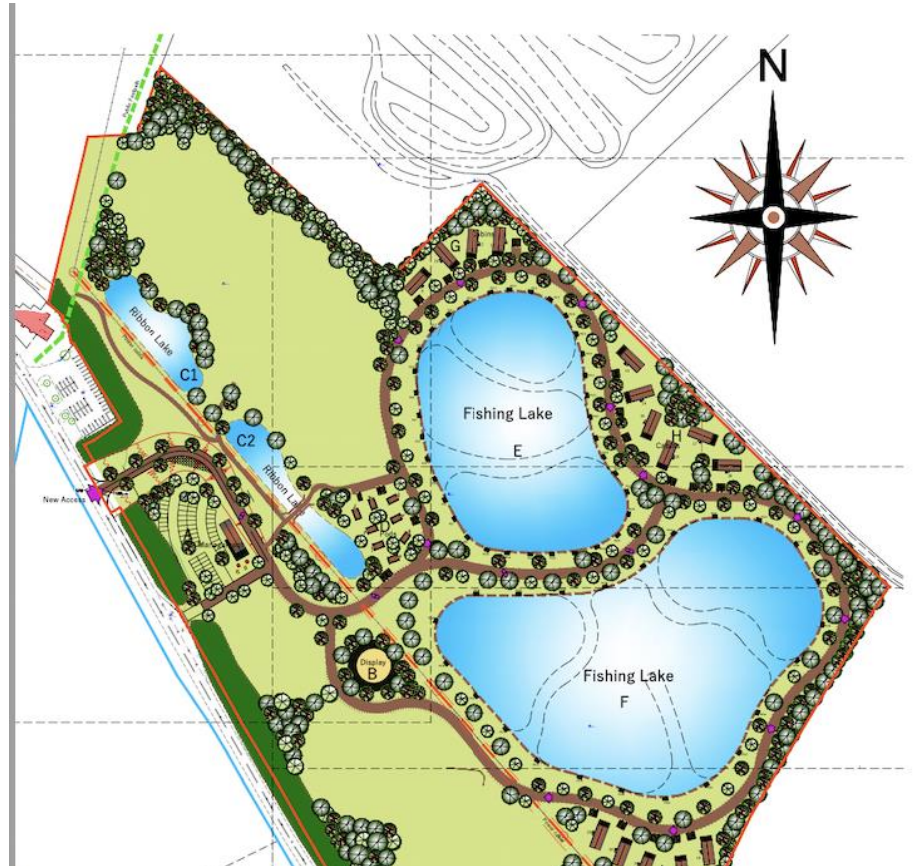


Design and Access/Planning Statement



Formation of two fishing lakes, two nursery lakes, the siting of 15 holiday accommodation lodges and 8 pods together with ancillary management building and associated access, parking and landscaping, Stratford Road, Alkerton

January 2024

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Introduction

The purpose of this statement is to set out the context for, and to explain the design principles behind, a proposal for the formation of two fishing lakes, two nursery lakes, the siting of 15 lodges and 8 accommodation pods together with a management building and ancillary vehicular access, parking and landscaping on land at Stratford Road, Alkerton.

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) (Section 42) requires a design and access statement to accompany applications for planning permission of this scale.

Paragraph 126 of the National Planning Policy Framework advises that the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what planning and development should achieve.

The framework of this statement follows the guidance set out in the CABE document entitled Design and access statements – how to write, read and use them. It is important to note that the DCLG Circular 01/06 Guidance on Changes to the Development Control System explains that the request for the access component of the statement relates only to access to the development and not to the internal aspects of individual buildings.

