

## 10 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL

### 10.1 Introduction

10.1.1 This chapter considers the effects of the proposed development upon the landscape and visual amenity of the application site and its surroundings and has been prepared by Davies Landscape Architects Ltd (DLA).

10.1.2 This section updates a previously submitted landscape and visual impact assessment submitted with a refused planning application (05/02098/OUT).

#### Scope

10.1.3 Subsequently, the scope of this landscape and visual assessment has been led by the scoping agreed with the Council for the previous application as well as addressing the adverse landscape and visual effects that the Secretary of State found unacceptable in the previous application. Its aims are to evaluate:

- The adverse and beneficial effects of the proposals on the landscape, its character and visual amenity during the construction phases and occupation of the proposed leisure development.
- The positive and adverse effects upon users of public rights of way within and adjoining the site.
- The provision, quality and accessibility of open space.
- The mitigation measures required to reduce, remove or avoid significant landscape and visual effects.
- The compensatory measures to be provided for effects that cannot be effectively removed or that will enhance the application site beyond its existing condition.

#### Previous Application (05/02098/OUT) – Summary of Landscape Issues

##### *Effect of landscape character and appearance*

10.1.4 The Secretary of State's report deemed that the scale and intensity around the north and eastern shore of lake 104 would '*dramatically and adversely*' affect the character and create an urbanising effect on the users of the circular pathway as Lake 104 lies within an attractive rural area that is regarded of value by the local community.

10.1.5 The development proposed around lakes 103 and 103a would significantly change the character and appearance but due to the enclosed nature of these lakes the visual effects

Chapter 10.0  
Landscape and Visual

would be far less reaching. However the jettied groups of buildings projecting into the lake would significantly compromise this.

10.1.6 This section of the ES has been structured to include:

- A review of national, regional and local landscape policy, considered relevant to the location and nature of the proposed development;
- A full description of the landscape and visual aspects of the application site and its setting to identify the receptors that are likely to be affected by the proposed development;
- A description of how the proposed development will affect the landscape and visual resources of the application site and its settings during construction and operation;
- An assessment of the residual affects as a result of the proposed development.

## 10.2 Planning Policy

10.2.1 This section provides a brief summary of the relevant landscape policies relating to the application site and to be considered in the design of the proposed development.

### National Policy

10.2.2 The key principle underpinning national planning policy is to provide sustainable development ensuring an integrated approach to the consideration of:

- Social inclusion, recognising the needs of everyone
- Effective protection and enhancement of the environment
- Prudent use of natural resources
- Maintaining high and stable levels of economic growth

### **Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1) 2005 – Delivering Sustainable Development**

10.2.3 PPS1 sets out the Government's national planning policies for the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system. As the PPS explains, "Planning should facilitate and promote sustainable and inclusive patterns of urban and rural development by: (there then follows a list of five factors including)

- "protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment, the quality and character of the countryside and existing communities". (Para. 5).

10.2.4 Paragraphs 33 – 39 of the PPS set out the Government's approach to the role of design in

delivering sustainable development. At paragraph 35 the PPS states “High quality and inclusive design should be the aim of all those involved in the development process.....It means ensuring a place will function well and add to the overall character and quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development. This requires carefully planned, high quality buildings and spaces that support the efficient uses of resources.....Good design should, inter alia, be integrated into the existing urban form and natural and built environments”.

**Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7) 2004 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas**

10.2.5 The PPS sets out a number of Government objectives for rural areas underpinned by the principle of sustainable development and include:

- Improving the quality of life and the environment
- Improving economic performance and providing diverse agricultural sectors

**Sustainable rural communities, economic development and services**

*Design and Character*

10.2.6 *Paras 12-13* relate to the design and character of rural settlements, in ensuring the development respects, enhances and contributing and the local countryside character and diversity. Development should be of an appropriate design and scale. and utilise tools such as Landscape Character Assessments and Village or Town Design Statements,

*Countryside protection and development in the countryside*

10.2.7 *Paras 15 –16* relate specifically to the protection and enhancement of the open countryside in particular

*(ii) Support other countryside-based enterprises and activities which contribute to rural economies, and /or promote recreation in and the enjoyment of the countryside*

*(iii) Take account of the need to protect natural resources*

*(v) conserve specific features and sites of landscape, wildlife and historic or architectural value, in accordance with statutory designations.*

**The Countryside**

*The countryside around urban areas*

10.2.8 *Para 26* - In areas not protected by PPG2 (Greenbelts) Authorities should aim to secure environmental improvements and beneficial uses including improved public access and

Chapter 10.0  
Landscape and Visual

facilitating recreational facilities. These should consider potential impacts upon adjoining landuses.

*Tourism and Leisure*

*Tourist accommodation*

- 10.2.9 *Paras 37-39* states that new development is to be located in or adjacent to existing towns and villages. The location of development should consider the protection and enhancement of existing landscape or sensitive features. These sites should not be visually prominent.

***Planning Policy Statement 9 (PPS9) Aug 2005: - Biodiversity and Geological Conservation***

- 10.2.10 PPS9 sets out planning policies on protection of biodiversity and geological conservation through the planning system and promotes opportunities for building-in beneficial biodiversity or geological features as part of good design.

***Planning Policy Guidance 17, (PPG17)Jul 2002 Planning for open space, sport and recreation***

- 10.2.11 The policy relates to assessing opportunities and needs for sport and recreation provision and safeguarding open space which have recreational value. This policy has been considered with relevance to the Public Rights of Way network around the site. The remainder of the site is currently private.

- 10.2.12 Development within open space should:

- Avoid any erosion of recreational function and maintain or enhance the character of open spaces
- Ensure that open spaces do not suffer from increased overlooking, traffic flows or other encroachment
- Protect and enhance those parts of the rights of way network that might benefit from open space and,
- Consider the impact of any development on biodiversity and nature conservation

**Regional**

***Regional Policy Guidance (RPG10)***

- 10.2.13 Regional Planning Guidance Note 10 “Regional Planning Guidance for the South West”

provides strategic guidance for the County Structure Plans, Local Mineral Plans and Local plans

**Gloucestershire Structure Plan (Second Review) Adopted 1999**

10.2.14 The county structure plan translates regional guidance in RPG10 to county level and provides the policy District Local Plans. In landscape terms the following policies have been considered:

- Policy NHE.1 (Protection of the countryside character)
- Policy NHE.2 (Protection and enhancement of wildlife and habitats)
- Policy NHE.8 (development within the Cotswold Water Park)
- Policy S.1 (conservation of natural resources within development)
- Policy S.6 Protection of local character and distinctiveness)
- Policy S.7 (enhancement of the county's environment)
- Policy T.2 (Pedestrian Access)
- Policy T.3 (Cyclist access)
- Policy TSM.1 (sustainable tourism and design)
- Policy TSM.3 (setting of tourist accommodation)

**Local**

**Cotswold District Local Plan 2001-2011 – (saved policies until 25<sup>th</sup> April 2009)**

**Policy UT.1 Cotswold Water Park**

10.2.15 This policy sets out additional criteria for acceptable development within the Cotswold Water Park.

10.2.16 The proposals should retain and enhance existing landscape features that contribute to the character and appearance.

