



ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT
VOLUME 1
CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1.1. This Environmental Statement (ES) has been prepared by a suite of consultants, and co-ordinated by WSP, on behalf of Great Lakes UK Limited (referred to as ‘the Applicant’). The Applicant is seeking to obtain detailed planning permission for the construction and operation of a proposed Great Wolf Lodge, Chesterton, Bicester (hereafter referred to as the ‘Proposed Development’), on land to the east of the M40 and south of the A4095, Chesterton, Bicester (hereafter referred to as the ‘Site’).
- 1.1.2. The proposed planning application will seek permission for:
- “Redevelopment of existing 9 holes of the wider 18 hole course at Bicester Hotel, Golf and Spa to provide a new leisure resort (sui generis) incorporating waterpark, family entertainment centre, conference facilities and restaurants with associated access, parking and landscaping.”*
- 1.1.3. The planning application boundary for the Site can be viewed within **Figure 1.1** and **Figure 1.2** at the end of this chapter, which currently exists as a triangular shaped area of the Bicester Hotel Golf and Spa (BHGS) site.
- 1.1.4. This ES is the written output of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process which has been undertaken in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (**Ref. 1.1**) (referred to as the ‘EIA Regulations’). The ES is one of the supporting documents submitted to Cherwell District Council (CDC) as the determining planning authority, in support of the planning application for the Proposed Development. This ES was prepared in collaboration with the following key stakeholders:
- CDC Officers including:
 - Planning Officer
 - Environmental Health Officer;
 - Economic Growth Officer;
 - Legal Services Rights of Way Officer;
 - Building Control Officer;
 - Landscape Officer; and
 - Conservation Officer [check Tim Screen title – may be Landscape Officer].
 - Natural England;
 - Highways England;
 - Thames Water;
 - Chesterton Parish Council;
 - Oxfordshire County Council; and
 - Environment Agency.
- 1.1.5. This Chapter outlines the legal framework and structure of the ES and confirms the other core planning application documents submitted with the detailed application. **Table 1.1** confirms the information required by the EIA Regulations and signposts the reader to the appropriate location of this information within the ES.
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- 1.1.6. WSP has been commissioned by the Applicant to co-ordinate the EIA in support of the planning application. This has incorporated technical input from a number of consultants, as outlined in **Table 1.2**.
- 1.1.7. Further details of the Proposed Development, including proposed land uses and anticipated construction programme, and details on the evolution of the Proposed Development design are provided in **Chapter 3: Reasonable Alternatives and Design Evolution** and **Chapter 4: The Proposed Development**.

1.2. THE SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

EXISTING SITE

- 1.2.1. The 18.6 hectare (ha) Site currently exists as the triangular shaped northern area of the Bicester Hotel Golf and Spa (BHGS), comprising 9 of the 18-hole outdoor golf course and associated ponds, mounds and dense woodland areas, as shown on **Figures 1-1 and 1-2**.
- 1.2.2. Access to the BHGS site is via Green Lane (main customer access) and the A4095 (service access).
- 1.2.3. The setting of the Site is shown on **Figure 1-3**. It is located adjacent to the east of the southbound M40, and the southern side of the A4095. A Public Right of Way (Footpath 161/6/10) crosses the Site in a north to south-east direction. The closest residential dwellings, Vicarage Farm and Stableford House, are located to the east of the Site. There are other residential dwellings beyond this with the closest being Tanora Cottage (to the east).
- 1.2.4. The Site contains a variety of habitat types of ecological value including ponds, plantation and semi-natural woodland, species-rich hedgerow, a variety of grasslands, dense scrub and tall ruderal vegetation.
- 1.2.5. There are several water bodies situated within the Site, comprising drainage ditches and engineered ponds, lakes and swamps associated with the golf course, the majority of which are located towards the north of the Site.

SURROUNDING AREA

- 1.2.6. The Site is located within the Chesterton Parish of Cherwell District, South Oxfordshire. The Site is situated approximately 500 metres to the west of the centre of Chesterton village, 3.2km west of Bicester town centre, and 2.5km from the retail centre known as Bicester Village.
- 1.2.7. The surrounding land use is primarily agricultural to the west (across the M40) and south of the Site. Bignall Park Barns (business use) are to the north-east and the village of Chesterton is to the east.
- 1.2.8. Adjacent to the Site are the existing BHGS buildings and the remaining 9 holes of the existing 18-hole golf course, which is of established mixed hotel and leisure use (Class C1 / D2). The existing BHGS buildings will remain alongside the remaining 9 holes of the golf course. The existing buildings are two storeys with pitched roofs. There are other low-density buildings in the vicinity, including surrounding houses and farm buildings and a warehouse/factory, all of which are up to three storeys (including pitched roofs) in height.

