

## **OBJECTION BY ROBERT ADAMS B.Sc. (Hort), MLI (retired)**

### **PROPOSED FURTHER AMENDMENTS TO GLEBE FARM CLAYDON OXON**

**REF. NO. 18/00904/F : AUGUST 2019**

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Further amendments have been proposed by the applicants including an array of new drawings and amended documents and reports. The scale of the amendments indicates that the applicants have recognised the numerous objections made by many people, and have made a number of major amendments to the design. Some of these will be discussed below.

1.2 Before that, however, it is regrettable that the applicants are persisting with the proposal that would lead to the over-supply of narrow boats in this relative small district between Cropredy and Fenny Compton and have not understood the consequential over-development that would occur, which if approved, would over-burden a small stretch of land encompassing both the historic Oxford Canal and its associated landscape with buildings, machinery, noise and lights.

#### **1.3 Over-Supply**

1.3.1 Already there are three narrowboat marinas from Cropredy to Fenny Compton, One is new to the south of Cropredy, the second is to the north of Cropredy which has approval for approximately 350 boats, and the third is Fenny Compton. The addition of 192 north of Claydon would increase the total on completion of all the marinas, over this short stretch of canal, to approximately 750.

1.3.2 The applicants have played down the anxiety about increased traffic on the canal but had the representative, speaking on the radio recently been with me this morning (30/8/2019), he would have seen queues from Claydon bottom lock to Claydon top lock, and this at 9.00am when the boats were beginning to ascend or descend the locks. Increase this number 'by a few' and increased delays would occur. If there are more than 'a few' boats travelling the delays through Claydon would increase. Already there are signs of frustration and annoyance by the boatpeople and it would be a mistake to consider this nothing more than 'a few' more boat movements.

#### **1.4 Over-Development**

1.4.1 The areas immediately around Claydon and between Claydon and Lower Boddington are rural in character and have been so for hundreds of years. The areas are unlikely to change in character (please see refusal of (*very small scale* – my italics) ) proposed nursery and ancillary works at Hay Barn, over the road from the proposed marina site, on the grounds that it would be 'residential development beyond the built-up limits of the nearest settlement', let alone a large scale development of the proposed residential marina, lifted high above this simple, functional landscape. This marina would include numerous residential boats, like the marina at Cropredy,

where children that might live there, could most likely attend the school in Cropredy. When the authorities were challenged over the approved *non-residential* Cropredy marina at a meeting in Claydon, it was admitted that there are no powers to prevent residential uses at Cropredy, and therefore, this is what would apply to Claydon. It would become by default a residential development, meaning the area of the size of Claydon village with an even greater population.

1.4.2 This would be a most serious incursion into the countryside, of greater scale and covering a wider area than some of Capability Brown's, the great landscape architect/gardener's, works. It would have the same result of sweeping away history and replacing it with something far less visually pleasing, serving far fewer people, let alone one that would encourage visits by the public, including especially the residents in Claydon.

1.4.3 There are no amenities in Claydon, no shops and no bus except on Thursdays for the Banbury market. There would therefore have to be either numerous journeys to Banbury or elsewhere for food, materials, etc., or there would be numerous delivery and other vehicles going to and from the proposed marina. Vehicles are to be advised to approach the marina from Lower Boddington and to leave going through Claydon. The representative on the radio stated that the number of movements would be small!

## 1.5 Objection to Over supply and Over-development

1.5.1 Because of the over-supply of narrowboats between Cropredy and Fenny Compton and the likely increase in traffic on the canal and on the local small scale country roads in the district, I contend that these contribute to unsustainable effects produced by the proposed marina.

1.5.2 Because of the over-development of this small scale parcel of land, in relation to a historic canal, including a large building and other works and maintenance structures, (still not identified despite previous objections), a vast area of water and 192 boats, (all leaving and entering the Oxford Canal, at one point) raised 5m. and more above the existing ground levels, with steep banks leading to drainage risks, including a number of new works to overcome pollution hazards, where there are none at the present, large areas of cars parked at intervals spread all around the proposed marina, alien landforms and the creation of a large lake to be served by one very small water ditch coming down from Claydon, the absence of detailed drawings giving adequate information on how landforms would relate to existing ground levels in particular at Glebe Farm House and outside the northern site boundary, and the lack of information on the planting associated with the eastern perimeters of the proposed lake, all combine to emphasise that this project has not been conceived in its entirety with much left open to the imagination.

1.5.3 On these two points alone, this project merits refusal as no complete picture emerges from the wide-ranging documents. It is surprising that the scheme makes no effort to encourage the village and its inhabitants to welcome such a development. They are to be refused entry into the marina, their landscape is to be closed off physically and visually, and the effect is the same as a notice board saying 'KEEP OUT'. Where are the benefits of that to the local community?