10.2.17 The development should demonstrate maintenance, enhancement and nature conservation of important habitats. (Cotswold Water Park Biodiversity Action Plan), and where appropriate create new habitats and long term conservation goals.

10.2.18 The design and siting should be sympathetic to the character of the area and avoid damaging

to the landscape.

10.2.19 Further explanation and guidance towards this policy is given within Chapter 11- **UPPER THAMES**. Of most relevance are paras:

- 11.1.12 ....However, several lakes remain un-restored, unused and with no apparent management or care; their landscape, nature conservation, recreation and tourism potential unrealised.
- 11.1.17.....The environment of the Water Park, so much valued by local people and visitors alike, is essentially man-made and requires long-term investment in management to sustain and enhance its ecological and recreational value

**(c) Landscape Enhancement**

- 11.1.27 ...."The improvement of the appearance and landscaping of the area, and creation of a new landscape character, paying particular regard to topography, indigenous species and the setting of the lakes and settlements, is an important benefit to be obtained from any development. This will play an essential future role in the success of the area for recreation, tourism and nature conservation".
- 11.1.28 "Development of land areas needs to avoid over-development and landscape denigration. By keeping a sensible, reasonably generous, proportion of land within sites free from development and dedicated to landscaping, the improvement of the appearance of the area will gradually occur".

**(e) Design**

- 11.1.30 ...."The opportunity should be taken in every development to raise the standards of layout, design, materials and landscaping".

**Policy UT.2 Settlement Protection Boundaries**

10.2.20 Protects residential amenities and enhance the landscape setting of settlements, only amelioration measures, such as tree planting and bunding will normally be permitted.

**Policy 9 Biodiversity, Geology and Geomorphology.**

10.2.21 The policy provides guidance and protection for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

against direct or indirect effects. Whilst neither site contains a SSSI there are two located along the southern boundary of the Lake application boundary.

- 10.2.22 The policy also protects sites which support any protected species and their habitats. Opportunities to enhance and create these habitats should be taken.

**Policy 10 Trees Woodlands and hedgerows**

- 10.2.23 Protects trees covered by a Tree Preservation Order and Hedgerows which are visually, ecologically and historically important. Trees covered by a TPO can only be removed if the character of the area would benefit or it is in the interest of good forestry or arboricultural practice.

**Policy 26 Tourism**

- 10.2.24 Proposals for holiday lodges will only be permitted if they have no harmful effect on the local landscape

**Policy 42 Cotswold Design Code**

- 10.2.25 Development should respect the character, appearance and local distinctiveness of the Cotswold District as outlined in the Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG).

**Policy 45 Landscaping in new developments**

- 10.2.26 The development should retain and incorporate existing attractive landscape features and wildlife habitats. Any proposals should not significantly affect the views of the wider landscape.

**Supplementary Planning Guidance**

**Cotswold Water Park, Adopted Nov 1999 (Fig 4.1 Planning Designations)**

- 10.2.27 This document provides guidance on the densities and types of development deemed acceptable within identified zones of the Cotswold Water Park.
- 10.2.28 The western section of lake 104 is allocated Zone A, a quiet zone with remote and tranquil quality which is essential to their character.
- 10.2.29 The eastern shore of Lake 104 and 103A are Zone B, suited to a variety of low intensity uses such as low noise recreation and low density caravan/camping sites.
- 10.2.30 The Land at Milestone and Lake 103 are allocated Zone C, - suitable for high intensity and

Chapter 10.0  
Landscape and Visual

noise uses such as holiday accommodation and active water sports.

Cotswold Design Code, adopted March 2000

10.2.31 This document sets out the principles to be considered when design new building within the Cotswolds. The document has been put in place to raise the standards of design in order to reflect the distinctive character.

10.2.32 The document makes an exception for new developments set around the lakes, which are not seen within the context of an existing settlement. These developments should exhibit the highest standard of modern architecture and reflect their setting.

10.2.33 Whilst the document concentrates primarily on architecture a chapter describing of setting requires that:

- Attention is given to existing public views in and out of the site with additional opportunities created to open up views
- Development in the countryside should avoid building on the skyline
- Landscaping will need to reflect the scale considering large scale tree belts rather than individual trees

**SOS Decision Notice**

- The intensity and scale of the former lodge development proposals around lake 104 is contrary to the sustainability principles outlined in PPS7 relating to the effective protection and enhancement of the environment. The proposals were also considered to conflict with Structure Plan Polices NHE.1 (Protection of the countryside character) and S.6 Protection of local character and distinctiveness) and Local plan Policies UT1 (Cotswold Water Park), 10(Trees Woodlands and Hedgerows, in with particular reference to the north east shore of lake 104.
- The inspector concluded that the medium to high intensity uses/development within Zone B was unacceptable and did not accord with the SPG zoning guidance however there was no conflict in principal to medium to high intensity/development around lake 103 – Zone C.

**10.3 Methodology**

10.3.1 While intrinsically linked, landscape and visual impact assessments (LVIA) are essentially separate procedures. It is often the case that an impact on one will often give rise or be

related to an effect on the other. The assessment process relies upon combination of objective and subjective judgement and it is fundamental to the credibility of the work therefore that a structured consistent and recognised approach is used.

- 10.3.2 The assessment has been undertaken by fully qualified, trained and experienced landscape professionals using techniques and best practice guidance in accordance with relevant Institute guidelines (Landscape Institute & the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 1995 & 2002).
- 10.3.3 To arrive at an evaluation of the significance of landscape and visual impacts, the process assesses the sensitivity of the existing baseline landscape and visual resources of the application site and its surroundings and combines this with the amount or magnitude of the change that would occur during the various phases of the development. The definitions and criteria used in the evaluation process are more fully explained in paragraph 10.3.14 and *Appendix 10.1*.
- 10.3.4 The assessment has been carried out in three key stages:
- Desk study;
  - Field and photographic surveys; and
  - Analysis and evaluation.
- 10.3.5 The preliminary stages are aimed at building up a thorough understanding of the existing baseline conditions of the landscape and its resources. The latter stages analyse and evaluate the significance of predicted effects of the proposals taking account of the mitigation measures.
- 10.3.6 Mitigation is/are the measure/measures taken throughout the design development to avoid reduce, remedy or compensate for any significant adverse landscape and visual impacts associated with the project. The proposals are consistently reassessed to test their effectiveness, appropriateness and feasibility.

### **Baseline Data Collection**

#### *Desk Study*

- 10.3.7 A desk study was undertaken using Ordnance Survey maps and aerial photographs of the landscape. These sources were examined for existing patterns and scale of landform, land cover and built development, giving guidance on the general landscape character of the application site and its surroundings.