- 1.2.9. The landscape surrounding the Site is relatively flat and also well vegetated, the Site is therefore well contained visually by hedgerows and woodland between 4 to 13m tall. The landscape typology of the land within the Site area is of typical golf course terrain which includes open space, ponds, mounds and dense woodland areas. The Site generally grades from north-west to south-east along the A4095 road at the north-eastern boundary of the Site; with levels falling from around 87m to 81m above ordnance datum (AOD).
- 1.2.10. The Site is not located within 2km of any ecological statutory or non-statutory designated sites.
- 1.2.11. The Chesterton Conservation Area is located approximately 1km to the east of the Site. There is one registered Park (Middleton Park) and a number of Grade II listed buildings and scheduled monuments within 2km of the Site.
- 1.2.12. The closest water body is Gagle Brook which is located approximately 520m to the north-east of the Site, at its closest point.
- 1.2.13. Environmental and planning features surrounding the Site and in the surrounding area are presented in **Figures 1-3 and 1-4** at the end of this chapter.

1.3. DEFINITION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 1.3.1. The term 'environmental impact assessment' describes a procedure that must be followed for certain types of projects before they can be given 'development consent'. The procedure is a means of drawing together, in a systematic way, an assessment of a project's likely significant environmental effects. This helps to ensure that the importance of the predicted effects and the scope for reducing them are properly understood by the public and the relevant competent authority before it makes its decision. The aim of EIA is to:

“protect the environment by ensuring that a local planning authority when deciding whether to grant planning permission for a project, which is likely to have significant effects on the environment, does so in the full knowledge of the likely significant effects, and takes this into account in the decision making process” and “ensure that the public are given early and effective opportunities to participate in the decision making procedures.” (Ref. 1.2).

1.4. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT

- 1.4.1. The EIA Regulations implement the requirements of the Directive 2014/52/EU and require that prior to consent being granted, for certain types of development, an EIA must be undertaken. The EIA Regulations set out the types of development which must always be subject to an EIA (Schedule 1 development) and other developments which may require an assessment if they give rise to likely significant effects (Schedule 2 development).
- 1.4.2. The Proposed Development meets the criteria under Section 12 (c) 'Hotel complexes and associated developments' and (d) 'Theme parks' of Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations and is therefore subject to statutory EIA. As such, the Applicant has prepared an Environmental Statement (ES) to accompany the planning application.
- 1.4.3. An EIA Scoping Report (**Appendix 2.1**) was prepared and submitted to CDC on 4th July 2019, together with a formal request for an EIA Scoping Opinion, in accordance with Regulation 15 of the EIA Regulations. A formal Scoping Opinion was subsequently received from CDC on 30th August (**Appendix 2.2**).

- 1.4.4. Further details on the Scoping Opinion and how it has informed this ES are provided in **Chapter 2: Approach to EIA**, with details of the consultee responses and how these have been addressed within the ES. This ES has been prepared in accordance with the Scoping Opinion.
- 1.4.5. The findings of the EIA are presented in this ES which has been prepared in accordance with the EIA Regulations as well as planning practice guidance (**Ref. 1.3**). The ES is submitted in three volumes for ease of reference:
- **Volume 1:** Main ES Text and Figures;
 - **Volume 2:** Technical Appendices; and
 - **Volume 3:** The Non-Technical Summary ('NTS'): provides a summary of the findings of the ES in non-technical language.
- 1.4.6. **Volume 1** of the ES contains a description of the assessment methodology and significance criteria, describes the baseline surveys/monitoring outcomes and provides an impact assessment and recommended mitigation for construction and operational effects. Where technical reports have been produced for a topic such as air quality modelling reports and historic environment desk based assessment, these reports are provided in **Volume 2** for reference, whilst their content is summarised within the associated technical chapter of the ES in **Volume 1**. Pertinent information from reports such as the Transport Assessment has informed **Chapter 6: Transportation and Access** and others.
- 1.4.7. Regulation 18(3) of the EIA Regulations defines an “environment statement” “as a statement which includes at least:
- (a) A description of the proposed development comprising information on the site, design, size and other relevant features of the development;
- (b) A description of the likely significant effects of the proposed development on the environment;
- (c) A description of any features of the proposed development, or measures envisaged in order to avoid, prevent or reduce and, if possible, offset likely significant adverse effects on the environment;
- (d) A description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the developer, which are relevant to the proposed development and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the effects of the development on the environment;
- (e) A non-technical summary of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (a) to (d); and
- (f) Any additional information specified in Schedule 4 relevant to the specific characteristics of the particular development or type of development and to the environmental features likely to be significantly affected.”
- 1.4.8. This ES contains the information specified in (where relevant) Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations. **Table 1.1** lists each of the elements required by the EIA Regulations on this approach, and where in this ES each of those matters is located.

