Islip Parish Council Response to Screening Opinion Application

Islip Parish Council has reviewed the EIA Screening Request submitted by Barwood Land for the proposed 250-dwelling development on the former Esso Petroleum/RAF fuel depot site off Bletchingdon Road.

We strongly believe that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) should be required for this development for the following key reasons:

1. **Site Contamination History**: The site has been used as a fuel depot by the RAF and later by Esso Petroleum from the 1940s until 1994. Previous ground investigations found "made ground and hydrocarbon odour and staining across much of the Site, associated with the general tanks/structures and the historical sludge pits."
2. **PFAS/PFOS Contamination Concerns**: We have significant concerns regarding potential contamination with 'forever chemicals' (PFAs and PFOS) at this former fuel depot. There is evidence of "a higher incident of cancer because of exposure to these chemicals, which are highly toxic and now banned. Former RAF personnel have been affected."
3. **Inadequate Assessment in the Screening Report**: The report downplays contamination risks as "moderate to low" without comprehensive testing specifically for PFAS/PFOS chemicals. This conclusion is premature given the site's history and the potential serious health implications.
4. **Proximity to Sensitive Receptors**: The site borders residential properties to the south and southwest, and is near Gallos Brook (a tributary of the River Ray), creating potential pathways for contaminants to affect both residents and the wider water environment.
5. **Scale of Development**: The 250 dwellings on 13.48 hectares "exceeds two of the three criteria as the Site area exceeds the 5ha threshold and the Proposed Development comprises more than 150 dwellings as listed within Schedule 2 10(b)" of the EIA Regulations.
6. **MOD Safeguarding Requirements**: The Ministry of Defence has identified that the site occupies multiple safeguarding zones surrounding RAF Weston on the Green. The MOD has specifically stated that drainage schemes "could increase the bird strike risk to aircraft" and that they "will need to be consulted on any drainage proposals and landscaping schemes." This additional regulatory complexity further supports the need for comprehensive assessment.

The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 require consideration of "the risk of major accidents and/or disasters... and the risks to human health." The potential presence of persistent, toxic chemicals such as PFAS/PFOS constitutes precisely such a risk.

For these reasons, Islip Parish Council requests that Cherwell District Council requires an Environmental Impact Assessment for this development, including comprehensive testing for PFAS/PFOS and other contaminants, assessment of remediation options, and evaluation of potential impacts on human health and the environment.