similarly, the noise levels do not permit a normal conversation to be held in front of the houses, so access to the reduced noise levels at the rear of the property is essential to make life bearable. For this reason, we (both 1 and 2 Wretchwick Farm Cottages) have spent considerable time, money and effort to create extensively landscaped and secluded gardens to the rear of the properties as a peaceful refuge away from the road. The combination of the proposed developments of an employment hub across Akeman Park and Wretchwick Green consisting of light industry and huge B8 distribution warehousing to the rear and on both sides of the property, effectively surrounding our property, will create an unbearable and unacceptable level of additional noise nuisance, leaving us absolutely nowhere to shelter from it. In particular, the B8 distribution warehousing in Akeman Park, by the very nature of these businesses, can be expected to involve large numbers of HGVs coming and going, not only during normal working hours, but also late into the night, or even 24 hours a day. The noise can also be expected not just to be limited to HGV engine noise, but also warning alarms for reversing vehicles, cargo doors being opened and closed, Tannoy announcements, as well as staff

coming and going. If the noise generated by these businesses was not enough, the presence of these giant, high walled buildings will also act like a reflective surface that will bounce the noise from the A41 to the rear of the Wretchwick Farm Cottages, not only making noise levels in the rear gardens unbearable, but also inside the properties which would therefore have to keep all windows closed throughout the year, regardless of temperatures. Furthermore, we the residents of No 1 Wretchwick Farm Cottages work from home. We have a wooden shed in the rear garden that is used as an home office. The noise nuisances described above will destroy the peace and quiet necessary for work and have a significant negative impact on our ability to do our jobs.

- c. The proposed close proximity of distribution warehousing to Wretchwick Farm Cottages, and the constant flow of HGV traffic serving it, can be expected to cause nuisance through vibration. Vibration at this location is particularly significant as the subsoil beneath Wretchwick Farm Cottages and running below the Akeman Park site is composed of stiff clay soils which transmit significantly more vibration, and over a longer distance from the source than other soil types⁽¹⁾. This nuisance will be further increased by the cumulative effect of vibration sources in the employment hub area of Wretchwick Green, which together with Akeman Park will surround three sides of our property.
- d. The nature of the distribution industry requires around the clock HGV traffic. Distribution Warehousing requires significant lighting to serve the loading bays and around the perimeter of the buildings for security. The close proximity of the proposed warehouses will therefore be the source of a significant light nuisance to the Wretchwick Farm Cottages throughout the night. This nuisance will be further increased by the cumulative effect of similar light sources in the employment hub area of Wretchwick Green, which together with Akeman Park will surround three sides of our property.
- e. The constant flow of HGV traffic in and out of the Akeman Park sites will be a significant source of air pollution around Wretchwick Farm Cottages. HGV vehicles are a source of a number of harmful air pollutant chemicals such as hydrocarbons, nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxide and carbon monoxide, but in particular HGV produce an excessive amount of fine particulate matter that poses a significant health risk. The close proximity of the extensive HGV activity to Wretchwick Farm Cottages will result in a substantial reduction of air quality for the residents. This air pollution will be further increased by the cumulative effect of pollution sources in the employment hub area of Wretchwick Green, which together with Akeman Park will surround three sides of our property.
- f. The cumulative effect of Akeman Park and Wretchwick Green will result in a total loss of visual amenity from Wretchwick Farm Cottages. As noted above, these properties are situated on an excessively busy road, and the gardens to the rear of the property are our only refuge. The location of the Wretchwick Green development, and more significantly, the giant warehouses of Akeman Park have a massive impact on the environment. The use of this green field site for warehousing represents an unacceptable change of use to the established rural residential properties bordering the site. The visual appearance of the warehouses is totally out of character to the 1880 build Victorian Wretchwick Farm Cottages, as well as the listed building at Wretchwick farm across the A41 which will be especially significant during winter months when there are no leaves on the trees. The cumulative visual impact of Akeman Park and Wretchwick Green will result in Wretchwick Farm Cottages being totally hemmed in, unable even to see the horizon. Similarly, the lane running beside these

properties down to Little Wretchwick Farm is part of a footpath that leads to the village of Launton. This footpath is used recreationally by local residents, joggers, ramblers and dog walkers who all currently enjoy extensive views across to Blackthorn Hill. The use of this land for massive warehouse will destroy the visual amenity of the footpath for recreational use. Most significantly, the positioning of these massive warehouses close to the A41, will be a visual blight on the appearance of Bicester, to anyone arriving here from the Aylesbury direction. This coupled with the employment sites proposed under the plans known as Bicester 1, 4 and 10, means that anyone visiting Bicester on any of the major roads serving the town, will be greeted by warehousing and industry giving them the impression that our beautiful town is nothing more than an eyesore on the countryside with a fancy high end shopping mall. Bicester, the small market town with its picturesque and historic centre will be wiped in effect be off the map. No one will want to visit Bicester other than to go to the Bicester Village shops.