Table 1-1 – Location of Required Information within the ES

| | Required Information | Location within this ES |
|---|--|---|
| 1 | Description of the development, including in particular: | |
| | (a) a description of the location of the development | <i>ES Volume 1, Chapter 1: Introduction</i> |
| | (b) a description of the physical characteristics of the whole development, including, where relevant, requisite demolition works, and the land-use requirements during the construction and operational phases | <i>ES Volume 1, Chapter 4: The Proposed Development</i> |
| | (c) a description of the main characteristics of the operational phase of the development (in particular any production process), for instance, energy demand and energy used, nature and quantity of the materials and natural resources (including water, land, soil and biodiversity) used | <i>ES Volume 1, Chapter 4: The Proposed Development</i> |
| | (d) an estimate, by type and quantity, of expected residues and emissions (such as water, air, soil and subsoil pollution, noise, vibration, light, heat, radiation and quantities and types of waste produced during the construction and operation phases. | <i>ES Volume 1, Chapter 4: The Proposed Development</i> <i>ES Volume 1, Technical Chapters</i> <i>ES Volume 2, Technical Appendices</i> |
| 2 | A description of the reasonable alternatives (for example in terms of development design, technology, location, size and scale) studied by the developer, which are relevant to the proposed project and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for selecting the chosen option, including a comparison of the environmental effects. | <i>ES Volume 1, Chapter 3: Reasonable Alternatives and Design Evolution</i> |
| 3 | A description of the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment (baseline scenario) and an outline of the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the development as far as natural changes from the baseline scenario can be assessed with reasonable effort on the basis of the availability of environmental information and scientific knowledge. | <i>ES Volume 1, Technical Chapters</i> <i>ES Volume 2, Technical Appendices</i> |
| 4 | A description of the factors specified in regulation 4(2) likely to be significantly affected by the development: population, human health, biodiversity (for example fauna and flora), land (for example land take), soil (for example organic matter, erosion, compaction, sealing), water (for example hydromorphological changes, quantity and quality), air, climate (for example greenhouse gas emissions, impacts relevant to adaptation), material assets, cultural heritage, including architectural and archaeological aspects, and landscape. | <i>ES Volume 1, Chapter 2: Approach to the Assessment</i> <i>ES Volume 1, Technical Chapters</i> |
| 5 | A description of the likely significant effects of the development on the environment resulting from, inter alia: | |

| | Required Information | Location within this ES |
|---|---|---|
| | a) the construction and existence of the development, including, where relevant, demolition works; | <i>ES Volume 1, Technical Chapters ES Volume 2, Technical Appendices</i> |
| | b) the use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity, considering as far as possible the sustainable availability of these resources; | <i>ES Volume 1, Chapter 4: The Proposed Development ES Volume 1, Technical Chapters ES Volume 2, Technical Appendices</i> |
| | c) the emission of pollutants, noise, vibration, light, heat and radiation, the creation of nuisances, and the disposal and recovery of waste; | <i>ES Volume 1, Technical Chapters ES Volume 2, Technical Appendices</i> |
| | d) the risks to human health, cultural heritage or the environment (for example due to accidents or disasters); | <i>ES Volume 1, Technical Chapters ES Volume 2, Technical Appendices</i> |
| | e) the cumulation of effects with other existing and/or approved projects, taking into account any existing environmental problems relating to areas of particular environmental importance likely to be affected or the use of natural resources; | <i>ES Volume 1, Chapter 14: Cumulative Effects</i> |
| | f) the impact of the project on climate (for example the nature and magnitude of greenhouse gas emissions) and the vulnerability of the project to climate change; | <i>ES Volume 1, Chapter 2: Approach to the Assessment ES Volume 1, Chapter 4: The Proposed Development</i> |
| | g) the technologies and the substances used. | <i>ES Volume 1, Chapter 4: The Proposed Development ES Volume 1, Technical Chapters</i> |
| 6 | A description of the forecasting methods or evidence, used to identify and assess the significant effects on the environment, including details of difficulties (for example technical deficiencies or lack of knowledge) encountered compiling the required information and the main uncertainties involved. | <i>ES Volume 1, Chapter 2: Approach to the Assessment ES Volume 1, Technical Chapters ES Volume 2, Technical Appendices</i> |
| 7 | A description of the measures envisaged to avoid, prevent, reduce or, if possible, offset any identified significant adverse effects on the environment and, where appropriate, of any proposed monitoring arrangements (for example the preparation of a post-project analysis). That description should explain the extent, to which significant adverse effects on the environment are avoided, prevented, reduced or offset, and should cover both the construction and operational phases. | <i>ES Volume 1, Technical Chapters ES Volume 1, Chapter 15: Summary of Mitigation</i> |