Chapter 10.0  
Landscape and Visual

10.3.8 The sources listed in references at the rear of this section, were consulted to establish a set of baseline conditions with respect to cover, landform and the landscape elements that combine to make up the landscape character and the relative value of the resource. A series of site visits was subsequently undertaken to gather more detailed information about the application site and its setting.

### **Landscape Impacts**

10.3.9 These are concerned with the physical effects of the proposals on the landscape and the changes that might occur to its character and how it is perceived. Landscape effects can be direct or indirect, beneficial or adverse and can be cumulative, permanent or temporary (short, medium or long term).

10.3.10 Direct effects include the quantifiable removal of features to the landscape, such as the loss of trees, hedgerows or water bodies or conversely, the addition of new landscape elements such as woodland.

10.3.11 Indirect effects include:

- Changes to the perception of the landscape;
- Changes in the character of an area;
- Changes to the experience of being in a particular space or designed landscape; and
- Changes to the experience of driving or cycling along a road or walking along a footpath

### **Visual Effects**

10.3.12 Visual effects relate to the changes that might arise to available views as a result of physical changes to the landscape and how people might respond to those changes.

10.3.13 As with landscape impacts, effects may be positive (beneficial), negative (adverse) and arise at different scales (local, regional or national) with different levels of significance. They may also be direct or indirect, cumulative, permanent or temporary (short, medium or long term).

### **Significance Criteria**

10.3.14 The threshold tables used to assess the sensitivity or importance of receptors, the magnitude of change and the resulting significance are shown in *Appendix 10.2*. By correlating the magnitude and sensitivity it is possible to identify the level of significance of each impact.

Table 10.1 - Landscape Impact Significance Definitions

<b>Severe</b>	The proposals become the dominant feature in, or fundamentally change the character of, a very important landscape, such that other elements become subordinate
<b>Major</b>	The proposals form an immediately apparent feature in a moderately or very important landscape such that they affect and change its overall character
<b>Moderate</b>	The proposals form a recognisable new element within a moderately or very important landscape, but are of such a design or small scale that a casual observer may not readily notice the change in character. Alternatively, the proposals cause an immediately apparent or fundamental change in character in a landscape of low importance
<b>Minor</b>	The proposals form a recognisable new element of different character within a landscape of low importance, but to such a small degree that they may not be readily noticed by an observer
<b>Negligible</b>	No part of the proposals have any effect on the landscape, such that they are scarcely or not appreciated and the character remains substantially unchanged

Table 10.2 - Visual Impact Significance Definition

<b>Severe</b>	Dominating changes to views from the most important receptors
<b>Major</b>	Major changes to views from important and very important receptors, or dominating changes to views from moderately important receptors
<b>Moderate</b>	Major or dominating changes to views from receptors of low importance, or small changes to views from important and very important receptors
<b>Minor</b>	Small changes to views from receptors of low importance
<b>Negligible</b>	No discernable change to views, or changes at such a distance or of such a small scale that a negligible component of wider views is influenced. Alternatively no views of the proposal available from important receptors

## 10.4 Landscape Baseline Data and Assessment

### Baseline

#### **Landscape Character**

- 10.4.1 Landscape character assessment is now used extensively to guide and inform planning policy and decision making that affects the landscape. Landscape character is defined as the district pattern and combination of elements that occurs constantly in a particular landscape and what makes it different and unique from one place to another. It is how we perceive the interaction of a number of aspects recognised as the earth sciences, historical and cultural influence, biodiversity, visual and sensory qualities, which all combine to create local

Chapter 10.0  
Landscape and Visual

distinctiveness and sense of place.

10.4.2 Character assessments can be undertaken at a number of scales. The Countryside Agency and English Nature (now Natural England), with support from English Heritage, produced 'The Character of England Map' in 1999 which provided a regional basis for further sub-regional, district, local and site level assessments.

10.4.3 In recent years most planning authorities have adopted either a sub-regional or district level assessment, often adopted as supplementary planning guidance. The desk study confirmed that both had been commissioned for the area covering the application sites but neither documents have been adopted.

10.4.4 The character assessments covering the area are:

Table 10.3 – Landscape Character Assessments

<b>Regional</b>	JCA 108 – Upper Thames Clay Vales
<b>Local</b>	Assessment of Landscape outside the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (June 2000, by White Consultants on behalf of Cotswold District Council)

**Assessment of Landscape outside the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

(Fig 10.1 Landscape character types)

10.4.5 Within the assessment the site is identified within the Thames Valley Landscape Character Type and is further classified as TV3, Fairford Airfield and Cotswold Water Park East:

10.4.6 "A varied area with little agricultural land use. Current and former sand and gravel workings are similar in character to area TV1 but not as extensive. This contrasts with the massive scale of the runway and associated features of the Fairford Airfield. Although seldom used it creates a forbidding military presence.

Sensitivities:

- Inevitable changes as workings proceed, recreation developments and vegetation matures
- There is capacity to absorb development for innovative sustainable developments with the framework of the former workings
- Small rural gaps and links alongside the River Coln are vulnerable
- Changes of developments in use of the airfield could have major impacts on the

landscape.

- 10.4.7 The landscape has already been subject to significant change within the Cotswold Water Park and at a local level there are contrasts in the scale and visual character as one approaches lakes 104 and 103, 103a from the River Coln corridor and Fairford.

*Discussion*

- 10.4.8 The gravel extraction denuded the application site of most of their historic agricultural features, but some historic landscape elements have been retained around the perimeters of the sites and between each of the three lakes and Milestone. Since being abandoned a more recent wetland landscape has been gaining dominance, rapidly establishing itself around the lake margins. This typically comprises scrub species such as hawthorn, willow, alder and poplar, along with reeds and emergent vegetation on the water's edge. The landscape character of the Application Site, that is to say the particular combination and interaction of elements and aspects of the landscape which serve to distinguish it from other areas, centres on the setting of the lakes within a strong prevailing pattern of enclosure and former gravel workings.
- 10.4.9 The pattern of enclosure is formed at the site boundaries by the older historic field hedgerows, and further compartmentalisation occurs by nature of the wetland vegetation around the lake margins. That strongly enclosed character is reinforced by the low-lying flat topography and density of the hedgerows, which cumulate to prevent any long views of any of the lakes from outside the application site.
- 10.4.10 Milestone lies in an area that has a different character to the remainder of the application site and remains as a recently disturbed piece of land dominated by gravel or bare earth areas interspersed by two water bodies and occasional young scrub around its margins. It is also influenced by the existing dwelling to the northwest and small retail warehouse abutting the northeast boundary. Its north east and west boundaries are defined by hedges providing enclosure but is more open to the south with only a 1.8m close board fence on a bank separating it from Lake 103. Overall it is in a visually poor declining condition and has more strongly influenced by both audible and visual detractors than lakes 103,103a and 104.
- 10.4.11 There is a marked change in landscape character as one enters the site from the more agricultural landscape to the west but less so when entering the site from Lake 105 to the east.
- 10.4.12 The landscape of the application site is not constant or in the same condition as the remaining agricultural landscape. Changes in appearance through increased enclosure occur in a relatively short time scale and will continue to change without management intervention.