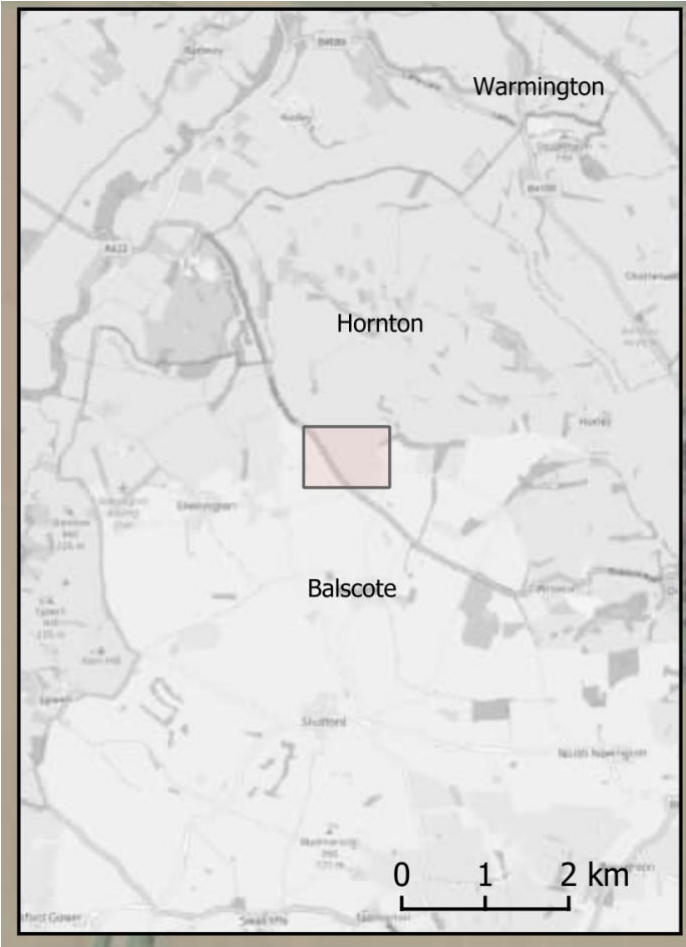
This Design and Access Statement assesses the physical and socio-economic context of the site, relevant planning policy, and then assesses the proposal under six headings:

Use/amount;
layout;
appearance;
landscaping;
scale; and
access

Physical Context

Location

The application site lies on the north eastern side of Stratford Road (the A422) approximately 1.5 kilometres to the south of Hornton and the same distance to the villages of Alkerton and Balscote. The site lies in a predominantly rural area characterised by agricultural, quarrying and leisure/amenity uses. The Wroxton Moto Cross Club utilise a track immediately to the north of the application site. There is an extant quarry on the opposite side of Stratford Road. Planning permission was granted in 2022 (ref 22/00158/CM) by Oxfordshire County Council for the modification of the approved restoration scheme for the importation of inert soil material for nature conservation and the erection of 18 single storey holiday lodges.



Context Plan

Physical Context

The site is proposed to be accessed from Stratford Road with a new point of vehicular access. here there are two existing points of access.

Site Description

The site extends to approximately 16.2 hectares and is roughly a diamond shape. The site has a substantial frontage to Stratford Road from the location of the Indian Queen restaurant and car park to a point opposite Jenny's Barn and Heath Farm.

The site comprises arable land with areas of grassland, tall ruderal vegetation, hedgerows and woodland as described in the submitted ecology report.

There are two public footpaths crossing the site (one runs from the south to Hornton) and the other is in the south east of the application area. These footpaths would be retained on their definitive lines.

Social Context

It is important to assess the affect that any development proposal will have on people in the locality and the formulation of the scheme has carefully considered the need to ensure that there is no adverse affect in terms of residential amenity or the character and appearance of the area. The site has relatively few near neighbours who could be significantly affected by the proposal in terms of residential amenity.

In terms of the affect of the development on the character and appearance of the area, the current attractive appearance of the site would be supplemented by two fishing lakes, a number of accommodation lodges and pods, and a management building together with appropriately surfaced ancillary access roads and parking. Additional landscaping/planting would also be provided to soften the impact of any new hard surfacing.

The social objective of achieving sustainable development is exemplified in the proposal in a number of ways. The proposal would provide opportunities for people to visit the site and enjoy time outdoors in an attractive environment as part of a healthier lifestyle. The design quality of the

Physical Context

proposals also indicates the applicants' social commitment to the creation of a high quality built environment.

