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Somerton Parish Council
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Application Number 18/00825/HYBRID

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Somerton Parish Council has the following comments to make regarding the Masterplan

Leisure Route

1. The proposal of a leisure route around the perimeter and connecting to surrounding villages. While in principle this is a good idea it creates extra issues we would like taking into account.
 - a. **The right of way that passes from the northern perimeter through Troy Farm** to Fritwell cuts right through the middle of the farm. We would like to point out this is a working farm with heavy machinery and lots of daily activity. The original footpaths were designed to service the farm and local farm workers from surrounding communities and did not have in mind the sort of traffic 3000 extra houses could bring through the working farm area. There will also be the draw to the central activity area in HP (View Tower, Zip Wire etc) in the other direction. So we would expect to see a massive increase in the use of the footpaths creating a health and safety risk if the path was to remain in its current location. We also seek clarification on what is meant by Leisure route; if all these paths are intended for leisure; cycles, horses walkers etc. **Somerton PC request there be funding allocated for upgrading these paths and re-routing part of it** so the leisure traffic does not have to pass right through the middle of Troy Farm with funding towards planting of trees and hedges to improve the leisurely aspect of the route.
 - b. **The Portway on the western perimeter** is planned to be reopened to connect to Upper Heyford and open the route to Kirtlington. The PC welcome this, however the part of the Portway that runs along the perimeter fence needs some careful consideration. It is adjacent to the fence and a very short distance from the perimeter road. We envisage this road to be very busy when there is full activity in place. Especially with the setting up and breaking down of film sets. We said in 2018 that we would like to see this closed because it runs adjacent to a bridleway and so makes the use of the bridleway for horses dangerous. Commercial traffic on the perimeter road is not compatible with a bridleway: We have been advised this would not be an issue but it already is. Imagine a small child on Pony, huge juggernaut passes, is not aware of bridleway, pony spooks, It's just an accident waiting to happen. **Rusting barbed wire** (rolled on the top of the fence) just adds to the problems. While out of reach to most walkers, it presents a threat to a horse

rider on a spooked horse. **Somerton PC would like to see this road perimeter closed or the very least a weight restriction on it.** (There have been at least 2 speed related incidents that we know of. We would also like to see an enforcement of the 20 mph speed limit. **Somerton PC** also request there should be considerable planting to buffer the bridleway from the road and suitable signage on the perimeter road to warn users of the close proximity of the bridleway and an improvement to the current fence to address the rusty barbed wire.

- c. **Leisure Route to Ardley** **FIGURE 6.2a** suggests a Leisure route to Ardley utilising a marked Bridleway. Somerton PC support the opening up of these routes! However you must know this route is not safe for walkers and impassable for horse riders. As it crosses the railway on the very busy B430. Is it the intention to make this route accessible for horses and will there be funding for this? As this route is not currently functional as a bridleway, (see photos from 1 June 2020 below) and even dangerous for walkers. The bridleway crosses the railway on the very busy B430 but the access from the gate is impossible on horseback and very difficult on foot as it is blocked by Armco barrier and overgrowth. After navigating the busy B430 bridge (on horseback *(assuming you have a steady Eddie that can navigate the 4' Armco and turn on a sixpence to avoid oncoming lorries)* –with current traffic levels and speeds this of course would be impossible. The Bridleway then leaves the highway and runs parallel to the railway on the Ardley side towards Ardley wood. This is not accessible by horse riders as the only way through is over 3 styles and overgrown tracks. The bridleway runs through the BBOWT nature reserve and the track is totally impassable on horseback. For it to be a viable bridleway and “Leisure route to Ardley, another route needs to be found away from busy traffic on the B430. **Somerton PC request for funding to re-route this bridleway to the other more suitable bridge just a little north near to the "earthworks" (fig 1).** This would be far more economical than trying to make the current Bridleway useable and only requires a small change.