**Tranquility mapping** (Fig 10.2 CPRE Tranquility Map)

- 10.4.13 The idea of mapping areas of countryside that could be regarded as tranquil (away from noise and visual intrusion) was first developed for a Department of Transport study in 1991, and then for the Countryside Commission (now the Countryside Commission) and Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE).
- 10.4.14 The Countryside Commission and CPRE used the methodology to produce a series of maps at regional and local scale that would indicate the likelihood someone would experience tranquillity in any locality. The methodology has, in essence, two parts
- A survey to test people's perceptions of beneficial and detracting factors when experiencing tranquillity
  - Geographical Information Systems (GIS) model to assess the impact of topography.
- 10.4.15 The Gloucestershire map (revised 2007) indicates that the site lies in the middle of the scale between least tranquil and most tranquil. Fairford to the west rates higher towards the least tranquil whilst the area to the southwest, around lakes 102 and 102A, are slightly more tranquil.

**Topography** (Fig 10.3 Topography Plan)

- 10.4.16 The site lies within the Thames Valley, following the River Coln, opening out into a level basin between Fairford, Lechlade and Kempsford (3.5km to the south). The exception to this is Horcott Hill, which rises markedly to 102m AOD 200m to the southwest boundary of the site, behind Cleeve Wood. The site area itself is very gently sloping from 79.5m AOD on the east boundary of lake 103 rising gently towards the west to about 81.15m AOD on the west shores of lake 104. The ground continues to rise gently towards Fairford at 85m AOD in the east. To the north the land rises to 115m AOD at Hatherop Downs about 3.5km from the site. To the east the land falls away gently to 75m AOD at Lechlade.
- 10.4.17 The land at Milestone is fairly level at approximately 80.2m AOD with the exception of the area surrounding the lakes which lies at 79.90. A low earth bund(700mm) runs along the southeast boundary of the site separating it from the main body of lake 103.

**Geology**

- 10.4.18 The underlying geology consists of river terrace and lacustrine gravels, overlain by soils of the Badsey 2 association. These are well-drained, calcareous, fine loamy soils, which are affected by groundwater. The hydrology and drainage are discussed in more detail in Chapter 11.

10.4.19 The rich deposits of sand and gravels have and continue to be an integral and important part of the local economies in this part of the Cotswolds. The extraction industries have had a significant effect on the landscape in a relatively short timescale, changing an otherwise agricultural landscape into a series of lakes from worked out gravel pits.

### **Human Influences**

10.4.20 The proximity of the site area to the Thames, a major highway for transporting goods has meant the site has had human occupation and influences since the earliest times.

10.4.21 Up until the early 20th C the site and surrounding area would have been dominated by an agricultural landscape interspersed with small villages and hamlets. The medium sized fields around the site are traditionally used for arable and the smaller sized fields for grazing. Historical maps show that the area changed very little over hundreds of years until gravel extraction started up in the 20th C.

10.4.22 Remnants of the old-field patterns defined by hedges still remain within many of the lakes. Old hedges are still present around the perimeters of the site as well as dividing lakes 103 and 104. The creation of lakes in worked out gravel pits has created many recreational and nature conservation opportunities creating a fairly recent and thriving tourist based economy, although this is not as developed in the eastern part of the Cotswold Water Park as in the west.

10.4.23 Fairford train station was located immediately northwest of lake 104, now demarked along the boundary by a planted earth bund.

10.4.24 Other major recent human influence in the local area is the RAF base at Fairford whose main interaction with the site is from the audible and visual intrusion of aircraft taking off and landing.

### **Roads** (*Fig 10.4 Site Context Plan*)

10.4.25 The principal roads in the area are:

- The A417 London Road, a dominant and major distributor road, within the local area runs along the northern boundary of both sites and provides a link between Fairford and Lechlade
- A secondary road, the Whelford Road, runs south from the A417 to Whelford, along the eastern boundary of Lake 105, approximately 250m east of Lake 103.
- Cinders Lane (Public Footpath BFA34) exits the A417 south and provides access to

the housing and football ground on the eastern boundary of Fairford. The lane stops 200m northwest of the Lake 104 joining public footpath BFA30 just before it enters the site.

### **Existing Settlements & Built Development**

#### *To the North*

- 10.4.26 A large warehouse/depot lies in a narrow plot abutting the northwest boundary of the lakes application site on the site of the former railway station.
- 10.4.27 Directly to the north of the wooded track (BFA30) there is a small lake with a pair of two storey office buildings lying on its northern shores. To the east of this are outbuildings within a small landholding.
- 10.4.28 A small leisure retail unit abuts the northeast boundary of Milestone land and has shared access via the existing entrance from the A417 into lake 103.
- 10.4.29 Further north, there are occasional isolated dwellings and farms set within open countryside to the north of the A417.

#### *To the South*

- 10.4.30 The northern boundary of the runway at RAF Fairford, the most conspicuous and largest development in the area, lies 1km to the south. Horcott Hill, a small residential development and industrial units are situated at the base of Horcott Hill approximately 400m to the southwest. Whelford, a small-dispersed settlement, is located 1km to the southeast.
- 10.4.31 The southern boundary of milestone land abuts the northern boundary of lake 103.

#### *To the East*

- 10.4.32 The Cotswold Water Park continues to the east as far Lechlade. Lakes 105 – 111 lie to the east of the application boundary. Lake 105 has been developed to provide a waterski course, log cabin style second homes on its northern shores and a fixed and mobile caravan site to the south.
- 10.4.33 The recent Coln Park development at Claydon Pike 700m to the east, includes holiday homes, a hotel complex and country park but has little physical or visual relationship with the site.

#### *To the West*

- 10.4.34 The largest settlement in the area, Fairford, is located to the west with properties along Cinder Lane and the Town's football ground 300m from the northwest boundary. Details of the population and facilities within Fairford are discussed in Chapter 12.

10.4.35 Beaumont Barn House and “The Bull Pens” lie along the eastern boundary of Fairford, 400m to the west of Lake 104 west boundary.

10.4.36 Horcott is located to the south of Fairford, 700m west of the site.

**The Historic Landscape and Site Designations** (*Ref Fig 10.5 Landscape Designations*)

10.4.37 The site falls within the Cotswold Water Park, which was established in 1967 and covers some 10,750 hectares. The Cotswold Water Park consists of 133 lakes created by sand and gravel extraction in the Upper Thames floodplain. Lake 104 is currently the 10th largest lake.

10.4.38 The older lakes (i.e. 103/103A and the 104 Lakes) tend to have been dug wet and generally have steep embankments with few shallow margins. Lake 104 was re-flooded in 1988/89 and has developed vegetation through regeneration.