## 2.0 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

2.1 The differences so far gleaned from the plans (I cannot do a detailed appraisal of all

documents as I am to be on holiday, like many others) relate to the revised entrance, the effects of the adjusted earth bunds associated with it, the new foul and water drainage schemes, the altered surfaces of hard-standing, etc., the change in design of the proposed lake to be excavated to provide the spoil for the earth bunds, and the omission of the 3m. high earth bund around the marina basin, now replaced by heightened hard standing, etc.

## 2.2 New Entrance

2.2.1 The proposed new entrance to the marina would now be positioned 80 m. from the crest of the canal bridge and 90m. from the crest of the bridge over the former railway line and stream. It would be 40m north of the entrance to Hay Barn. The water level of the canal is put at 115.00 and the level of the Lower Boddington road at the proposed entrance is 113.300. However, the access road does not fall from the road to the marina, it rises first to 117m and then falls to 115.700, the level of the proposed marina inner ring road.

2.2.2 On either side of the access road are two large earth bunds both rising to 118m in height, i.e. 4.70m above the Lower Boddington Road. Instead of there being one high bund, there are now two. They both, however, still would completely screen the land to the east of the road, and therefore the marina as well. In one move, the applicants have destroyed a lovely view across open countryside both from the canal bridge and the road. What is the enhancement of the countryside in that? Why have such vast and high earthworks that completely destroy a valuable, existing experience been retained, when it is known what an environmental impact they would have?

2.2.3 It is understood that the proposed entrance and access road are wide enough not to be blocked in an emergency. Is this supported by a report?

2.2.4 If an extension to the time period is granted so that the village, who would still be seriously affected by the proposed marina, can hold a meeting to discuss this set of amendments, perhaps I will be able to comment on the other documents as well in a later submission.

## 2.3 Proposed Building

2.3.1 It is understood that there are no amendments to the proposed building and its height to the ridge. Therefore, it would still be approximately 8m above finished floor level i.e. approximately at a level of 125.700m. This would be more than 8m above the level of the canal and approximately 10m above the access point on the Lower Boddington Road. It would be seen from the canal, from the road to the south, from properties on the northern side of Claydon, and would be approximately 5m above the crest of the canal bridge. All the views from these aspects would screen the landscape beyond it and the nearer the building to the viewpoint, the greater the screening would be. Where is the enhancement of the countryside in that?

2.3.2 Yet again, no evidence has been given on the new drawings that show where additional ancillary protection structures, cranes, works area, etc. are proposed. How will boat maintenance and repair be carried out – in the open air? Or will there be protection, coverings, structures, etc. Despite these short-comings being complained about earlier, the applicant has paid no attention them in the revised layout. How can the proposals be examined in detail if this information is not available? What is the final picture of the development and what benefits would accrue to the locality and the village?

2.4 Drainage Amendments : new proposals are made for the disposal of foul drainage and surface water drainage. In principal, it would appear that at the end point, all water, in times of high water volumes on the site, would eventually enter the stream outside the northern boundary of the site.

2.4.1 Surface Water Drainage : a detention basin is noted on the drawings to be located quite near the Lower Boddington Road and would take water off this road at the site entrance. It would be taken to the detention basin, which is to be located on sloping land lower than the existing ground levels which are rising towards the higher former railway bridge. The detention basin is small and in times of flood overflow could occur onto neighbouring lower ground. No perimeter security fencing is shown around the basin to keep children away. In addition, a swale is to be located towards the south-east corner of the site. Yet again, little attempt has been made to absorb it into the landscape and no security measures around it are shown.

2.4.2 Foul Drainage : an extensive foul drainage system is now indicated on the drawings. No outflow is shown to the stream in times of flood. What guarantees are there in place that, if that should occur, pollution would not spread down the stream or into the marina basin?

2.4.3 Flood Risk : The removal of the low 3m. bund around the marina's perimeter has been replaced by raising the hard standing from 115.50m to 115.70m. This is an improvement so that views from the narrow boats of the surrounding landscape are no longer prevented. However, as the risk of flooding has not be recognised (flooding has occurred locally up to 0.70m within the last 30 years), the adjustment of hard standing height is only marginally satisfactory. As warnings of climate change perpetually warn of storms and heightened ground water levels, should not this level be adjusted upwards as well?

## 2.5 Proposed Eastern Lake

2.5.1 The proposed lake is smaller than that originally shown. Although water levels are indicated (still not clearly indicated) at 108.285, i.e. 6.715m below that canal or 7.415m below the revised marina hardstanding, there is also inadequately accurate information on how the levels of the canal and the proposed lake would relate along its southern boundary, and how the levels near Glebe House Farm would be accomplished. Contours are shown ending at boundary lines with no information on the levels in adjacent areas. What control would there be over its final shape? No realistic appreciation by others can be done without this additional contouring data.

