

Our Ref: RDV/ecy

24th March 2017

For the Attention of Matthew Parry
Cherwell District Council

By email only: matthew.parry@cherwell-DC.gov.uk

Dear Mr Parry

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Bicester Gateway: Application 16/02586/OUT

I am writing to you in support of the above planning application for a new 150 bed hotel and 160,000 sq ft B1 office/hi-tech development at Bicester Gateway.

I should start by disclosing that I act as marketing agent for Bloombridge and agreed the Option Agreement between them and the land owner. I am also a Board Member of the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and a board member of Experience Oxfordshire.

Earlier this year Experience Oxfordshire published a report which they commissioned by Destination Research investigating 2015 travel data. This showed tourism spend was up 5% per annum to £1.96 BN and overnight stays up 5% to 2.6M and 9.5M total nights. With the impact of Brexit on the pound this is likely to increase due to the dual effect of increased overseas travellers and 'staycationers'. The proposed employment growth in Bicester and impact of both improved rail service and the expansion of Bicester Village mean that the demand for overnight stays in Bicester is only going to increase.

Bicester Gateway occupies an important entry site into Bicester. It provides the opportunity to provide for both increased demand for overnight stays for both business and the leisure industry. Due to the increased connectivity with Oxford it offers an ideal location for visitors and conference guests to use during the year. Oxford remains underprovided for hotels and potential for expansion is limited.

The impact of a hotel as a catalyst for the development of the office/hi-tech park cannot be understated. In my experience as a letting agent, the availability of on site amenities such as a hotel are vital for the success of a new development and even more so in Bicester where there really isn't, as yet, a successful office sector. The proposal to develop the hotel upfront is important as it will open up the site for business, showing interested occupiers that Bicester Gateway is an emerging, established destination capable of delivering B1 buildings in time to suit the required timescales - typically 18 months from first enquiry. It is fair to say that business parks need a certain level of amenities in order to be attractive places for employees to work, which is a key locational decision factor for employers.

I therefore hope Cherwell District Council are able to fully support this planning application.

Yours sincerely

A large black rectangular box redacting the signature of Richard Venables.

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Director

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