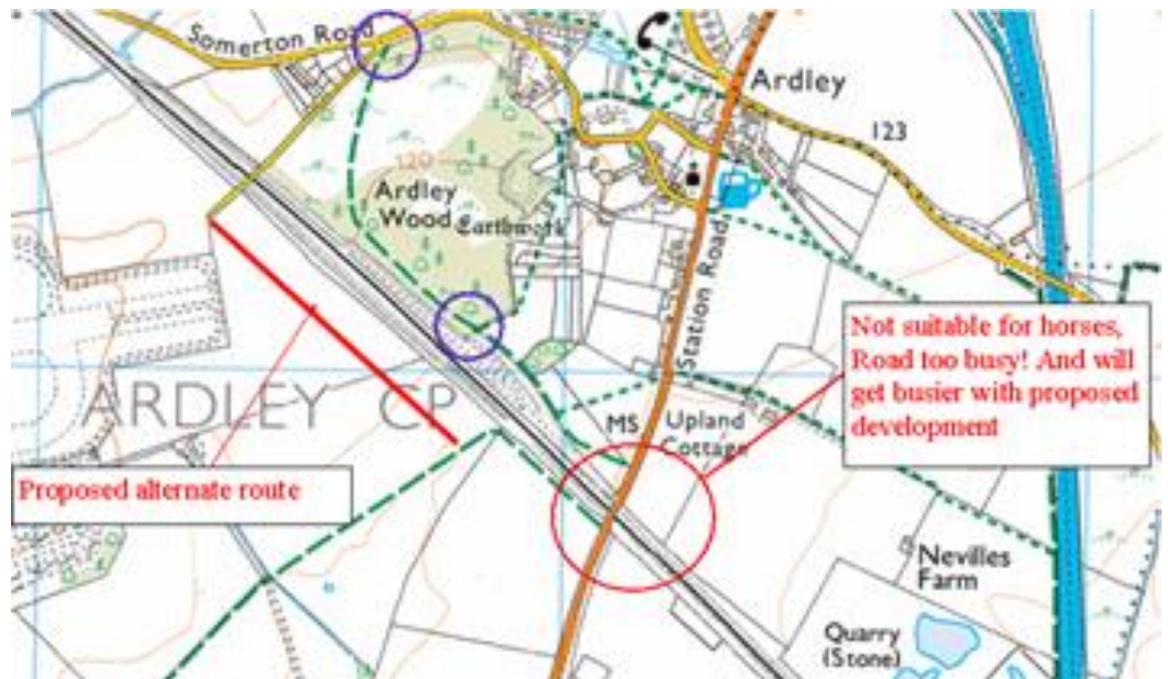
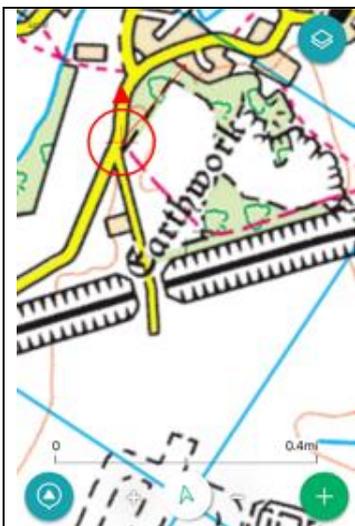


Fig 1 showing our proposed alternative route.



Entrance to Bridleway too narrow for horse (see OS map left for position)



Bridleway totally over grown



Bridleway on B430 near Ardley



Bridleway in B430 near Ardley



Bridleway in B430 near Ardley



B430 Armco



B430 Bridleway gate to left of sign



B430 View of Bridleway Entrance



B430 Gate behind Armco



B430 Marked Bridleway, behind Armco



Suggested Alternative Bridge Crossing further north near Ardley "Earthworks" (see OS)

2. **Observation Tower and Zip Wire.** While we do not object to this feature **Somerton PC would like to see some restrictions on the times and dates it is open to limit noise and possible light pollution to the surrounding area.**
3. **Filming Area 27;** Our main concerns with regard to the filming (as we stated in 2018) are **Noise and light pollution and contributing to excessive traffic of the perimeter road not only** during filming, but also during the set-up and taking down, heavy traffic, loud generators and bright lighting. Previous filming activity has already demonstrated enormous effect on the rural nature of the adjacent area, i.e. dwellings adjacent to the northern perimeter. Village Farm, The Cattery, Troy Cottages, Troy Farm. Excessive noise during shoots has already caused concerns for residents and horse owners; horses being spooked enough to jump out of their paddock. With regular filming, the potential for personal injury would be significantly increased. We request the following be taken into account:
 - a. Excessive noise should be kept to a minimum; there should be restrictions placed on filming activities, so that set up times and filming outside of normal working hours is kept to a minimum.
 - b. There should be liaison with **ALL** neighbouring dwellings with advanced warnings of excessive noise.
 - c. Access to Filming Area 27 West and 27 East should not be via the perimeter road as we perceive this could at times be substantial and will impact on the amenity of Village farm which is close to the boundary as well as adding risk to the use of the Portway bridleway. (details above in point 1b)

