

Coalition of Local Parish Councils

27 November 2025

Response to Planning Application Consultation 25/02232/OUT

Outline application with all matters reserved for tourism development Including outdoor and indoor theatres, restaurants, hotels, conference facilities, offices, warehousing and storage, security control centre, medical centre, animal facilities (including stables, aviary, animal sheds), laundry facility and workshops, and supporting infrastructure including waste management centre, wastewater treatment facility, energy centre and sub-stations, photovoltaic (pv) solar panels, water storage tanks and pumps, lakes and water management systems, structural landscaping, internal footpaths, internal vehicular routes, active travel routes, parking and access (outline masterplan).

Submitted of Behalf of the Members of the Parish Council Coalition

Blackthorn
Bucknell
Cottisford
Deddington
Duns Tew
Farthinghoe
Finnmere
Fringford
Fritwell
Godington
Hethe
Launton
Lower Heyford and Caulcott
Middleton Stoney
North Aston
Somerton
Souldern
Steeple Aston
Stoke Lyne
Upper Heyford

Puy du Fou – Coalition of Local Parish Councils – Objection

We represent 20 Parishes in the vicinity of Bucknell that would be significantly impacted by the consequences of the Puy du Fou planning application. As a coalition of Parish Councils we strongly object to the proposals being put forward by Puy du Fou to build a visitor attraction in Bucknell.

The following are the reasons the Coalition believes the application must be refused. In summary:

- **Agricultural**

Sterilisation of ca. 34 hectares of Best and Most Versatile (subgrade 3a) land (BMV) – poorer quality land must instead be considered for this application.

The impact on BMV land did not form part of the applicant's site comparison criteria. The applicant's defence that the proportion of BMV land to be destroyed is not significant in national terms is not a relevant test in planning law.

- **Archaeology**

The area is rich in highly significant archaeological assets going back to pre-historic times. Sampling intensity was materially below Oxfordshire's required best practice, coverage gaps were significant, and reliance on post-permission 'record and advance understanding' conflicts with the NPPF policy position that recording is not a justification for loss.

- **Ecology and drainage**

Surveys were limited due to weather and access, yet the applicant still submits its application in an incomplete form. Irreplaceable habitats would be destroyed and there is no mitigation offered.

The application fails the NPPF test for irreplaceable habitats. It foreseeably causes deterioration to ancient woodland and veteran trees, and no "wholly exceptional" case or bespoke compensation has been made or offered. The site also overlaps a Conservation Target Area (CTA), which has been carefully designated by District Council planners in the local plan.

- **Heritage**

The applicant's proposals would erode the historic agricultural setting and harm the setting of Bainton, Bucknell and Stoke Lyne. There is no justification provided by the applicant for the harm its plans will cause; the applicant focuses on visual aspects – this is not enough. It must fully consider sound, light and activity and the impacts that those points will have on heritage assets.

- **Light pollution**

The applicant has failed to appreciate the site's dark-sky sensitivity, has failed to provide receptor based data analysis and has ignored the ecologically sensitive nature of the site.

- **Local plan conflict**

The plans are not in Cherwell local plan and, thankfully despite lobbying by the applicant, officers at Cherwell District Council did not acquiesce to the applicant's request to change wording and class the area as an 'omission site' in the local plan.

Further, the local plan policy states that large schemes are expected to be situated in allocated sites, not in unallocated rural regions, and recent rulings by the Supreme Court uphold the primacy of the local plan in decision-making.

- **LVIA and Public Rights of Way**

The proposed development would result in an unacceptable visual intrusion into the open countryside; would be inconsistent with the established character of the Oxfordshire Estate Farmlands; would diminish the tranquillity of the area; and would harm the visual amenity and experience of users of Public Rights of Way through and around the site.

- **Minerals safeguarding**

A significant portion of the proposed development site (approximately 45 hectares) falls within a designated Mineral Safeguarding Area for crushed rock, as defined by Policy M8 of the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan.

Oxfordshire County Council's Minerals and Waste Policy Team objects to the application on the grounds that it would result in the sterilisation of a potentially substantial mineral reserve, estimated at over 20 million tonnes of limestone, at a time when the county's landbank for crushed rock is below the national policy minimum.

- **Noise pollution**

Bucknell's submission has been supported by a competent person, qualified to conduct noise impact assessments for planning applications. This work, under separate submission shows methodological errors in the applicant's submission and concluding (with comprehensive evidence) that noise levels from the site will exceed the statutory safe thresholds.