| | Required Information | Location within this ES |
|----|---|---|
| 8 | A description of the expected significant adverse effects of the development on the environment deriving from the vulnerability of the development to risks of major accidents and/or disasters which are relevant to the project concerned. Relevant information available and obtained through risk assessments pursuant to EU legislation such as Directive 2012/18/EU (3) of the European Parliament and of the Council or Council Directive 2009/71/Euratom (4) or UK environmental assessments may be used for this purpose provided that the requirements of this Directive are met. Where appropriate, this description should include measures envisaged to prevent or mitigate the significant adverse effects of such events on the environment and details of the preparedness for and proposed response to such emergencies. | <i>ES Volume 1, Chapter 2: Approach to the Assessment</i> <i>ES Volume 1, Technical Chapters</i> |
| 9 | A non-technical summary of the information provided under paragraphs 1 to 8 | <i>ES Volume 3, Non-Technical Summary</i> |
| 10 | A reference list detailing the sources used for the descriptions and assessments included in the environmental statement. | <i>All chapters and volumes of the ES – Volumes 1, 2 and 3</i> |

1.5. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

1.5.1. The EIA Regulations do not require an assessment of planning policy or guidance. The Planning Statement, submitted as a separate planning application document examines the merits of the Proposed Development in the context of relevant planning policy. Where relevant, **Chapters 5 – 13** of the ES provide an overview of the relevant local, regional and national planning policies and guidance in the context of the EIA which includes:

- National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) published online in March 2014, updated in 2015, 2017 and 2018 (**Ref. 1.3**);
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (adopted February 2019) (**Ref. 1.4**);
- Adopted Cherwell Local Plan (Part 1) 2011-2031 (**Ref. 1.5**); and
- Saved policies of the Cherwell Local Plan 1996 (**Ref. 1.6**).

1.6. PROJECT TEAM

1.6.1. WSP has prepared this ES in conjunction with a full project team including:

- EPR – Architects and Lead Designers;
- Arcadis – Project Managers;
- DP9 – Planning Consultants;
- Volterra – Socio-economic Consultants;
- Motion – Transportation and Access Consultants;
- Hoare Lea – Air Quality and Acoustic Consultants;
- Bradley Murphy Design (BMD) – Landscape Consultants;
- AOC Archaeology – Cultural Heritage and Archaeology Consultants;

- Curtins – Geotechnical, Water Resources, Flood Risk and Drainage;
- WSP – providing environmental services including co-ordination of the EIA, along with ecological, arboricultural, ground conditions assessments and a waste management strategy.

1.6.2. In line with Regulation 18(5)(a) – (b) of the EIA Regulations, the ES and technical assessments which inform it have been undertaken by a suitably qualified project team. **Table 1-2** presents the Project Team for the ES, their associated roles and expertise. The Project Team stated are responsible for the scope, content and assessment of likely significant effects of their respective technical chapters (where relevant).

1.6.3. WSP is responsible for the coordination, compilation and procedural review of the ES. WSP is registered under the EIA Quality Mark operated by the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) which recognises our commitment to excellence in EIA activities. WSP was one of the original eight pilot organisations in the UK that trialled the process in 2011 and developed the EIA Quality Mark scheme from the former Corporate Registered Assessor process. We have continued to maintain our EIA Quality Mark registration, following annual examination by IEMA in relation to our ongoing products, staff, innovation and promotion of EIA within the industry. WSP has and continues to support and lead nationally recognised guidance for EIA in the UK.



1.6.4. WSP has developed and applies an in-house set of processes, procedures and guidance for EIA based on sound project management principles.