Somerton Parish PC would also like to express their concern to the location for this filming Area, 27 West; its use of Pyrotechnics and its close proximity to Portway Bridleway. There is the potential for a Health and safety risk to Horse riders in the event of loud explosions. **Somerton PC request there be restrictions on noise from this area to protect the bridleway users.**

4. **Change of use of hangers “26” from English Heritage to Storage:** our concerns regarding this relate to the potential for noise and light disturbance and we asked that activity be restricted to normal working hours Monday to Friday in order to protect the amenity of the residents adjacent to these: ie. Village Farm (150M from the perimeter fence), The Cattery Troy Farm & Troy Farm Cottages. **Somerton PC request there be no late night Activity at this site.**
5. **Community Health Hub.** The PC fully supports the development of a community Health Hub on the Heyford Park site but would also like to note, that this would increase traffic volumes through surrounding villages including Somerton. We would like to see funding for transport for all surrounding villages and request that Somerton and Fritwell receive an equal amount to the other surrounding villages to mitigate traffic issues.
6. **Bus Service.** While we support the planned bus services, we would however like to see more to connect the surrounding villages, Somerton, Fritwell, North Aston etc. to HP for using the Health centre and other amenities. Otherwise there will be an impact on traffic volumes through Somerton. **Somerton PC request the possibilities of a regular bus service for Fritwell Somerton North Aston, be investigated thoroughly**
7. **Strategic Planting and Noise Management.** We would like to see a lot more strategic planting along boundary fences to minimise noise and improve the visual appearance. To be effective this needs to be very dense, ideally this should be happening immediately as it will take time to get established. **Somerton PC request Dorchester Living Ltd look at other measures to contain noise such as Earth Berms and sound walls.** Existing planting outside of the northern perimeter on Troy Farm land should not be relied on for this purpose, this has no density and is not effective against noise pollution, and further measures on HP side are required.

- 8. Traffic Mitigation.** Most of Somerton village roads have high banks and no pavement, which presents its own set of problems for pedestrians' safety, having to navigate the road to the Play Park or the Village Hall with small children for example is a great concern for our residents. Somerton was a quiet village but has seen a large increase in traffic since the developments at Heyford Park. Most of the houses in Somerton front onto the road and there is much concern about speeding traffic through the village and surrounding roads. With the promotion of a leisure route to Somerton, we only envisage more pedestrians tackling these dangerous roads and while we welcome walkers through the village we would like to seek help from experts on how to address this issue and ask for the funding to support this. We would like to see the Somerton to Ardley road speed, restricted to 40 MPH. and some SID in place to enforce it. In Somerton village we have already sited a SID (funded by the PC) to reduce speeds and this has shown to be effective to a degree. We would like to see funding for more of these in our village. . The £25k that has been suggested by the transport assessments, while welcome, would not be enough to address all the issues. The developers are creating a destination for people outside of HP, with Health Centres, retail, sports & leisure facilities etc. and this will only impact on the traffic volumes on our small roads. **Somerton PC request that more contributions to traffic mitigation than currently offered is requested.**

(We would also like to enquire as to the current status of the Barley Mow traffic mitigation project at Upper Heyford and the 40K S106 money already paid to OCC from the last tranche of development. The MCNP discussed the use of this money in great depth and agreed it should all be spent in Upper Heyford on a single project. When most people involved in this decision (parish councillors) are all volunteers, giving their valuable time freely; it's extremely disappointing to be still waiting for this project to see the light of day. Where is this money? and when will it be used for what we had all agreed to spend it on in 2018? What has delayed this project? What a total waste of all our time!!)

Weight Limit on the Heyford Road and the Ardley Road Somerton. Somerton was a sleepy Oxfordshire village, with most dwellings having direct frontage onto the through road and has very little pavements. **Somerton PC would like to see a weight restriction on the roads mentioned above,** especially if Lower Heyfords and Fritwell are successful in their request for the same.

9. We would just like to note that we are not happy with this planning Application being processed during the current Covid Pandemic as Parish Councils and the MCNP forum have not had a chance to meet properly to discuss thoroughly.

Somerton Parish Council do not object to this application provided that all the above points are secured by a condition, requiring full implementation within 6 months of the date of approval of this application.