No community should experience an increase in noise that would affect its quality of life from such a development. This application has the nearest residential

communities less than 1km from the site with a moderate residential density. When compared to the applicant's other sites in France (3km – low density) and Spain (10km – very low density), the choice of this location has to be questioned and transferring experiences from other sites to this application need to be assessed in this context.

There is no legal requirement proposed by the applicant to maintain all noise below the existing, correctly calculated, background levels at different times of day throughout the year. The applicant needs to have legally enforceable mitigation measures in place to stop all sound sources immediately should any incursion of those background limits occur and be prevented from resuming sound sources for a set period of time.

- **Power Infrastructure**

The proposed development faces a fundamental obstacle regarding power supply for its later scale-up phases, as confirmed by both National Grid and Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN). There is currently zero firm headroom at the East Claydon Grid Supply Point, Bicester North Bulk Supply Point, and the relevant primary substations, with all available capacity already allocated and no surplus available for new large-scale connections. Both National Grid and SSEN have triggered reinforcement works, but these are not expected to be completed until at least 2031, and further upgrades at Bicester North are contingent on the replacement of the East Claydon substation, which itself will not even enter public consultation until 2026. This means there is no credible route to a secure, non-curtailed electricity supply for the later phases of the proposed development within the applicant's intended timeframe, and any interim reliance on on-site solar and battery storage would only provide limited, short-duration cover, insufficient for either peak or winter demand.

Given these constraints, the public interest clearly lies in prioritising scarce electrical capacity for essential local needs, such as housing and critical public services, which are already being delayed due to grid limitations. Approving a discretionary, high-demand leisure development in the face of these unresolved infrastructure deficits would risk further delaying much-needed homes and operational facilities, such as the Thames Valley Police forensics centre, which is already set to operate on a partial supply until at least 2037.

- **Socio-economic harm**

The applicant's socio-economic case is grossly overstated, meaning there is no material benefit to the district. Their claim that £1 spent in the park will generate £3.20 for the local economy relies on opaque inputs and gross multipliers, and incorrectly assumes that significant expenditure on transportation (e.g. fuel and rail fares) is captured and/or stays in the region. Direct employment is predominantly part-time seasonal, and no staff accommodation is proposed despite large

visitor-night forecasts. Factoring in realistic wages, rents and labour-market tightness shows very high affordability pressure and displacement risk.

- **Transport and travel**

The applicant's own modelling admits the development will worsen traffic, yet their submission fails to meet National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requirements for sustainable transport and mitigation. Local roads and the Strategic Road Network are already at breaking point and the applicant offers no credible plan to address the surge in vehicles that their scheme would generate.

Critical risks to properties north of the site, such as Swifts House and those in Stoke Lyne, are ignored. The assessment overlooks the reality that surrounding villages already face gridlock, and the night-time exodus of visitors would bring intolerable noise and light pollution to rural communities.

No meaningful analysis has been provided for the impact on Junction 9 of the M40, a known bottleneck where congestion routinely causes delays and frustration for residents and businesses.

The public transport claims made by the applicant are questioned by statutory bodies – 50% arriving by transport is widely recognised as being unrealistic and the applicant needs to rework its application with correct data and a full and meaningful assessment of all traffic concerns raised.

Cumulative Impact

The proposed development must be considered in the context of an unprecedented concentration of major schemes in rural North Oxfordshire, including the Heyford Park “new town”, the Oxfordshire Rail Freight Interchange, and the Baynard’s Green logistics developments.

Taken together, these projects would concentrate extraordinary visitor, HGV, and commuter flows, as well as industrial-scale built form, in a small rural area that lacks the highway capacity, public services, and environmental headroom to absorb them. Oxfordshire County Council’s “Strategic Considerations” highlight that while each application must be judged on its own merits, the cumulative impacts of multiple large developments – on transport, air quality, noise, carbon, water / wastewater, biodiversity, landscape, heritage, and social infrastructure – are severe and cannot be ignored.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires decision-makers to refuse development where residual cumulative impacts, after mitigation, would be severe.

Piecemeal decision-making risks disaster for our local communities, the environment and the region’s heritage. We urge the planning authority to require a single, independently audited cumulative impact assessment covering all major schemes in

the area before any determination is made. Only by considering the full, combined effects can the public interest be protected and sustainable development ensured.

Summary

The proposed site is wholly inappropriate for this application given all of the points raised. The application should be refused and the applicant encouraged to find an alternative site where issues that are described here are not material considerations to such an application.

This objection represents the response and view of the Coalition of Parishes.