2.5.2 The change in levels between the proposed lake and the marina surround are steep (7.415m), and the incline of the banks is very steep, with gradients of between 1 : 5 and 1 : 6 (slope rates of greater than 20% would be created) from the lower perimeter track to the upper inner track. Ramps for public use are usually at a gradient of 1 : 15 (6.6%). Therefore these ramps are severe and should not be approved. The ramps to accommodate the changes in level proposed should be 110m long, so that they would be in agreement with this public standard. Is it right to assume that everyone is able-bodied and can cope with the very steep, non-standard ramps.

2.5.3 Still no definition is given of the water source for the proposed lake and where it would enter it. No figures were also given for the volumes regularly to be available from the ditch that

might serve the proposed lake, which crosses under the canal and along the eastern boundary of Glebe Farm House. If this is the water to be used from this source, is it within the control of the applicants or are there other sources also not identified on the drawings? What time period has been assessed to fill the lake, let alone the marina?

## 2.6 Proposed Marina Entrance from the Oxford Canal

2.6.1 It is a concern that the marina is to be constructed with material from the proposed lake. It is assumed that excavated spoil would take two years to consolidate to take the marina perimeter construction. It is also assumed that the entrance from the canal would be stronger than the works needed around the marina because there would be continuous water movements between the canal and the marina. Also, because of the great level difference between the canal and existing ground levels, piling would be required to stabilise the marina entrance.

2.6.2 In the case of the proposed building and where structural or other weights would be applied to the made-up ground, piles would also be needed to support them. Construction noise would become significant and disturb any wildlife in the area, let alone the village and the canal corridor. If there were to be uneven settlement leading to leakage, piling would be required to provide security of support from the earth bunds. What would be the risk of subsoil settlement changing the profiles of the banks and affecting the hardstanding levels around the marina?

2.6.3 It is noted in the central vegetated ban there is a 'Wildlife Embankment'. It is most unlikely with the movement of people and the noise of the boats and air pollution in the area, there would be any significant wildlife. What wildlife enhancement is envisaged?

## 2.7 Bunds Generally

2.7.1 As the bunds retaining and enclosing the proposed marina would affect the local countryside, their relevance should be explored.

2.7.2 The revised bunds still are not typical of this area. They would remain an alien formation, quite out of scale with the smaller banks of the Oxford Canal, which affect only small areas of land. The canal allows historic land uses to run under it (drainage ditches to the lake, etc?) and roads to run over it. None of these works required 5 m. high bunds. The proposed marina bunds would rise 5m along the northern boundary and coupled with the stream banks of 2 – 3m. they would widen the area of ground disturbance considerably.

2.7.3 At Wormleighton Reservoir, west of the site, there was concern about the stability of the bunds, and piles were introduced. Are all the bunds around the marina to be piled?

2.7.4 If the bunds are not to be piled, what guarantees are there that they would be examined and maintained in perpetuity? In the case of changed ownership, what future guarantees would ensure that the marina would be returned to agriculture if a bund fails. What insurance cover would there be so that if the Oxford Canal, in the case of bund failure, were to drain would be carried by the applicant especially as in certain areas there is insufficient information on contour levels, etc.? Please also see Section 4.0 dealing with canal failures.

## 2.8 Glebe Farm House

2.8.1 Despite queries in previous submissions, there is still no information on the drawings showing how Glebe Farm House would be accessed. In the absence of this information, it is assumed that access would be from within the marina or from the lower road. In the latter case the access would be steep, because of the difference in levels and the limited distance between the marina and house boundary. Is the Council aware that information here is inadequate?

## 2.9 Footpath Access to the Marina and Public Footpath

2.9.1 The access footpath to the marina is now shown to be off the public footpath to the east of the site boundary. As locals are not to be encouraged to visit the marina, is it correct to assume that it would be gated on the boundary? This is not shown.

## 2.10 Security

2.10.1 There are limited fence lines indicated, but no overall fencing around the site. If security is an issue, where and how is the site to be secured? Again, this was raised in previous submissions, and is still unanswered. Is the Council satisfied with this response?

## 3.0 OBJECTION

3.1 This proposed project to build a narrowboat marina without any recognition of how it will affect the lives of the people within the village of Claydon. It also shows a lack of understanding of how new vehicle traffic would affect the village (exiting traffic from the marina is to be directed to Claydon whose roads are inadequate). Both these have ensured that local support for the proposed marina is hard to come by.

