

# **CAMBRIDGE SPORT LAKES**

## LANDSCAPE DESIGN REPORT

### **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 A full analysis of the landscape, ecology and nature conservation elements of the site is contained in Sections 3 and 6 of the Environmental Statement. These have been taken into account in preparing the landscape design concept and masterplan for the site.
- 1.2 In addition, further material including photographs of the site and its surroundings are included in the Planning Statement, which have been taken into consideration in this report.

### **2.0 Context and Overview**

- 2.1 This is described both in the Environmental and Planning Statements. In summary, the proposed Cambridge Sport Lakes site is flat, being aligned parallel to and west of the Cambridge to Ely railway line along or adjoining the 5 metre AOD contour which is generally parallel to the railway. Currently the land is in agricultural use, with a network of ditches, hedgerows and some isolated trees within it.
- 2.2 To the east of the railway, the landscape is open farmland with extensive wetland towards Wicken Fen. To the north is the edge of the settlement of Waterbeach and to the west is the A10 and development along part of its frontage and to the south Milton, Milton Country Park and the A14. Between the application site and the A10, a new golf course is currently under construction, The railway line, its embankment and overhead gantries form strong man-made features along the eastern boundary.
- 2.3 In addition to road, rail and housing developments, man-made interventions have occurred in the landscape over a long period on agricultural land and in a more formal manner in the creation of gardens to historic country houses, with Anglesey Abbey (National Trust) some distance to the east.
- 2.4 There are no public footpaths within the application site but east of the railway are a series of major long distance routes, including Haling Way and Fen Rivers Way along

the River Cam and Harcamlow Way east of Horningsea, which is designated as a Conservation Area.

- 2.5 In the Countryside Agency publication "Countryside Character" Volume 6, East of England, the application site falls into the southern extremity of Character Area 46 – The Fens. Approximately along the A10 road is the boundary to Character Area 88 – Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands, which lies to the west.
- 2.6 In the Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines, the site is shown as being situated at the eastern end of the Western Claylands on the map of Landscape Character Areas. Where appropriate, the guidelines and objectives relevant to this site will be followed in the landscape design proposals.
- 2.7 In the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003, Figure 7.1 indicates Target areas for habitat creation. The application site does not fall within any of them.
- 2.8 In the Structure Plan, chapter 4 states that Tourism, Recreation and Leisure policies should be implemented and take forward the Sustainable Development Strategy in the Structure Plan in a number of ways, of which the following ones are relevant to this application:-
- meeting the needs for sport and recreation in locations which minimise the need for travel and are not detrimental to the environment.
  - developing strategies for enhancing informal countryside recreation.
  - encouraging proposals for water-based recreation.

### **3.0 The Proposals**

- 3.1 The Planning Brief gives full details of the proposed development, with its sporting, leisure and recreational elements within the landscape framework of a new and attractive country park. Inevitably, this will create a new man-made element into the landscape but the proposals aim to make this a visual as well as a recreational enhancement of the area, bearing in mind that the site is in the Green Belt but not covered by any specific landscape designations.

- 3.2 As agreed with the local authority and in accordance with sustainability principles, it is intended that no material excavated to construct the rowing course and other features should be taken off site and consequently levels will be raised to accommodate this material. This becomes an integral part of the design as it creates viewing areas and elevated views within and from the site. In addition, the bunding can assist on wind attenuation, which is a technical requirement for the Competition Lake course on this site.
- 3.3 The planting design is aimed to create a landscape, which will enhance the experience of those using the facilities or walking or cycling through it. The bunding alone, according to wind tunnel tests, will not be sufficient for wind attenuation purposes and needs to be supplemented by shrub and tree planting.
- 3.4 To reduce leaf fall into the water bodies, the plant mix will include a high proportion of evergreens on the slopes down in the rowing course. On the slopes down to the outer edges of the site the planting will be mainly deciduous with a predominance of native species to blend with the surrounding landscape. Where possible, existing trees, hedges and ditches will be retained, but inevitably, with the level changes required, this vegetation retention will be minimal. Nevertheless, it is anticipated that some vegetation along the Car Dyke Road frontage will be retained, except where vision splays preclude this. Also, the hedgerow between the eastern entrance road and Car Dyke will if possible be retained, as will the line of trees on the edge of the site, west of the Alan Burrough Training Lake.
- 3.5 The extent of new planting and the possibility of enhanced perimeter ditches, should not only add to the tree cover and diversity of vegetation on the site but add a nature/wildlife corridor northwards from Milton Country Park.
- 3.6 The landscape master plan (drawing 4259 – 100) and the related sections (drawings 4259 – 101 and 102), illustrate the landscape design concept, based on the architect's layout and contour plan. As shown on this masterplan, the landscape aims and objectives are set out in more detail, with eight categories of planting, with related species indicated for each area, related to conditions and location. With much of the land to be made up of raised embankments, plant selection has taken into account the need to establish plants in these conditions. Prior to any construction work commencing on site, planting plans for each phase and a proposed landscape

management plan would be prepared and submitted for approval by the Planning Authority.