10.4.39 Lake 102 and 102A lie adjacent to the south boundary of lake 104. Lake 102A is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest notified for its valuable aquatic and emergent vegetation and invertebrate communities. A limestone grassland meadow located to the east of lake 102 is also notified as a SSSI. Lakes 111 and 111b are also designated SSSI located about 0.7km to the southeast.

10.4.40 The site is outside the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which lies about 3km to the north.

10.4.41 There are three Scheduled Ancient Monuments within a 2km radius of the site, Fairford Saxon Cemetery 2km to the northwest, Claydon Cottages 1.2km to the southeast and Hengiform Barrow 1.8km to the southwest. A site based archaeological assessment has been submitted as part of the Scoping Request..

**Access and Rights of Way** (*Ref Fig 10.6 Site Access and Public Rights of Way*)

*Vehicular Access to the Sites*

10.4.42 Vehicular access to lake 103 is via a small track which links directly on to the A417 in the northeast and continues down the east shore of Lake 103 and 103A where it heads southeast to meet with the Whelford Road and flanks lake 105, 111 and 111A and B.

10.4.43 The only access to lake 104 is currently restricted to a field gate off the A417 and a further link to the northwest of lake 103.

10.4.44 Milestone House and land is currently accessed from a gravel driveway off the A417 in the northwest corner of the application boundary.

*Public Footpaths*

- 10.4.45 There are a number of footpaths that head out of east Fairford towards the lakes and pass through the site (BFA 21, 22, 23, 29 30, 31 34 & BKD32). Lake 104's close proximity to Fairford and the fact that a footpath circumnavigates it make this a popular pedestrian circuit with local residents. The footpaths on site have been clearly defined by stock proof fencing to protect habitats around the lake and contain trespass. The alignments of the paths were agreed on site in 2006 with the Gloucestershire County footpath officer prior to the planning appeal of the former application and it is acknowledged that a definitive section of BFA 30 in the northeast of Lake 104 cannot be used as it cuts across water. A permissive route just north of the shore is used instead to ensure the continuity of the walk.
- 10.4.46 Public Footpath BFA30 enters the northwest corner of the site from Fairford and Cinder Lane where it is enclosed by tall hedges for most of its route. The path continues eastward following the northern boundary through a partially wooded track and then follows close to the shores of Lake 104.
- 10.4.47 At the northeast corner of lake 104, the footpath heads due south between to the eastern boundary of lake 104 and the dense scrub vegetation along the lakeside margins to the southwest corner where it meets with BFA 32. This is the point where the northeast section of the footpath follows a permissive route as a section of the definitive footpath was lost during the gravel extraction.
- 10.4.48 Public Footpath BFA 33 runs between the northwest corner of the application site and heads south from BFA 30, following the hedge line along the west boundary of the lake 104 for approximately 180m until meeting Footpath BFA 31; a route which enters the site across arable fields from the southeast of Fairford.
- 10.4.49 Footpath BFA 31 continues on from BFA 33 around the southwest corner of Lake 104 where it meets Footpath BFA 21 entering the site after following the north bank of the River Coln. Approximately 150m further east, Footpath BKD 32 which runs on the south bank of the River Coln, parallel with BFA 21 enters the site via across a small pedestrian bridge. The Footpath merges with BFA 32 on the southwest shore of lake 104 and follows Courts Brook along the south shores of lake 104 before joining up with BFA 30 in the southeast. The path then heads southeast between lakes 103 and 103A, where it follows the southern margins of lake 105 until reaching Whelford Road where it terminates.
- 10.4.50 A cycle route, designated in the Cotswold Cycle Strategy, runs from the northeast edge of Fairford, 0.3km from the northern boundary of the site, heading north to Salt Way and then east to Lechlade.
- 10.4.51 Offsite, Footpaths BFA35 and BH4, follow the direction of the cycle route, starting 0.4km north

of Hatherop Lane and joining the cycle path south of South Farm.

- 10.4.52 BLE 1 and BFA35 run from A417/Thornhill farm, 0.8km east of the site and joins the cycle track at Stanford Hall.
- 10.4.53 BKD 6/BFA 37 (0.5km to the south of Lake 105) runs east from Bowmoor Cottage, Whelford Road.
- 10.4.54 There are no public rights of way that pass through or are immediately adjacent to the land at Milestone.

### Assessment

#### **Landscape Features on or Adjacent to the Site** (Ref Fig 10.7 Existing Site Feature & Appendix 10.3 BS5837 Tree Survey)

- 10.4.55 The application sites were originally agricultural land, before being used for sand and gravel extraction, which ceased in the late 1980's. The resultant pits were allowed to flood and the banks restored to grass. The extraction industry denuded the site of most of its internal physical features save for some boundary hedgerows and mature trees that survived around the perimeter of the lakes. An area Tree Preservation Order Ref: 15(1993) covers all of the important trees and tree groups, but not recent self regenerated scrub around the lake margins. The TPO does not cover the Milestone application site.
- 10.4.56 The local landscape is now characterised by its lakes and wetland vegetation, which provide a range of nature conservation, public and private amenity benefits. Lakes 103, 103a and 104 are the most westerly lakes in a tight cluster of 15 other lakes located to the east of Fairford. The lakes within the Milestone application are not numbered and are not of the same scale as the other lakes.

#### **Lake 104**

- 10.4.57 This covers an area of about 20.3 hectares and has a perimeter of 2320m. The open managed grassland area around Lake 104 gently slopes to banked shorelines shrouded by belts of self-regenerated scrub comprising young and semi-mature hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), willow (*salix sp.*), alder (*Alnus sp.*) and poplar (*Populus sp.*).

#### **Boundaries**

- 10.4.58 A poorly managed gappy hawthorn hedgerow containing occasional mature ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) marks the north boundary. This becomes a narrow tree belt before it doglegs north towards the A417 and then merges with a gappy hawthorn hedgerow.

Chapter 10.0  
Landscape and Visual

- 10.4.59 The boundary adjacent to the A417 is formed by a mature , poorly managed, 8-12m high treed hedgerow comprising a mix of hawthorn with occasional field maple (*Acer campestre*), oak (*Quercus robur*), cherry (*Prunus sp.*), ash and sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*).
- 10.4.60 The south boundary is marked by Courts Brook, which is often dry in summer and helps to relieve the River Coln in flood conditions. The brook has emergent vegetation butting onto more mature willow, poplar and bramble that mark the stream corridor. Courts Brook meanders from the northwest to the southeast separating the application site from lakes 102 and 102a to the south.
- 10.4.61 A 6-8m high hawthorn hedgerow on a low hedgebank interspersed by occasional trees divides the land between lakes 103 and 104 to the east. The quality of the hedge is poor and gappy from lack of management but nonetheless is an historic landscape feature worthy of retention and enhancement. It thickens up to the north where it bounds Milestone House but is more a tree belt than hedge from lack of management.
- 10.4.62 A mature remnant hawthorn hedge with occasional mature ash trees marks the western boundary.