3.2 That there is a possibility that this proposed development is even considered appropriate in this agricultural landscape, unchanged for almost two hundred years in the service of a once strategic waterway, should **not** encourage the development of a vast modern marina that is not in any way associated with local settlements and people. The fact that locals would not be encouraged to have a relationship with land over which they have enjoyed views for generations, just because of a new development, is appallingly insensitive.

3.3 Because this proposal would increase waterway traffic significantly and unsustainably, by being placed within open, unspoilt countryside, with no amenities or services nearby, and which would require much carbon emissions to accomplish, it should be dismissed as totally inappropriate, with no environmental or other benefits whatsoever that would be of value to the local area or local people.

3.4 A consequence of the approval of this project would be to increase the number of approved narrowboats on the section of canal between Cropredy and Fenny Compton to 750. This would be disproportional and would also lead to over-development within an intimate area of countryside and also to the over-supply of narrowboats. The restricting effects of the Claydon locks on the ease of boat traffic has not been recognised in this amended number of boats. These two elements if approved would lower the quality of boat life along this section of

waterway, and would contribute to increased queues and significant delays through the Claydon Locks. By continuing with the proposed development, the applicants continue to ignore the water restrictions that already occur on the canal and would only be exacerbated by the large increase on boat movements.

3.5 That the water supply to the proposed lake is not identified clearly, is disrespectful of the local area, where, if the supply fails or is inconsistent, could lead to a marshy wasteland of no environmental value.

3.6 The scale of the proposed development is so disproportionate with and harmful to the local landscape and the local village, (covering a land area much like Claydon), it should not be allowed. No environmental enhancements have been proposed to mitigate the effects of this project on the landscape and the village. Why, therefore, is the project even being considered as it is so unrelated and harmful to, and destructive of, the local countryside?

3.7 That the village is not to be encouraged to visit the site and to be considered outsiders is insensitive in the extreme, especially when construction, service and delivery vehicles would be directed to and therefore through the village.

3.8 I therefore object very strongly to the proposed narrowboat marina at Glebe Farm. It is significantly damaging to the environment, to the canal environs and to character of the historic landscape uses of this part of Oxfordshire.

#### **4.0 CONDITIONS**

4.1 In addition to the conditions in my previous submission, the following should be added :

*‘That the applicants and their successors shall properly insure and maintain the marina and its bunds and other supporting structures in perpetuity to ensure that, in the case of failure, whether financial or physical, the marina will be restored to its original agricultural uses. Insurance levels will be approved by the local authority on an annual basis together with an approved annual valuation of the marina within its boundaries, as identified in the original approved plans and documents’.*

This condition has arisen because of recent canal failures where structures have failed leading to landslip, etc. This must not be allowed to happen at this location because of its sensitivity. Please see information on the next page

## Dam statistics



**D**ESPITE its efforts to rebrand as a wellbeing charity, with pricey TV adverts exhorting viewers to “recharge by water”, the Whaley Bridge dam incident put the Canal & River Trust’s (CRT) responsibility for a huge network of crumbling infrastructure firmly in the public eye.

CRT board papers show that a high number of infrastructure failures and emergency works on the canal network during 2018 had a “big impact in terms of navigation availability” and caused major planned maintenance work that should have been done over the 2018-19 winter to be pushed back to next winter.

The problems included the breach at Middlewich (see last *Eye*), the collapse of a culvert on the Leeds and Liverpool canal and landslips in the embankments at the Earlswood reservoir dam, near Solihull, and on the North Stratford canal.

In a report to the board earlier this year, asset improvement director Simon Bamford said that because of the need to fund this “significant number” of urgent repair jobs in the previous year, a number of necessary planned projects had been postponed, including relining various canal embankments in the North of England, repairing waterway walls and dredging at Ellesmere Port.

Works to rebuild lock walls on Llangollen

canal were cancelled as they turned out to be more “problematic” than expected and will be reattempted starting in November. Repairs to a grade II listed lock on the Marple flight on the Peak Forest canal took a lot longer than expected.

A repairs backlog pre-dates the 2012 creation of the trust, which inherited a £30m queue of works when the government decided to turn British Waterways into a charity (see *Eye* 1260). But it also inherited a handsome portfolio of waterside properties to help fund it – and receives a grant of around £40m a year from the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs every year until 2022 – after which it should taper off on the expectation that the CRT will become self-funding.

As well as performing poorly at keeping the canals open for navigation, the board reports show that the CRT was set to miss its 2019 targets on safety for both staff and visitors to the canals – and that was before a town nearly drowned!

## NUMBER CRUNCHING

**6 nights** Time 1,500

Whaley Bridge residents spent away from home due to danger of dam bursting and reservoir flooding town

**15** Number of UK reservoirs which, Environment Agency says, have capacity to threaten human life if they fail and are overdue for safety measures