

Application No.: 18/00904/F

Applicant's Name: W A Adams Partnership

Proposal: Formation of inland waterways marina with ancillary facilities building, car parking, access and associated landscaping including the construction of a new lake.

Location: Glebe Farm, Boddington Road, Claydon, Banbury, Oxfordshire OX17 1TD

Comments from the Economic Growth Service

Summary

In principle, Economic Growth would be supportive of the proposed development because of its potential to increase tourism revenue for the stretch of the Oxford Canal within Cherwell district, with the opportunity for businesses close to the canal such as pubs, restaurants, cafes and shops to benefit from a growth in trade. However, this would need to be balanced against potential impact the marina would have on the canal, roads and countryside.

Strategic context

The Cherwell Local Strategic Partnership's extant Adopted Cherwell Economic Development Strategy states that the Partnership will: ***"Work in partnership with businesses and tourism bodies to enhance and develop our tourism product, maximising the value whilst minimising any negative effects."*** The Partnership seeks to do this by ***"Attracting new investment in tourism infrastructure, enhancing visitor attractions, accommodation, transport, public realm, etc"***, with the result hoped to be ***"Increased visitors' length of stay and expenditure"***.

The proposed development creates not only a new marina with ancillary facilities, but also an irrigation lake enabling the applicants to apparently grow high value crops which require irrigation and are not dependent on subsidies. The application therefore represents a valuable farm diversification opportunity, providing a non-agricultural business for the farm in order to offset both the loss of land to HS2 construction and the reduction of financial subsidies to farmers following EU withdrawal.

Operational context

In creating a small number of jobs - estimated at three full-time and three part-time – there would be a further positive contribution to the local economy.

However, the applicant has produced a press release from 2018 in which the Canal & River Trust (CRT) identified the Oxford Canal as "the busiest canal in the country" (CRT Press Release 01 March 2018); and the CRT's 2018 Lockage Report gave Lock 21 Claydon Bottom as the busiest lock on the Cherwell stretch of the canal, with 4,983 lockages. With established marinas operating at nearby Fenny Compton Wharf and Cropredy, there could be expected to be an increased volume of boaters following the addition of a new marina. This stretch of the canal might risk being perceived as congested in high season but this

may be subjective and there may be capacity. If this is a concern, the Canal & River Trust should be able to provide advice.

The Transport Assessment does not predict a high level of road traffic for the marina, drawing on comparison figures from other marinas, including Crick in Northamptonshire. However, I note that Crick Marina is accessed by a regular two lane 'A' road (the A428), whilst this application site is only accessible via a single track country lane, with few passing places. The impact on existing local traffic - including walkers, cyclists and horse riders who currently enjoy the use of this lane - should be considered. Not only would the marina's shop and clubhouse be expected to receive regular deliveries, its sewage treatment plant would also be expected to require maintenance and treatment. I see no mention of delivery and maintenance vans/lorries within the Transport Assessment.

Conclusion

The proposed development has the potential to provide a positive economic impact by increasing the numbers of visits to the area and the amount of time and money visitors spend locally. It also promises to be a significant farm diversification investment. However, by creating a large 192-berth marina in this specific relatively remote location it raises some concerns as to its suitability. The potential impact on the canal, roads and countryside should be balanced with the potential economic benefits. The impact could possibly be mitigated to some extent through improving the lane with, for example, the creation of additional passing places and the advice of the highways authority should be considered.

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