*Northern shores*

- 10.4.63 The northern shoreline is covered in a long practically unbroken belt of poplar, willow, alder and hawthorn.
- 10.4.64 A large area of unmanaged improved grassland lies between the north boundary hedges and the shoreline.

*Southern shores*

- 10.4.65 Taller more established scrub covers much of the southern shoreline, dominated by willow and poplar species with occasional ash

*Eastern shores*

- 10.4.66 The land between the remnant hedge and east shores of lake 104 is dominated by an almost unbroken belt of hawthorn and goat willow (*Salix caprea*) scrub, which opens out to reveal a gravel shoreline in the southeast corner of the lake. There are occasional gaps towards the north affording views across the lake.
- 10.4.67 The route of BFA 30 runs between a remnant hedge and belt of waterside scrub and is demarked along this section by a stone surface.

*Western shores*

- 10.4.68 The western shoreline of Lake 104 is more open unmanaged improved grassland interspersed by clumps of willow and alder scrub. It is worth noting that scrub has developed

quite markedly since the first planning application was prepared.

### **Lake 103**

- 10.4.69 Lake 103 covers approximately 3.6 hectares with a perimeter of approximately 1200m, and was used as a trout lake fished from platforms and rowing boats up until 2006. Vegetation around the immediate edge has been regularly managed to retain easy access to the shores. There are several mature coppice willow interspersed with fishing platforms.
- 10.4.70 The north boundary of the backs onto old gravel workings and Milestone House. A 1.8m close board fence on a raised bank separates the two.
- 10.4.71 Lake 103 is also bounded to the east by a 6-8m mature hawthorn hedge, interspersed with occasional blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), mature 10-15m high specimens of English oak, ash Field maple cherry Crack willow (*Salix fragilis*) and English elm (*Ulmus procera*).
- 10.4.72 A gappy 4-6m unmanaged hawthorn hedgerow with occasional goat willow divides lake 103 and 103A, north of Footpath BFA32.

### **Lake 103A**

- 10.4.73 Lake 103A, a small triangular lake, covers 1.1 hectares with a 475m perimeter and was used as a fishing lake for large carp until 2005. The gravel and partially grassed banks are interspersed with willow and hawthorn scrub with several 10-12m high mature willows on the southern shoreline.
- 10.4.74 The lake is separated from BFA32 to the north by a 3-4m high gappy willow and hawthorn scrub.
- 10.4.75 A remnant mature hedge interspersed with mature ash lies towards the southwest shore.
- 10.4.76 The eastern boundary is defined by a mature dense 7-10m high treed hedgerow comprising hawthorn, occasional blackthorn, English oak, ash Field maple, cherry, Crack willow, and English elm separating it from lake 105.
- 10.4.77 The boundary with Lake 102 is marked to the south by mature 10-12m high willow scrub, with a 4-6m hawthorn hedge forming the remainder of the western boundary.

### **Milestone**

- 10.4.78 The land around Milestone House covers approximately 1.5 hectares and contains a large two storey residential property, several outbuildings and two lakes that were formally used for fishing. The larger of the lakes is separated by two pedestrian bridges.

Chapter 10.0  
Landscape and Visual

- 10.4.79 The majority of the western section of the site is covered by gravel which has been laid on top of tarmac with the exception of small garden areas to the front and rear of the property.
- 10.4.80 The lakes occupy most of the eastern half of the site. The smaller of the two lakes abuts the northern boundary and a narrow gravel strip runs between the bank and chain link fence.
- 10.4.81 The larger of the water bodies contains a narrow island that is accessible by two small bridges to the east and west. Vegetation scrub, including willow has begun to develop along the steep banks of both lakes.
- 10.4.82 The northern boundary abutting the A417 is bordered by a 8-10m high conifer hedge.
- 10.4.83 The eastern boundary abuts the access track to lake 103. It is delineated by a post and wire fence an unmanaged hedgerow containing 3-4m high trees and a mix of deciduous and ornamental shrubs.
- 10.4.84 Two overhead electricity pylons run through the north eastern section of the site
- 10.4.85 A small retail/workshop unit is located to the north of the site and is separated from the site by a 1.8m high chain link fence and 2m high ornamental evergreen hedgerow.

*Services*

- 10.4.86 There are various existing services in the vicinity of the sites including a water main, two medium pressure gas mains and an 11kv overhead electricity cable. A short distance to the west of the site is an existing foul water sewer leading to the Beaumoor Farm pumping station from where effluent is conveyed to the Fairford Sewage Treatment Works at Horcott, a short distance to the south.

## **10.5 Visual Baseline Data and Assessment**

### **Desk Study**

- 10.5.1 Through desk-based analysis of Ordnance Survey maps, aerial photography, topographic survey and cross sections an approximate extent of visibility (visual envelope) and the likely persons (receptors) who would be affected by the proposals was established. The desk-based analysis cannot normally take full account of the effects of intervening vegetation; subtle changes in topography and influence of existing and recently built development. These factors are subsequently checked in the field survey.
- 10.5.2 The visual receptors likely to be affected by the proposed development proposals were recorded in the table below for further analysis in the field.

Table 10.4: Predicted Receptor Locations

<b>Residents</b>	Beaumont Barn & Bull Pens Meadowcroft, No.6 Cinder Lane
<b>Footpaths &amp; Bridleways</b>	BFA 21, 22, 23, 29, 30, 31 & 32, 33 & 34, BKD 32
<b>Users Of Roads</b>	A417, Whelford Road
<b>Others</b>	Caravan Park and Jet Ski centre (lake 105) Business and Industrial Buildings on A417
<b>Views Of Or From Valued Landscapes</b>	None predicted

### Visual Envelope (Fig 10.8 Visual Analysis)

- 10.5.3 The visual envelope predicted in the desk based analysis cannot always take account of the screening effects of vegetation and existing buildings, or the cumulative and screening effects of other developments in the area.
- 10.5.4 Subsequently thorough field surveys have been undertaken taken to determine a more accurate assessment of the potential visual impact of the proposals. Field surveys have been carried out extensively across the site for the previous application, planning appeal in 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007 and have been updated for this assessment in winter and early spring 2009.
- 10.5.5 The visual envelope is affected by the following features:
- Mature treed hedgerows along each of the lakeside boundaries and application site perimeters.
  - An 8-10m high conifer hedge along the northern boundary of Milestone land and the A417
  - Low lying generally flat topography.
  - No residential properties immediately adjoining the site.
  - Intervening mature hedgerows and trees between the major settlement of Fairford and other nearby settlements.
  - Scrub vegetation growing around the waters edge and alongside the public footpaths within the site which serve to filter and block views from public rights of way and create strong enclosure.
- 10.5.6 These elements combine to create a very restricted visual envelope that does not extend significantly beyond the application boundaries.