Economic Context

In terms of the economic objective, the proposed development would have a significant positive economic impact on the local economy with local companies and contractors providing services to the site. The development would result in the employment of a number of people to administer bookings, take money and maintain the lakes and grounds together with companies who would carry out the development including suppliers and sub-contractors, the majority of which would likely be local to the area. The creation of a sustainable leisure development would benefit and sustain other businesses in the local area, for example, the pubs, restaurants, cafes and shops in Alkerton and the surrounding villages.

Environmental Context

The environmental objective is made up of a number of facets.

In terms of the environmental impact, the proposal would include attractive planted lakes and the surrounding areas which would respect and enhance the countryside location of the site. The overall site would be maintained and enhanced for visitors to enjoy and a net gain in biodiversity would be obtained. The conclusion reached is that the development would re-use this rural site for a beneficial purpose without giving rise to any adverse impacts.

Planning History

The planning history available on the Council's website includes the following relevant applications:

- 02/01972/CM – Variation of condition 65 of 97/00430/CM relating to noise levels on previous approvals.

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework ('The Framework') sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are to be applied. The framework advises that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, and this is made up of three dimensions:

- an economic objective i.e. contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy;
- a social objective i.e. supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities; and
- an environmental objective i.e. contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment.

Paragraph 8 advises that the above roles are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways.

Paragraph 14 states that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and that this means approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay. In this case, the proposal would fully accord with the relevant development plan policies and as it proposes sustainable development as defined in the Framework, planning permission should be granted.

Paragraphs 88 and 89 of the Framework relate to the rural economy and advise that planning policies and decisions should enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas through both the conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings, the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses and sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside. In these circumstances, it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable.

Section 12 of the Framework relates to achieving well designed places. Paragraph 131 advises that the creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve and that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. The guidance in paragraph 135 advises that planning (policies and) decisions should ensure that developments will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, that they are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and landscaping and that they are sympathetic to local character and history while not preventing appropriate innovation or change. The proposal has been carefully designed with this guidance in mind. The submitted site layout and detailed plans indicate how this has could be successfully achieved.

Development Plan Policies

The Development Plan for this site consists of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031, which dates from December 2016, a Partial Review of the Cherwell Local Plan relating to Oxford's Unmet Housing Need (September 2020), the saved, retained policies of the Cherwell Local Plan, 1996 and the Minerals and Waste Local Plan, together with any Neighbourhood Plans. The policies of the Minerals and Waste Local Plan are considered of little relevance to the proposal and there is no made Neighbourhood Plans in the area.

The adopted policy map indicates that the site has no specific designation and is therefore considered to be open countryside.

The following policies are considered the most relevant to the consideration of the application:

Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (adopted December 2016)

Policy PSD1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development reiterates the presumption in favour of sustainable development provided in the Framework and advises the Council will take a proactive approach to such development. Planning applications that accord with the policies in the Local Plan will be approved unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Policy SLE1: Employment Development advises that in rural areas, employment development (including intensification) will be permitted subject to compliance with other policies in the Plan and other material considerations. Unless exceptional circumstances are demonstrated, employment development in rural area should be located within or on the edge of those villages in Category A. Alkerton and the surrounding villages are not within this category, however, as the use proposed requires an isolated, rural location, this is considered of lesser weight in this case. The policy text goes on to set out a number of criteria that need to be followed in order that a new employment development could be supported and these include, inter alia, the need to provide sufficient justification to demonstrate why the development should be located in the rural area on a non-allocated site, that the development be designed to very high standards using sustainable construction, that it is small scale (unless it can be demonstrated that there will be no significant adverse impacts on the character of the village or surrounding environment) and that the proposal can be carried out without undue detriment to residential amenity, the highway network, the appearance and character of the landscape and environment. It is considered that these criteria would be complied with by the proposals.

Development Plan Policies

Policy SLE3: Supporting Tourism Growth advises that the Council will support proposals for new or improved tourist facilities in sustainable locations, where they accord with other policies in the plan, to increase overnight stays in the District. The proposed use would encourage additional visitors to the area and to the benefit of the rural economy.

