

MIDDLETON STONEY PARISH COUNCIL RESPONSE

to APPLICATION 18/00825/HYBRID : HEYFORD PARK MASTERPLAN

I am writing with the formal response of Middleton Stoney Parish Council to the revised Heyford Park Masterplan application. Our principal concern is with the increased traffic implications for our village. We are grateful for the openness of CDC and OCC officers in explaining the further mitigation proposed, but we do not think this sufficient. **We therefore oppose this proposal and urge the Planning Committee to reject it.**

Our starting point is that there is already severe congestion in the village notably at the signalised junction of the B430 and B4030 which is harming the environment and safety of villagers, and adding to pollution. Indeed in commenting on the separate Great Wolf proposed application, the Local Highways Authority noted “There is currently severe congestion at the junction” which would be exacerbated by additional traffic. This would be “contrary to paragraphs 103,108 and 109 of the NPPF, Cherwell Local Plan Policy SLE4 and Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan 4 Policy 17”

Turning to the current proposal we note that even the proposed developers accept that with their proposed package of mitigation, the situation would at best be “no worse than the current situation without development”. We believe it is long overdue that the situation is improved by both Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District Council, not just ‘made no worse’ by the ever-increasing development affecting the community here.

While there are elements of the proposed mitigation we welcome, we believe that overall the development would significantly exacerbate a position which is already deeply unsatisfactory. Over many years now, the community of Middleton Stoney has been detrimentally affected by new developments all around it and there is a strong view in the village that enough is enough. Our community needs to be given adequate consideration. Our community should be allowed to enjoy the sustainable and environmentally pleasant lifestyle that planners insist are provided for their inhabitants of new developments.

Overall Traffic Volumes

For residents who live adjacent to the roads in Middleton Stoney, traffic queues in the morning and evening rush hour are common. On the Ardley Road north of the crossroads, residents experience some 35,000 vehicle movements a week with traffic regularly queuing from the traffic lights back out of the village past the start of the 30mph zone and indeed the start of the 40mph zone. The proposed routing of the traffic from the Upper Heyford development will increase traffic flows significantly. Indeed an extra 1000 car journeys from residents in Upper Heyford would mean a 25% increase in vehicles. The pollution alone from that level of increase should be sufficient to confirm the unsuitable nature of the proposed mitigations.

Dealing with the key elements of the proposed mitigation in turn:

Heavy Goods Vehicles

We welcome the proposed weight restrictions on Bicester Road. We believe these are already long overdue (please see attached video file to illustrate the danger to life for pedestrians presented by the current traffic issues here). However we are concerned that this would only be a partial solution, and consideration must be given to weight restrictions being introduced North/South on the B430. The proposed restriction on the Bicester Road would at best manage 25% of the HGV traffic although there are no guarantees that it would not simply re-route HGVs onto the North/South road instead. There are currently c2500 HGV movements a week through the village, a large majority of which happen during the working week.

Were the proposal accepted, we would also like to see the proposed routing agreement on construction traffic, and associated monitoring/enforcement activities, to ensure it does not pass through the village. Although we understand that a routing agreement already exists for businesses at Upper Heyford, the InHealth HGV regularly passes through the village and without enforcement we fear many others will simply ignore the restriction.

New Bus Services

Again we in principle welcome the suggestion of an improved bus service from Heyford to Bicester but are not convinced that it will encourage sufficient passenger numbers from Heyford and subsequently divert traffic from Middleton Stoney. At least initially it will only be twice an hour and it is clear from the extremely low number of passengers (our residents regularly report just 3 or 4 passengers on the 50+ capacity buses) on the existing 250 service that most residents are likely to choose to use their own cars. We have not seen a convincing travel plan from the developers which would convince people to transfer from private cars to public transport, and understand there is at the moment no camera number plate recognition enforcement available in Cherwell to enable the proposed bus gate restrictions to work. Finally there is nothing in the proposed plans about what will happen when the s106 subsidies from OCC run out.

Even if the bus gate enforcement were to work, the likely outcome is simply to divert considerable extra car and HGV traffic down Ardley Road (B430). Many of the cars will then turn left into Bicester Road adding to the long traffic delays at peak times.

Finally we fear the result of this proposed mitigation would be to render the existing 250 service uneconomic depriving Middleton Stoney residents of their existing service to and from Oxford.

Cycle Lane

Again this is welcome in principle but ignores the fact that cyclists will be forced to ride flanked closely by large HGVs as well as large numbers of cars through a very narrow and congested junction in Middleton Stoney (as illustrated by the attached video). This is unlikely to encourage many new cyclists. We believe it would be much better to provide an off-road segregated cycle track on the whole route even if that necessitates narrowing the road for traffic in places.

Traffic Calming

We note that the developers are proposing s106 support for a number of neighbouring villages but not Middleton Stoney even though the traffic consequences here are likely to be amongst the most severe. We think this inequitable, and were the proposal to be approved it should be on the basis that

Middleton Stoney be allocated a comparable amount of s106 funds for further traffic calming measures.

Other Issues

We note that there are several other measures which could easily be taken to mitigate consequences of this development. One suggestion is a pedestrian crossing at the existing signalled junction to make it safer for children and others to access the playground. Again, this is something we feel is long overdue, are surprised this has not featured in CDC and OCC's transport planning to date, and feel should be installed regardless of any future development at Heyford Park.

2 final points

Implications of Covid19

We are living through an extraordinary pandemic which will have far reaching implications for many years to come. These inevitably will include the public's unwillingness to use public transport due to health concerns. It also calls into question the financial viability of all developers. Were the development to proceed, we would therefore want to be consulted on, and subsequently notified about, regarding the key trigger points on the achievement of which the various mitigation measures are implemented. Our concern is that the development will either stall or take much longer than foreseen, and the promised mitigation will not happen. So for this reason as well we would:

1. Urge the Council to **reject** the proposal at this time until the longer-term implications of the current pandemic are clearer.
2. Work with Middleton Stoney community to work towards installing measures outlined above, particularly the HGV restriction, **regardless** of any Heyford Park future development.

Consultation with Parish Council

We strongly regret that there has not been better and more regular engagement with the Parish Council in the formulation of these proposals. It is a very clear and serious affront to local democracy that we were unaware of the detailed planned mitigation until the formal consultation on the application. We are grateful to Councillor Ian Corkin, Andrew Lewis (CDC) and Joy White (OCC)

for their belated efforts in the last week in facilitating discussion on the proposals, but feel strongly that it is not reasonable to expect Parish Councils to plough through thousands of pages in order to find the passages of relevance to them. We therefore reiterate our call to CDC to make the planning process consultation much more user-friendly.

CONCLUSION

The Parish Council has drawn up a draft policy to promote a good, clean, safe, healthy and pleasant environment in Middleton Stoney. These proposals fail to support these aspirations, are a step in the wrong direction and we urge the Council to reject them.