

## 4. PLANNING POLICY ASSESSMENT

### 4.1 Introduction:

This Planning Policy Assessment considers the proposed development against the statutory Development Plan together with national planning policy.

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The proposal has therefore been assessed against:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- The Hinckley & Bosworth Core Strategy.
- The Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (SADMP).
- Other material considerations, where relevant.

### 4.2 The National Planning Policy Framework:

The NPPF establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development and seeks to achieve three overarching objectives:

- Economic
- Social
- Environmental

The proposed development has been designed to contribute positively to all three objectives.

#### Economic Objective:

The proposal will:

- support rural tourism;
- generate visitor expenditure within the Borough;
- create employment during construction;
- support local businesses;
- diversify the rural economy.

The proposal therefore contributes positively to sustainable economic growth.

#### Social Objective:

The proposal provides:

- additional visitor accommodation;
- increased recreational opportunities;
- enhanced access to the countryside;
- support for local leisure facilities;

The proposal contributes towards the vitality of Earl Shilton and the wider Borough.

#### Environmental Objective:

Environmental benefits include:

- native tree planting;
- habitat creation;
- biodiversity enhancement;
- sustainable drainage;
- landscape improvements.

The proposal has been designed to protect and enhance the natural environment.

### 4.3 Sustainable Tourism:

National planning policy recognises the importance of supporting sustainable tourism in rural areas.

The proposal will provide a small-scale tourism development capable of attracting visitors to the Borough whilst respecting the surrounding landscape. Unlike large holiday parks, the proposal has intentionally been limited to four lodges. The development therefore represents an appropriate scale of rural tourism.

#### 4.4 Design Quality:

The proposal demonstrates high-quality design through:

- low-density development;
- natural building materials;
- generous landscaping;
- careful positioning of buildings;
- sympathetic architectural detailing.

The development has been landscape-led from the outset

#### 4.5 Climate Change:

The proposal incorporates sustainable design principles including:

- energy-efficient construction;
- electric vehicle charging;
- permeable surfacing;
- sustainable drainage;
- increased tree planting.

The proposal therefore contributes towards reducing environmental impacts.

#### 4.6 Hinckley & Bosworth Core Strategy:

The adopted Core Strategy establishes the long-term planning vision for the Borough.

The proposal has particular regard to the objectives relating to:

- sustainable economic development;
- tourism;
- environmental quality;
- design;
- biodiversity.

#### Tourism:

The proposed holiday lodges represent a form of rural tourism capable of contributing to the local economy through increased visitor spending. The development supports the wider tourism offer within Hinckley & Bosworth.

#### Rural Economy:

The proposal supports rural diversification by introducing a tourism use that complements the surrounding countryside rather than fundamentally changing its character. The proposal therefore contributes towards economic resilience within the Borough.

#### 4.7 Site Allocations and Development Management Policies:

The proposal has been assessed against the relevant Development Management policies.

#### Countryside:

Although located outside the settlement boundary, the proposal has been carefully designed to minimise impact through:

- low building density;
- extensive landscaping;

- retention of hedgerows;
- limited building heights.

The proposal seeks to conserve the intrinsic character of the countryside while delivering economic and environmental benefits.

#### Tourism Development:

The proposed holiday lodges are intended solely for visitor accommodation.

#### The development:

- supports tourism;
- creates employment;
- contributes towards local expenditure;
- strengthens the Borough's visitor economy.

#### Design:

The proposal demonstrates good design through:

- careful layout;
- high-quality architecture;
- landscaping;
- sustainable construction;
- appropriate scale.

#### Biodiversity:

The proposal will increase biodiversity through:

- native planting;
- meadow creation;
- wildlife habitats;
- ecological connectivity.

Subject to detailed design, biodiversity enhancement is expected to exceed the current baseline.

#### Highways:

The proposal benefits from direct access to Leicester Road. Traffic associated with four holiday lodges is anticipated to be modest. Adequate parking and turning facilities will be provided within the site.

#### 4.8 Material Considerations:

Additional material considerations include:

#### Economic Benefits:

The proposal will increase visitor spending across:

- accommodation;
- food and drink;
- retail;
- leisure;
- visitor attractions.

#### Landscape Enhancement:

The proposal delivers significant landscape improvements through:

- extensive planting;
- habitat creation;
- hedgerow enhancement.

Biodiversity:

The proposal provides opportunities to achieve measurable biodiversity enhancement.