### **Field Survey**

- 10.5.7 The extent of visibility was checked by initially looking out into the landscape from various locations within the application site and walking all footpaths and roads in the vicinity. It is often the case that views from houses and places of work can only be predicted by looking towards the receptor from the application site and cross checking the view through section analysis. This process is limited clearly as views are seen from ground level and may be available from elevated viewpoints such as upper floor windows. In these instances where sensitive views are being considered, professional experience and judgement are crucial and where doubts exist, are checked by cross sectional analysis.
- 10.5.8 Preliminary layout proposals were tested to obtain an initial understanding of what aspects of the proposed development might be seen from sensitive receptors and what influence the landscape elements such as trees hedges and woodland might have in screening or filtering views.
- 10.5.9 Principal Representative Viewpoints (PRVs), which are typical or representative of a given area within and around the application site and generally from the various receptor groups identified above, were also chosen in the field and photographs taken to record each viewpoint. Additional site photographs to show context and character. These photographs are located within the A3 Figure and Photographs document.

### Assessment

#### **General Findings**

- 10.5.10 Within the eastern lakes of the Thames Valley there are strong and abrupt contrasts in the scale, complexity and visual character as one enters the Water Park landscape from the surrounding agricultural landscape with a sense of a complete change of place. A common feature, a result of the flat landscape and wetland vegetation, is that views are often enclosed or blocked by rapidly establishing wetland vegetation and remnant features affording only intermittent glimpses between lakes, roads and the surrounding farmland.
- 10.5.11 The most pleasant and stimulating views are across long stretches of water or complex framed views with a juxtaposition of elements across multiple treed horizons. An all too common occurrence on many footpaths and views around the waterpark is that one ends up staring into green walls or tunnels with little sense of variation between one lake and another.
- 10.5.12 Generally, the application site is very well contained by hedges and tree belts, which inhibit views into the site from long and middle distance views. The majority of sensitive views are therefore from: footpaths contained within the application site itself; glimpsed views from the

A417; limited upper storey rooms of a few houses on the east fringes of Fairford.

### **Views Outside the Sites**

- 10.5.13 There are existing strongly filtered transient views into the northeast corner of lake 104 from cars travelling on the A417 between west boundary of Milestone and the entrance to the commercial area to the west. Views decrease in full leaf cover.
- 10.5.14 Views of Milestone land can only be glimpsed at a position opposite the house driveway but then blocked by the mature conifer hedge as PRV14.
- 10.5.15 The industrial workshop and mature hedgerow and a planted bund in the northwest corner screens views from properties along Cinder Lane and the Football Ground
- 10.5.16 Filtered glimpses looking over lake 105 from the Whelford Rd towards Milestone and Lake 103 are available for a short distance approaching the junction with the A417. Similar closer and unobstructed views would be available from the wooden lodges on the northern shore of lake 105 as well as the caravan park and ski club.
- 10.5.17 A few residential properties around Bull Pens have the potential for upper storey views looking across intervening hedgerows and tree belts towards lake 104, 103/103A but are strongly filtered and blocked. Footpath BFA 31 runs from the western fringes of Fairford through fields before entering on the west shores of lake 104 and views are blocked by intervening hedges. There are no significant views from Footpath BFA 21 which heads west from BFA 31 in the southwest corner, as views are blocked by hedges in fields in the foreground.
- 10.5.18 Although Horcott Hill to the south is at a raised elevation compared to the site, Cleve Wood and mature vegetation along Courts Brook screen views.

### **Views Within the Sites**

#### *Views from the north*

- 10.5.19 Hedgerows and trees screen views from BFA 30 as it approaches the site via the Cinder Lane as PRV 1. Lake 104 comes into view as the path approaches the northwest corner of the application site as PRV 2 & 3 where views are open across a grassy meadow and the lake is filtered by bankside scrub and trees. The layering effect of intervening bands of vegetation screens views of Lake 103/103A and Milestone on the middle horizon. Heading 100m further east, views are screened as the footpath enters a partially wooded track as PRV 4 but open out 180m further east as PRV 5, 6, 7 & 8.

Chapter 10.0  
Landscape and Visual

- 10.5.20 The same wooded track limits views into the site from the industrial/commercial development.
- 10.5.21 Views are truncated by the boundary vegetation bordering Milestone, the A417 and lake 103 but there are occasional glimpses of the lake itself through waterside scrub. Views are generally not as stimulating or attractive from this section of footpath as PRV 9, 10 & 11, which tend to focus on a grassland corridor enclosed by the shoreline vegetation to the south, trees and hedgerow to the north with a truncated, vegetated horizon. Traffic noise from the A417 becomes increasingly intrusive approaching the grassy meadow towards the northeast.
- 10.5.22 A mature tall tree lined hedgerow (H2) prevents significant views of Milestone House and the retail unit even in the winter view.
- 10.5.23 Footpath BFA30 turns due south following the west side of the hedge that separates lake 103 and 104 as PRV 12, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 & 21. Views are predominantly tunnelled between the hedge and the scrub on the east shore of Lake 104 but there are two narrow arcs of open views looking across the water through gaps in the scrub as PRV 16. Fairford Church spire can be glimpsed in the background rising above a mature hedged and treed horizon. A mature but gappy hedgerow partially filters views into Lake 103, in the winter scene but is a much denser screen in full leaf cover aided by dense and often tall groundcover.
- 10.5.24 Lake 103A and the northern part of Milestone are predominantly blocked from view.
- 10.5.25 Views begin to open out heading further south towards the junction with BFA 32 and there are long views across the gravel shoreline and water as PRV 22 & 23. The broadly rectangular promontory shrouded in scrub screens views of the northeast shoreline.

*Views from the south & east*

- 10.5.26 The short stretch of Footpath BFA32 between 103 and 103A has filtered views through bankside vegetation of both lakes as PRV 24, 25, 26, 27 & 28 with occasional longer framed views down the length of lake 103 towards Milestone as PRV 27. Views of the site become heavily filtered by the east boundary hedge as the path circumnavigates around lake 105 and is eventually screened by the static caravan site near Whelford Rd.
- 10.5.27 There are long open attractive views across the water and gravel beach as BFA 32 heads west around the shores of lake 104 as PRV 30. The path becomes enclosed for much of its length but there is an attractive view opposite the triangular promontory and shore in a break in the vegetation as PRV 31.
- 10.5.28 Views of the east and north shore of lake 104, 103 103A remain screened by mature vegetation until the path reaches the southwest corner of the lake as PRV 32 where glimpses of the east shore start to become available.

- 10.5.29 Views Footpath BKD32 are screened as the path enters the application site and joins BFA 32. A small island which is becoming increasingly vegetated screens views BFA 21 meets BFA 31.
- 10.5.30 Rising topography, tall hedgerows and mature vegetation along Courts Brook screen views from Whelford, in the southeast

*Views from the West*

- 10.5.31 BFA 31 enters the site midway along the west shore of lake 104 and affords open framed views looking along the length of lake 104 towards all its shores as PRV 33. Views quickly disappear behind scrub on the lake banks heading south with occasional open views through breaks in the vegetation.
- 10.5.32 A similar view is available from the short stretch of BFA 33 located between BFA 31 and 30 as PRV 34.