- 3.7 The sections, based on the engineer's drawings, are produced to clarify and illustrate the location of the plant mixes noted on the landscape masterplan, the layout and proposed levels within the main part of the development. This demonstrates that the variety of planting arrangements proposed, relate to the requirements and conditions in that part of the site,

#### **4.0 Visual Impact**

- 4.1 To assess the landscape and visual impact of the scheme, four viewpoints have been selected from which the site can be seen in its broad setting. Photomontage images have been created to illustrate the landscape proposals. For reasons already stated, the earth modelling would need to be planted as soon as possible, so that this, where visible, would soon be softened by vegetation, bearing in mind intervening vegetation in several views towards the site. As this is a long term development, the photomontage images show the planting when well established. Planting is shown with growth as anticipated after 15 years, taking an average height expectancy of 5 metres by that time.

- 4.2 The locations of each of the four viewpoints are shown on the landscape masterplan. The existing view is shown as at July 2005 and the photomontages indicate the likely appearance fifteen years after the site is completed and planted. Although these are summer views, it is not anticipated that there would be significant changes in the visual impact during the winter, due to the earth modelling and density of planting.

##### **VIEW 1: (Drawing 4259/103):**

This is from the road out of Milton running north, to the west of the application site. It looks east over the new golf course currently under construction. Occasional trees in the middle distance along a field boundary would be removed by the development. Instead, a new horizontal element of planted raised bunds would be introduced into the landscape, with distant trees east of the railway still being visible on the skyline. Although the excavation and bunding work would cause some visual impact initially, once the planting has become established, the scheme would produce no adverse landscape visual impact. Indeed, the landscape character would be enhanced. Growth of planting on the new golf course has not been indicated.

VIEW 2: (Drawing 4259/104):

This is from the entrance road just inside the site, looking south. Currently, behind the frontage vegetation to Car Dyke Road, the site is open agricultural land with some remnant hedgerows and isolated trees along field boundaries. This view would change from an open aspect to a wooded edge, planted on earth mounding. The proposed entrance road, beyond the mini-roundabout would pass through new woodland. Initially, from this road going south-west, the Competition Lake would be visible but after fifteen years would not be visible, unless some gaps are left in the planting, except possibly in winter, when glimpses of the water are likely. Because of retained and new planting along the Car Dyke Road frontage, apart from at the new road access there would be no significant visual impact on the views along or from Car Dyke Road. Inside the site, inevitably the change from agricultural to leisure uses would be a significant visual change, introducing a new, but fully landscaped element into the landscape.

VIEW 3: (Drawing 4259/105):

This is taken from Clayhithe Road near Eye Hall Farm, looking west. The current view is of middle and far distance trees and some overhead telephone cables and posts. On the right hand side, where there are few or no trees, passing railway trains on the London, Cambridge, Waterbeach, Ely line affect the rural aspect on a regular basis. On the left two thirds of the view, significant vegetation, mainly along the River Cam, means that trains are unlikely to be seen, except possibly in winter. Any view of the scheme would be very limited and any initial landscape and visual intrusion during the construction period would soon be eliminated once planting is established, merging with other trees and hedgerows in the mid distance, beyond the railway line in the right hand third of the photomontage. There would be no significant change to this view.

VIEW 4: (Drawing 4259/106):

This is from Haling Way (Towing Path) along the River Cam, south-west of Horningsea, looking west. The small building on the left adjoins the Fen Road level crossing and the trees behind it form the western border of the Training Lake. To the right of it can be seen the railway line and its gantries and overhead wires, with trees on or beyond the western edge of the application site filling the distant skyline and screening Milton. The construction of the Training Lake would hardly be visible from this viewpoint and the main addition would be trees between the lake and the railway line, along which regular trains in both directions would be fully visible, except on the

extreme left of this view. Any visual impact during construction would be minimal and the new planting would enhance the landscape character in the longer term.

## **5.0 Conclusions**

- 5.1 The proposals would provide new Leisure and Country Park facilities in the area, of benefit to Milton, Waterbeach, Horningsea and the wider community. An area of countryside would become open to public access and use and would provide a potential pedestrian and cycle link between Milton Country Park and Waterbeach.
- 5.2 The excavation and new earth modelling needed to construct the scheme would have an initial visual impact. No residential properties have a direct or close view of the site. Any views from footpaths to the east are largely screened out by vegetation and any glimpses will have railway trains in the middle distance, in front of the scheme.
- 5.3 The substantial planting would soften the earth modelling, adding a new horizontal skyline of trees into the existing horizontal flat landscape. As demonstrated by the photomontages, little or no significant landscape and visual impact is anticipated in the short term and in the longer term as well as providing the leisure facilities, the scheme will add much ecological value in the form of additional tree and shrub cover into the site, with substantial landscape and visual enhancement to the area.

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August 2005