Table 1-2 – Project Team

| Topic | Competent Expert Evidence |
|--|---|
| EIA Coordination, overarching technical authority for the ES | Vanessa, Thorpe (BSc, MSc, MEnvSc, PIEMA) – Project Director |
| Chapter 1 Introduction | Nicola Lear (BSc, MSc, MEnvSc, AIEMA) – Project Manager Sophie Harris (BSc, MSc, GradIEMA) – Assistant EIA Coordinator |
| Chapter 2 Approach to the Assessment | |
| Chapter 3 Reasonable Alternatives and Design Evolution | |
| Chapter 4 Proposed Development | |
| Chapter 14 Cumulative Effects | |
| Chapter 15 Summary of Mitigation Measures | |
| Chapter 16 Summary of Residual Effects | |
| Volume 3 Non-Technical Summary | |
| Chapter 5 Socio-economics | Ellie Evans (BA, Member of the Institute of Economic Development (IED) – Socio-economic Lead. |
| Chapter 6 Transport and Access | Phil Bell (BSc, CMILT, MCIHT) – Technical Lead for Transport |

| Topic | Competent Expert Evidence |
|---|---|
| Chapter 7 Air Quality | Chris Rush (BSc, PG Dip Acoustics, CEnv, MIEMA, MIOA, MIEEnvSc, MIAQM) – Air Quality Technical Lead |
| Chapter 8 Noise and Vibration | Matthew Cand (Dipl Eng PhD MIOA) – Noise and Vibration Lead. |
| Chapter 9 Biodiversity | Luke Roberts (BSc, MSc, MCIEEM) - Principal Ecologist |
| Chapter 10 Archaeology and Cultural Heritage | Victoria Oleksy BA (Hons) MA, MCIfA – Archaeology and Cultural Heritage Technical Lead |
| Chapter 11 Ground Conditions | Roisin Lindsay (BSc (Hons) MSc MIEEnvSC CEnv FGS) – Ground Conditions Technical Lead |
| Chapter 12 Water Resources, Flood Risk and Drainage | David Hammond (BSc, MSc, DIC, C Geol, FGS) Technical Lead |
| Chapter 13 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment | Richard Waddell (PG Diploma Landscape Architecture, CMLI) Senior Associate Landscape Architect. |

1.7. PLANNING APPLICATION DOCUMENTS

1.7.1. The ES is one of a suite of documents which will support the planning application for the Proposed Development. The planning application submission comprises the following documents:

- Planning application form, certificates and notices;
- Application location and Site Plans;
- Application plans;
- Design and Access Statement;
- Planning Statement (including Open Space Assessment);
- Landscaping Details/Plans;
- Environmental Statement: Volume 1 Text and Figures, Volume 2 Technical Appendices and Volume 3 Non-Technical Summary;
- Statement of Community Involvement;
- Servicing and Delivery Plan;
- Transport Assessment and Travel Plan (appended to the ES);
- Energy and Sustainability Statement;
- Flood Risk Assessment (appended to the ES);
- Waste Management Strategy;
- Arboriculture Report;
- Ventilation and Extraction Statement;
- Draft Construction Method Statement;
- Lighting Strategy;
- Utilities Statement; and
- Operational Management Plan.

1.8. REFERENCES

- **Ref. 1.1:** HM Government (2017). The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. [Online] Available at: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/571/pdfs/uksi_20170571_en.pdf
- **Ref. 1.2:** Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2014, updated March 2019). National Planning Practice Guidance 'Environmental Impact Assessment'. [Online] Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/environmental-impact-assessment>
- **Ref. 1.3:** Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2016, updated July 2019). National Planning Practice Guidance. [Online] Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>
- **Ref. 1.4:** Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2014, updated in July 2018 and February 2019). National Planning Policy Framework. [Online] Available at: <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/>
- **Ref. 1.5:** Cherwell District Council (2016). Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031. [Online] Available at: <https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/info/83/local-plans>
- **Ref. 1.6:** Cherwell District Council (2007). Schedule of Policies the Council will Continue to Use - Policies Contained in the Cherwell Local Plan 1996.

FIGURES





Key
 — Red Line Boundary



TITLE:
 Great Wolf Lodge, Oxfordshire

FIGURE No:
 1-1 - Site Location Plan

Date Modified:
Drawn By:
File:



Key

- Planning Application Boundary
- - - - - PRoW (161/6/10)



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TITLE:
Great Wolf Lodge, Oxfordshire

FIGURE No:
Figure 1-2 - Red Line Boundary