Sustainable Drainage:

Surface water will be managed using sustainable drainage techniques, reducing run off and improving water quality where feasible.

4.9 Planning Policy Compliance Summary:

4.10 Planning Consideration Assessment:

Sustainable Development ✓ Complies

Rural Tourism ✓ Strongly Supports

Economic Growth ✓ Supports

Design Quality ✓ Complies

Landscape Protection ✓ Mitigation Proposed

Biodiversity ✓ Enhancement Proposed

Sustainable Drainage ✓ Complies in Principle

Highway Access ✓ Suitable in Principle

Environmental Enhancement ✓ Positive

4.10 Conclusion:

The proposal has been developed following careful consideration of national and local planning policy.

The proposed development:

- supports sustainable tourism;
- contributes towards rural economic diversification;
- provides environmental enhancement;
- improves biodiversity;
- respects the surrounding landscape;
- delivers high-quality design.

When considered against the Development Plan as a whole, the proposal represents sustainable development capable of making a positive contribution to Hinckley & Bosworth Borough.

#### 4.11 SITE PLANNING HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF THE PROPOSAL

Introduction:

The application site has previously been the subject of planning proposals for commercial development. Those proposals identified a number of planning considerations relating to the site's countryside location, landscape character and visual impact. The current proposal has been developed following careful consideration of those issues. Rather than seeking to maximise the development potential of the site, the current application adopts a landscape-led approach that prioritises environmental enhancement, rural tourism and high-quality static lodge design. Accordingly, the proposal should be considered as a fundamentally different form of development.

Previous Planning Considerations:

The previous proposals identified a number of principal issues including:

- the countryside location of the site;
- visual impact;

- landscape character;
- scale of development;
- relationship with surrounding land;
- environmental effects.

These matters have directly influenced the preparation of the current proposal.

#### Evolution of the Current Proposal:

The current scheme represents a significant reduction in both scale and intensity. The development now comprises:

- only four holiday lodges;
- extensive landscaping;
- significant ecological enhancement;
- substantial biodiversity improvements;
- low-density development.

The proposal therefore represents a fundamentally different planning proposition.

#### Reduction in Built Development:

Compared with previous proposals, the amount of built development has been significantly reduced. Large areas of the site remain open and landscaped. The proposed buildings occupy only a limited proportion of the site. This enables the landscape to remain the dominant feature.

#### Landscape-Led Design:

The proposal has been designed around the existing landscape. Key design principles include:

- retention of mature hedgerows;
- reinforcement of existing vegetation;
- additional native woodland planting;
- meadow creation;
- habitat enhancement.

Landscape therefore becomes the defining characteristic of the development.

#### Change in Land Use:

The previous proposal sought commercial employment development. The current proposal seeks visitor accommodation associated with rural tourism. The planning considerations applicable to tourism development differ materially from those associated with employment development. The proposal therefore requires independent assessment against the relevant planning policies.

#### Scale:

The proposed development consists of only four lodges.

This modest scale:

- reduces visual impact;
- limits vehicle movements;
- minimises built form;
- allows generous landscaping;
- reduces pressure on local infrastructure.

#### Environmental Enhancement:

The proposal provides opportunities for significant environmental improvement.

These include:

- additional native trees;

- strengthened hedgerows;
- species-rich grassland;
- bird nesting opportunities;
- bat roosting opportunities;
- hedgehog connectivity;
- sustainable drainage features.

The environmental value of the site will therefore be enhanced.

#### Tourism Benefits:

The proposal supports the visitor economy by providing high-quality accommodation within easy reach of local attractions. Visitors are expected to support:

- local cafés;
- restaurants;
- public houses;
- visitor attractions;
- retail businesses;
- local services.

This contributes to the wider economic objectives of the Borough.

#### Planning Approach:

The proposal has deliberately avoided intensive development. Instead, the application seeks to demonstrate how sensitive tourism development can successfully coexist with the surrounding countryside through careful planning, landscape enhancement and sustainable design.

#### Conclusion:

The current proposal represents a substantial evolution in the development of the site. Rather than repeating previous proposals, the application adopts a fundamentally different planning strategy based upon:

- low-density tourism;
- landscape enhancement;
- biodiversity improvement;
- sustainable design;
- environmental stewardship;
- economic diversification.

Accordingly, the proposal should be assessed on its own merits and in the context of the planning policies applicable to rural tourism.