

7 May 2025

Dear Neighbouring Parish

Puy du Fou – Parish Councils’ Coalition of Objection

In 2008, 19 local Parish Councils came together to oppose plans for the incinerator at Ardley, creating a powerful lobby, which generated significant traction with Oxfordshire County Council and the media. Ten or so years later, Parishes Against the Wolf was established and 35 Parish Councils and villages, representing over 25,000 residents, opposed the plans for the Great Wolf development in Chesterton. Both of these collective actions were an essential – possibly even decisive – initiative, which led to both planning applications being rejected. As you know, planning permission was eventually granted on appeal by HM Planning Inspectorate, but not before the power of the Parish Council coalitions had won the day at the local level.

Our rural community, comprising small, poorly-funded but highly resilient and beautiful villages now faces an existential challenge in the form of Puy du Fou’s forthcoming application to build a 400+ acre theme park on productive farmland and ancient woodland at Bucknell. If successful, the theme park will attract up to 1.5m visitors per annum, roughly equivalent to the combined populations of Leeds, Sheffield and York. This will change the communities of Bucknell, Bainton and Stoke Lyne forever. Furthermore, there will be an acceleration in the domino effect of development (as is already the case around Bicester and other parts of Oxfordshire) as one farm after another finds itself to be the last line of defence against encroachment and coalescence, and feels it has little option but to sell up to developers, as the threat to its livelihood and way of life becomes too great to resist.

Puy du Fou may not appear to be your fight, but it is the thin end of a very large wedge, which will inevitably position itself against your parish boundary before long. If you have any doubt about this, please look at the map overleaf to see some examples of how development in the area is proliferating. How long before there is no countryside left between Bicester and Banbury, Aylesbury, Oxford, Brackley, or Thame?

While we are still awaiting submission of the planning application (possibly as soon as June), there are multiple reasons to object to this development in principle now and in detail later. These arguments are too lengthy to rehearse in full in this letter but you can find further details in the objections raised by statutory consultees and members of the public to Puy du Fou’s request for an EIA Scoping Opinion from Cherwell District Council, available here:

<https://planningregister.cherwell.gov.uk/Planning/Display/24/03217/SCOP>

These arguments are also presented on the North Oxfordshire Resident Action group website here:

<https://norasays.org.uk/>

In brief, they include:

1. Unacceptable increase in traffic volumes on inadequate road infrastructure, leading to longer journey times, more accidents, and more rat-running through our villages.
2. The destruction of natural habitats and productive farmland, and the loss of natural landscapes and views, leading to the decline and eventual demise of a rural way of life.
3. The impact on local rail capacity, stations and the knock-on effect on traffic in Bicester, which is already at capacity.
4. The strain on local infrastructure from a theme park for which there is no economic need, given the below-average levels of unemployment in Cherwell.

The Parish Councils of Bucknell and Stoke Lyne are inviting you to join a “coalition of objection” to the Puy du Fou theme park, comprising those Parish Councils which will feel the effects of the development, should permission be granted.

We are building this coalition now, before submission of the planning application, because there is enough information in the Scoping Opinion Request to know that the development will have devastating adverse impacts on our wider community, and because there will not be time to consult with each of the parishes once the application lands.

Bucknell and Stoke Lyne will do the ‘heavy lifting’ of objecting to the planning application, a key component of which will be demonstrating the depth and breadth of local objection to the plans, which is a major consideration for planners.

If you are minded to object, we will be hugely grateful for your support. Our plan will be to name the coalition of Parish Councils in our response to the planning application, but nothing will be made public until then.

We are further making a written pledge to reciprocate with our support for your next planning objection, whatever it may be, if it will also adversely impact the local area.

Please let us know your position on this matter as soon as possible. If you would like to discuss it with us, please don’t hesitate to get in touch using the details below.

Thank you very much.

Yours sincerely

Chris Wells
Bucknell Parish Council, Chair

Nick Barnes
Stoke Lyne Parish Council, Chair

To contact us, please email chris.wells.bucknellpc@gmail.com