- g.** As noted above, these properties are situated on an excessively busy road, and the gardens to the rear of the property are our only refuge. The location of the Wretchwick Green development, and more significantly, the busy and excessively tall warehouses of Akeman Park with their associated parking, and tall HGV vehicles accessing the site will completely surround our property, overlooking our hedges and resulting in a total loss of all privacy that we currently enjoy. Furthermore, as the main bedrooms are by necessity to the rear of the properties (see section on noise above), as is also the bathroom of No 1 Wretchwick Farm Cottages, the loss of privacy also has a major impact inside these houses.

3. Ecological and hydrological impact

- a.** The proposed development site is currently green fields with ecological significance. Although the majority of the area is semi-improved grassland, there is still significant biodiversity that includes wide ranging species of scientific interest and even protected species. Notable species to be found across the site include the Great Crested Newt, three species of bats, Common Lizard, Grass Snake, Badgers, Brown Hairstreak Butterfly, Black Hairstreak Butterfly, Forester Butterfly, Red Kite, Buzzard, Kestrel, Sparrow Hawk, and wild orchids. The Common Lizard is of particular significance as there is a resident population beside Wretchwick Farm Cottages, which regularly visit the gardens, and can be seen along the lane that leads down to Little Wretchwick Farm. The Akeman Park development will destroy this lizard population.
- b.** Although it was clear from the posters presented at the public consultation that no drainage/flood management solutions have yet been considered or proposed for the Akeman Park site, the topography of the land in general and the presence of Blackthorn Hill to the East ensures that any drainage solution will be forced to go north and or west, joining the scheme proposed for the Wretchwick Green development. The ultimate destination for this drainage is the series of ponds being created at the northernmost point of the site known as the River Ray Meadows within the Conservation Target Area (CTA) which has been earmarked as the relocation site for Great Crested Newts removed from elsewhere within the development. Rain and flood water run-off from the Akeman Park site will be contaminated from the pollutants typically associated with roads and HGVs, thereby degrading the CTA habitat and endangering the species there.

4. Impact on rights of way

- a.** Discussions with the representatives at the public consultation revealed that Framptons is unaware of the ownership/responsibility for the gravelled lane that runs from the A41 beside Wretchwick Farm Cottages to Little Wretchwick Farm. This lane forms the border between the Wretchwick Green and Akeman Park developments and will no longer serve Little Wretchwick Farm once these developments have been built. This lane has been used by the current and former residents of Wretchwick Farm Cottages for not less than (and presumably significantly longer than) 20 years to gain access for waste tankers to empty the septic tank that serves these properties that is situated next to the rear hedge north east of the cottages. Closure or change to this access point via the lane would prevent emptying of the septic tank and infringe our established right of way.
- b.** Similarly to point 4 a. above, the lane is also a public footpath and any development effecting this lane will also infringe on the public's right of way.

5. Legal responsibilities

Why attending the public consultation presentation, we were informed by Framptons that there is no developer involved in this Akeman Park proposal and they were acting on behalf of the land owner. We are concerned that the land owner does not have sufficient funding to develop such a significant site, including all necessary Environmental Impact Assessments, ecology surveys, archaeology surveys, hydrology surveys etc with the result that they will be unable to complete project as required and in compliance with all necessary controls. In the spirit of open and honest disclosure, we ask that you confirm that there is no developer involved in this project and the forthcoming planning application. This information is required so that we know who is legally responsible for the development should we decide to pursue a legal challenge

References:

⁽¹⁾International Standards Organisation

ISO 2631-2:2003 Mechanical vibrations and shock: evaluation of human exposure to whole body vibration: Part 2 – Vibration in buildings 1 to 80Hz.

ISO 2631-2:1989 Mechanical vibrations and shock: evaluation of human exposure to whole body vibration: Part 2 – Continuous and shock induced vibration in buildings (1 to 80Hz).