

CAVERSFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Mrs Jane Olds, Parish Clerk

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Response to Planning Application 18/01253/F

26 September 2018

Dear Maria,

Caversfield Parish Council considered planning application reference 18/01253/F at Bicester Heritage, Buckingham Road, OX26 5HA for 'Erection of hotel and conference facility with associated access, parking, and landscaping' at the meeting on 20 September and had the following objections.

While the Parish Council is not against appropriate development with adequate mitigation, a number of objections were raised at the meeting.

The design of the hotel was not aesthetically pleasing and the Parish Council noted the concerns of Historic England. The addition of the plant area on the top of the building (which is only shown as a thin grey line on the plans) appears to make the building almost a whole storey higher than the current hangars and, while it doesn't increase the 'habitable volume' of the building, it does increase the overall height, making it taller than the surrounding hangars. This does not comply with Policy ESD15.

It was noted that there were not only rooms, but apartments in the hotel. The Parish Council requests that there should be a limit to the length of occupancy so that they may not be used as permanent dwellings.

The building overall will have an overbearing effect on the properties in Turnpike Road, particularly those properties facing towards the airfield. Many of the upper floor rooms of the hotel, which will be too high to be screened by the perimeter hedging, are likely to have a direct view into the residential houses. This also does not comply with Policy ESD 15.

Safety implications regarding the landing and flying of aircraft from the airfield were also raised. The overshoot area immediately opposite - in what is now the 'American Park' - within the village of Caversfield, may not be as accessible.

The village of Caversfield is, essentially a dark place apart from a small amount of street lighting installed by the MoD. It is assumed that both the hotel and the car parks will cause light pollution. The Parish Council, therefore, requests that modern techniques of movement sensors in the external lighting will ensure that lights are

only used when needed; more efficient LED bulbs would reduce the light pollution as much as possible in line with Policy ESD13 and these should be included as Planning Conditions.

The Parish Council did not believe that there was adequate parking provision for the project. While the travel plan assumes that many people will come by bus or train, this may not be the case as the train service to Bicester from London is not as regular as it should be, often with 50 minutes between trains and then two arriving almost at the same time.

Considering Policy SLE4: The Parish Council was very concerned about the local highway infrastructure – particularly on the Buckingham Road A4421 as no provision appeared to have been made for any traffic management mitigation proposals for busy periods.

The A4421 is already a busy road (even five years ago there were more than 6,000 vehicle movements a day) with a 50mph limit; with an additional junction will come additional risk and potential accidents unless the speed is reduced to at least 40mph. It should also be remembered that the A4421 is one of the registered Haul Roads for both HS2 and the East / West Rail project which will increase vehicle numbers – particularly HGVs for many years to come.

The additional junction entrance is also proposed to be unmanned which caused concern.

The vehicular access to the site is also contrary to the 'RAF Bicester Planning Brief' published by the District Council on 7 September 2009. In Section 3.9, the third paragraph states that *"it is not considered appropriate to introduce any additional or alternative vehicular access points into either the technical or domestic site, as this would disturb the historic integrity of the layout which so clearly defines the former function of the site. Dependent upon the future uses, however, it may be appropriate to re-use existing gated access points or open up new ones to ensure ease of pedestrian and cyclists' access only, subject to safe crossing points over the existing highway network being provided."* A safe crossing point is yet to be provided.

With regard to pedestrian access, although there is mention of a Toucan Crossing in the Travel Plan, it is not on the plans, and as mentioned above, the Parish Council believes should have been a condition of the occupation of the site. This Toucan Crossing will be even more essential to assist pedestrians crossing the road from the village of Caversfield and north Bicester due to the increases in traffic which the hotel is likely to produce. Provision and funding via S106 should be made for this crossing which needs to be near to the bus stops, north of the main entrance to the Bicester Heritage Technical Site.

S106 funding should also be considered to reduce the speed limit from the Stratton Audley Turn to the roundabout to 40mph.

Parking in the village when Bicester Heritage has events has become a significant issue. The Parish Council would like to have additional clauses in the Travel Plan to prohibit people (both customers and staff) using the hotel or other areas of the Bicester Heritage site parking on the roads around Caversfield. This could mean that all members of staff have parking permits so that they can be easily identified.

With this in mind, the Parish Council would request S106 funding to pay for a traffic management scheme within the village (possibly double yellow lines, but not limited to this) and to agree that during events, their traffic management plan must include stopping their visitors impeding the day-to-day lives of the villagers.

This hotel will have a significant impact on the village of Caversfield. While Bicester Heritage do give local residents discounted tickets for their events, the impact of a hotel will be far greater. With this in mind, the Parish Council requests that a significant discount is given to local residents for the use of the leisure facilities.

I trust that this is of help to you and the Planning Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Jane Olds