

**10875 – Great Wolf Lodge, Bicester
EPR Architects Summary Proof of Evidence (CD12-16)**

Proposed Great Wolf Lodge
Chesterton, Bicester

**Architectural Design and Scheme Development
Evidence on behalf of Great Lakes UK Limited**

SUMMARY

by

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Illustration of the Great Wolf Resort, Bicester: Arrival and Entrance

EPR Architects

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EPR Architects

1.0 Qualifications and Experience

- 1.1 My name is Nick Rayner. I am a qualified architect with over 20 years of architectural design experience. I have been registered with the Architects' Registration Board (ARB) since qualification in 2001, and a member of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) since that time.
- 1.2 I joined EPR Architects in 2005 and have been a Director there since 2016. I have been responsible for a broad portfolio of architectural projects, chiefly in the hotel and hospitality sector. I have also undertaken the roles of auditor and hospitality design consultant on UK and international hotel schemes.
- 1.3 As a Director within the Hotels Team at EPR, I have been responsible for managing the architectural services for the Great Wolf Lodge, Bicester project on behalf of Great Lakes UK Ltd ("the Appellant"). In the role of Lead Designer, I have been responsible with the EPR team for designing and coordinating the design proposals with the Appellant's consultants. This included participating in pre-application discussions with the Local Planning Authority, wider stakeholders, and attending public consultations.

2.0 Scope and Nature of Evidence

- 2.1 My evidence provides:
 - an explanation of the evolution of the architectural design concepts based on the principles of a landscape led approach and the project brief for the Great Wolf Lodge, Bicester ("Proposed Development").
 - details of the pre-application dialogue with the Local Planning Authority, Cherwell District Council ("CDC") and wider stakeholders;
 - a detailed description of the architectural design proposals as submitted with the Planning Application ref. 19/02550/F1;
 - a response to Reason for Refusal no. 4 of the Planning Application Decision Notice (CD3-1).
- 2.2 My evidence demonstrates that:
 - the architectural design is of a very high quality - accommodating a detailed operational brief and well placed within the Site and its landscape;
 - a thoughtful and considered approach has been taken to the development of the architectural design with due regard to the consultation process undertaken with CDC and with wider stakeholders;
 - the proposed design has addressed matters of contextuality and any impact on the character of the local area;
 - the proposed design does not result in any of the adverse effects alleged in the Reason for Refusal no. 4, but rather delivers significant and substantial benefits.

3.0 Evolution of the Design and Consultation

- 3.1 On arrival at the Proposed Development, the building is gradually revealed through the trees and landscape of its enclosed parkland setting and welcomes guests up to its entrance court, surrounded by the gabled, stone-dressed facades of the resort. The architectural design accommodates the detailed operational brief of the waterpark, family entertainment centre, conference, dining and guestroom areas within the building. The design draws from the architectural forms and materials seen locally in towns, villages and the rural area, and stands comfortably within the context of its landscaped site setting.
- 3.2 My evidence details the narrative of the design process from the initial briefing and analysis, through the design development phase, the pre-application consultation process and its relevance to the developing design, culminating in a detailed description of the architectural proposals as submitted with the planning application ref. 19/02550/F.
- 3.3 A landscape-led approach to design has been taken whereby the building location was informed by the existing and proposed landscape features of the Site to conceal it from key sensitive viewpoints as agreed with CDC's Landscape Officer and illustrated in the Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). Where the building is visible from views immediately within the Site the architecture responds contextually to the local vernacular and architectural styles of Bicester and Chesterton, and views of it are glimpsed through layers of screening created by the existing and proposed vegetation of the landscape proposals.
- 3.4 Myself and the EPR team analysed the characteristics of the Site and the local area alongside the project brief in order to develop and define our architectural response. There was a thorough process of consultation during the pre-application meetings with CDC, and other consultations held with the public and Chesterton Parish Council. The architecture has evolved since the inception of the project to create a design that stands comfortably within its site and that responds sensitively and appropriately to the local context.