Policy ESD13: Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement states that development will be expected to respect and enhance local landscape character, securing appropriate mitigation where damage to local landscape character cannot be avoided. Proposals will not be permitted where, inter alia, they cause undue visual intrusion in the open countryside, cause undue harm to important landscape features and topography, they are inconsistent with local character, or they would impact on areas judged to have a high level of tranquility. In my view, the proposals would not give rise to the adverse impacts described above for the reasons set out in this statement.

Cherwell Local Plan 1996

The following saved, retained policy is considered the most relevant to the consideration of the application:

Policy C28 - Layout, design and external appearance of new development

This policy seeks to ensure the standards of layout, design and external appearance, including the choice of external finish materials, are sympathetic to the character of the urban or rural context of that development. The proposals seek to respect the context of the area by proposing timber as the facing material for the proposed management building. The design of the buildings and the associated parking and access routes would be high quality as required by Local Plan policy and by the requirements of the Framework.

Design Constraints and Opportunities

The application site is located in the countryside, outside of but close to the services and facilities which are found within the surrounding villages of Alkerton, Hornton and Balscote.

The major constraints to the development of the site are relatively few with the principal considerations being:

Ensuring that the layout and design of the development is compatible with this rural location.

Providing a restful environment for visitors.

Maintaining residential amenity.

Providing a safe access to the site for residents, visitors and all highway users.

In terms of its opportunities, it is considered that the site lies close to nearby villages which offer facilities which would be required by anglers and other visitors.

The development of this site offers an opportunity to provide a viable, attractive addition to the leisure offer in the District in a sustainable location.

The development proposed would have no adverse effect on any near neighbours.

The proposed development would enhance the appearance of the site and the surrounding area.

Design Principles

The scheme has been designed with the following design principles in mind:

- Be well Integrated into its surroundings;
- Locally inspired and/or of a distinctive character;
- Aware of the site's topography and adapting to it;
- Enabling the retention of the best existing habitats and vegetation and enhancing the site's biodiversity;
- Providing safe access and vehicle parking for visitors that is well integrated so that it does not dominate the site.

In addition to the above, as indicated in the Design Constraints section above, an important aim has been to ensure that the proposal provides a viable, attractive addition to the leisure offer in the District.

Site Use

The proposal seeks full planning permission for the formation of two fishing lakes, two nursery lakes, the siting of 15 accommodation lodges and 8 pods, a management building and ancillary vehicular access, parking and landscaping.

The proposed use of the site for leisure fishing lakes and short term accommodation is considered an appropriate use to apply for planning permission for given its rural surroundings and the policy context provided by policies SLE1 and ESD13 of the adopted Local Plan. The proposal represents sustainable development as defined on the Framework which would give rise to direct employment and additional spend in the local economy. With that in mind, it is suggested that a leisure use should be favourably considered.

Amount of Development

The application proposes the following amount of development:

Two fishing lakes of approximately 24,000 and 13,000 square metres respectively. Two smaller, 'nursery' lakes.

15 single storey accommodation lodges measuring approximately 96 square metres.

8 single storey accommodation pods of approximately 20 square metres each.

A management building of approximately 136 square metres.

A surfaced car park capable of accommodating 60 vehicles.

Layout

The proposed site layout has a specific design character which includes a small number of loop roads which would frame and provide access to the accommodation and to the lakes for those visitors who can't access the lakes on road (or who have heavy fishing equipment with them).

The layout is well structured with one main access point (from Stratford Road).

The proposed layout has evolved as part of an iterative process once the important site constraints had been identified. The final scheme layout reflects a desire to ensure that the lakes, parking, accommodation and management buildings do not dominate the site and an intention that the overall site character remains rural in nature.

The accessibility of the site will be primarily addressed in the Access section of this Statement, however, it is considered that the proposed layout promotes a clear definition of public and private realm areas.

Appearance

In designing the scheme, the incorporation of rural vernacular features has been a fundamental principle. Details such as appropriate timber treatment, timber doors and decking would be included in the design of the accommodation and management buildings. It is considered that the inclusion of these features in a comparatively simple approach to form and elevational treatments would achieve a high quality environment reflecting the best aspects of similar building design found locally.

In relation to materials, the buildings would be faced with timber appropriate to the rural area, together with profiled metal cladding to reflect the site’s surroundings.

It is expected that the final details of landscaping would be the subject of a condition for subsequent approval, however, the incorporation of significant amounts of additional supplementary landscaping, both in terms of hard landscaping and planting, has been a guiding principle that has been used in drawing up the overall scheme details. The scheme includes new tree planting within the site to supplement the well vegetated areas around the periphery of the site.

Landscaping

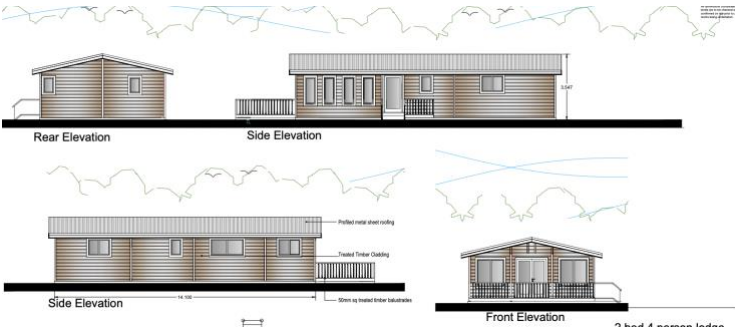
Although tarmacadam would be used for the main access road, different surface treatments may be used on the parking/turning areas and on the internal access roads. It is intended that with careful conveyance of all areas of incidental space any maintenance and management issues associated with such areas would be able to be dealt with ‘by design’ rather than needing resolution by the visitors or the site management team.

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be

Scale

As indicated under the Amount heading earlier, it is proposed to form two fishing lakes, two nursery lakes and erect a small number of single storey accommodation and management buildings.

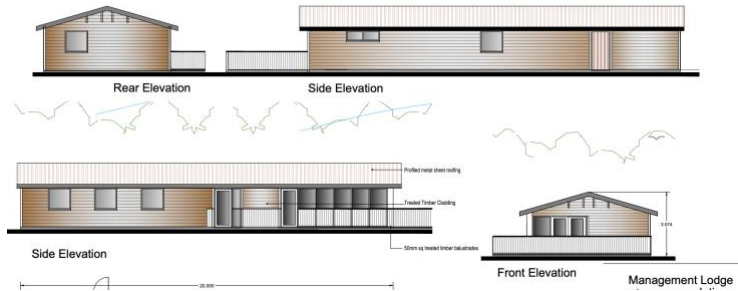
The proposed lodges would have an approximate maximum ridge height of 3.5 metres.



Proposed elevations

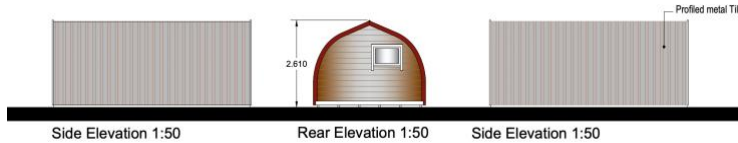
The proposed management building would also have an approximate maximum ridge height of 3.5 metres.

Access around the development



Proposed elevations

The proposed accommodation pods would have an approximate maximum height of 2.5 metres.



Proposed elevations

Scale

The overall approach to vehicular access is firmly based on suppressing vehicle speeds and creating an environment that would be safe for pedestrians and cyclists in accordance with the guidance provided by Manual for Streets. A fundamental aim is that the highways do not dominate the layout. The use of the proposed loop road should ensure that vehicle speeds are kept below the aspirational limit of 20 mph.

The layout has been designed such that pedestrians can move freely and safely through the site.

Disabled people will not be segregated from any area of the site as the design process has been an inclusive one.

All of the site would be accessible by disabled people and the overall site layout has been designed to allow full ease of movement for all disabled people including those with visual impairments.

Access for emergency services is available from the main site access.

Access around the development

Conclusion

It is considered that this Statement demonstrates the design approach and evolution of this leisure development which it is intended would provide an attractive environment for all of its visitors and users.

The main design principles of providing a distinctive design character and quality have been adhered to and all constraints to development have been fully assessed in the design process.

The visual impact of the scheme has been minimised and the resulting development would, it is considered, represent an attractive, well-designed new environment which would enhance its surroundings.