4 Response to Reason for Refusal 4 and the PAW Statement of Case

- 4.1 The Decision Notice 19/02550/F (CD3-1), issued by CDC provided six reasons for refusal. My evidence relates to Reason for Refusal 4 and statements in the PAW Statement of Case. Matters relating to the other reasons for refusal are dealt with by the Appellant's other consultants, and I refer to these in my evidence.
- 4.2 I consider the architectural response to be of a very high quality. The design addresses matters of contextuality and any impact on the character of the local area and does not result in any of the adverse effects alleged in Reason for Refusal 4, but rather delivers significant and substantial benefits.
- 4.3 The size, scale and massing of the proposed building has been carefully considered in the context of the surrounding landscape. The resort building is located very comfortably within the large Site with more than sufficient space around it to accommodate the size of the building itself. In terms of actual appearance and

perception, the massing of the building is broken down by varying the proposed heights and the plan form, giving the effect of making one building appear as a cluster of buildings. As the building is approached within the site, it is gradually revealed through the landscape at a scale appropriate within its setting.

- 4.4 The proposed building's materiality and articulation has been developed through study of the architectural vernacular of the local area, including Bicester and Chesterton. The design was developed specifically with the local area's architecture in mind. Window patterns, sizes and surrounds, façade materials, roof profiles, styles, proportions, height and scale were all taken into consideration and translated into an architectural composition that responded to these elements whilst not being unnecessarily fussy. The use of timber, render, and local stone as façade materials break up the elevations and reference the materials used on buildings within Chesterton, Bicester and the locality, along with steeply pitched roofs and gables with minimal overhangs.
- 4.5 The architectural proposal divides the building into three distinct parts, each with their own character, materiality, height, scale and massing. The waterpark has its own agricultural architectural language, and the hotel component employs a hierarchy of three buildings using the layout typology of the country manor estate. I consider that the design is well articulated and derived from characteristics common to and readily recognised in the local area.
- 4.6 I do not consider that "significant urbanisation" will result from the Proposed Development. Architecturally, the building has been composed and articulated to present itself as a series of buildings (water park, hotel, FEC), broken down into distinct bays with different characters. It has aspects of a campus type resort set in a contained countryside location with its own natural landscaping. It does not have characteristics associated with a city, town, or village, or any other urban or urbanising environment.
- 4.7 I do not consider that there would be "unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area". The LVIA demonstrates the absence of any material harm to the character and appearance of the area when properly analysed. There is a strong degree of enclosure to the Site by virtue of the existing and proposed landscaping. Where the building is visible it will be perceived as a cluster of buildings glimpsed through broken views created by the proposed landscape features - a result of the landscape led design approach. The use of architectural forms and materials common to the area around Bicester and Chesterton result in a building that is established in its context and supports the character of the area.
- 4.8 The architectural design responds to and supports local distinctiveness. The proposal works in harmony with the existing established woodland and landscape features, as well as the proposed soft landscape enhancements, which serves to reinforce the local landscape distinctiveness of the area.
- 4.9 The design draws inspiration heavily from the character and materials of buildings in the local area. There is a significant use of local stone, pitched roofs of varying heights, and architectural details and features which are used locally, all of which root the development in its context. Overall, the Proposed Development does not fail to reinforce the local distinctiveness of the open countryside, Chesterton village, or the wider Bicester area.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 The Proposed Development is designed to provide a fantastic hospitality destination, offering families a dynamic and unrivalled entertainment experience.
- 5.2 The design process undertaken demonstrates a response that is landscape-led in approach and which has undergone an iterative design process, responding to the local context in all aspects.
- 5.3 I consider that the Proposed Development would not cause significant urbanisation and unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the local or wider area, due to the extent of existing enclosure to the landscape surrounding the Site combined with a carefully considered landscape-led design approach.
- 5.4 The Proposed Development will not result in any of the adverse effects alleged in the reason for refusal, but rather deliver significant and substantial benefits overall.