**Sensory Qualities**

- 10.5.33 We use all of our senses in perceiving the landscape, but are most influenced by its visual qualities.
- 10.5.34 Generally there are abrupt contrasts in scale and visual character as one enters the Water Park landscape from the surrounding agricultural land. If one walks by a number of lakes there seems little to distinguish one lake from another. A common feature is that they are often enclosed by rapidly establishing wetland vegetation or remnant hedges and tree belts. Views therefore are often truncated and it is extremely difficult get long vistas across several lakes to distant horizons where the quality of view might be improved by the juxtaposition of a number of elements.

**Lake 104**

- 10.5.35 Lake 104 is the 10th largest in the Cotswold Water Park and affords some longer attractive and stimulating vistas across the water towards an assemblage of waterside trees and scrub rising above the water particularly from the west and southwest. There are however changes to the sensory qualities around its shoreline.
- 10.5.36 Views for instance looking west towards Fairford across the north shoreline of lake 104 are not as stimulating or attractive as those from the west as they tend to be enclosed in a narrow field of vision created by vegetation on the north boundary and the shoreline with only glimpsed views of the water. Traffic noise becomes more audible from the A417 and vehicle movements can be glimpsed through the hedge.

Chapter 10.0  
Landscape and Visual

- 10.5.37 The eastern shore by contrast to the west is densely covered in scrub and there are few opportunities to look at the water. When available the view is stimulating, framed by the vegetation with a glimpsed view of Fairford church steeple set within a well-treed horizon.
- 10.5.38 There are also stimulating attractive views from the southeast shoreline particularly at the beach area in the southeast, with occasional framed views between groups of scrub towards a short treed horizon.
- 10.5.39 Overhead aircraft movements from RAF Fairford would also provide some audible intrusion, but were not noticeable on any of the site visits. The concrete batching plant at Whelford Rd can also be heard in the background reducing the sense of tranquillity.

**Lake 103**

- 10.5.40 Lake 103 stimulates greater feelings of intimacy, being a much smaller lake enclosed by hedges and with access all round its shores to the waters edge. The lake is located next to a lake 105, which is occasionally used for water-skiing and an audible intrusion particularly in the summer months. The concrete batching plant at Whelford Rd can also be heard in the background reducing the sense of tranquillity.
- 10.5.41 The northern area is visually degraded by partially restored gravel workings just north of the site.
- 10.5.42 The noise from the A417 provides some audible intrusion particularly towards the northern margins.
- 10.5.43 Overhead aircraft movements from RAF Fairford would provide some audible intrusion, but were not noticeable on any of the site visits (see existing noise assessment Chapter 7.7 below).

**Lake 103A**

- 10.5.44 Lake 103A is the smallest, intimate and most enclosed of the three lakes. Mature hedgerows contain it both visually and physically.
- 10.5.45 There is minor audible intrusion from the A417 which could increase from sources at Lake 105.

**Milestone**

- 10.5.46 The application site is enclosed and mainly experienced from lake 103.
- 10.5.47 The conifer hedge to the front provides a strong visual barrier towards the A417 but there is

audible detraction from the traffic especially to the north of the site. As with lake 103 and 103a there is potential for noise detraction from the use of lake 105.

## 10.6 Landscape Mitigation, Enhancement and Strategy

*(Fig 10.9 Landscape Strategy & 10.10 Landscape Master plan)*

10.6.1 The landscape strategy has been considered as an integral part of the scheme development in order to arrive at an appropriate site layout and design. The iterative process has been to avoid impacts as a first consideration and reduce from that point on ensure that any potential adverse effects could be designed out or reduced. It is often the case that not all impacts can be avoided, particularly with EIA development and measures to compensate for residual adverse effects have therefore been considered.

10.6.2 All major developments have a number of competing constraints and opportunities that have to be thoroughly evaluated and valued judgements made as to their importance in the scheme development. Other than at Milestone, the key landscape and visual amenity constraints were already well known to the design team through experience of the previous application. The preceding analysis, updated for this application showed that there were several landscape and visual constraints within in the development area not least the decision notice from the previous public inquiry for the most recent applications on this site. The key constraints can be summarised as:

- Tree Preservation Order 15 covering lake 104, 103 & 103a (but not Milestone)
- Mature native hedgerows H1, 3, 8, 9, 13, 16 18 and 20 for landscape, visual and habitat
- The enjoyment and views from lakeside walks particularly BFA 30, 31 and 32.
- Regenerating, emergent and bank side vegetation and habitat around the lake margins (not present at the time of the TPO and therefore not covered)
- The attractive assemblage of vegetation around the shores of Lake 104 which is instrumental in defining the character of the lakes.

### Landscape Mitigation

10.6.3 Mitigation is/are the measure/measures taken during both the design development construction and operation phases to avoid reduce, remedy or compensate for the significant adverse landscape impacts associated with the project. The proposals have been consistently reassessed to test their effectiveness, appropriateness and feasibility.

Chapter 10.0  
Landscape and Visual

- 10.6.4 The implementation of the proposed mitigation measures are not only aimed at reducing and removing adverse aspects of the proposals but providing enhancement of the landscape beyond its current condition.
- 10.6.5 To avoid significant effects on the sensitive landscape features and trees most of which are protected by Tree Preservation Order 15. A BS5837 Pre-Planning Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) was produced by a qualified arborist and is attached in *Appendix 10.3 and 10.4*.

### **Landscape Strategy**

- 10.6.6 The 'Strategic Review and Implementation Plan for the Cotswold Water Park' undertaken on behalf of the Cotswold Water Park Society highlighted a lack of an overall coherent landscape strategy for the CWP with *..."advice only being sought or offered to aggregate companies on an ad-hoc basis. This has led to a landscape that a recent landscape Character Assessment has generally described as fragmented, poorly structured and illegible, especially when compared to its historical character.....and the inappropriate planting of flora that has no link to the past, or strategic direction in relation to the future"*.
- 10.6.7 Given the lack of clear policy guidance it has been important to establish a set of landscape and biodiversity enhancement principles with the key stakeholders namely the Cotswold District Council Environment team, Cotswold Water Park Society, RSPB and Natural England. The landscaping measures comprise two principal elements:
- structural landscaping around the lake margins, site boundaries, open spaces in association with biodiversity enhancement.
  - landscaping within the interior of the site to create a setting for development and in conjunction with biodiversity aims.
  - These broad principles have been embodied within the illustrative site master plan.

#### Structural landscaping

- 10.6.8 The aim of the new landscape framework and structure planting may be summarised as follows:
- To maintain, protect reinforce and define the site boundaries of development areas.
  - To retain key views of the lakes.
  - To plant indigenous native species of British provenance.
  - To provide an improved setting to the existing footpath routes through the site.

- To increase the quality of footpaths to enable access for all abilities.
- Where appropriate, to screen the development in relation to views from adjacent vantage points.
- To protect sensitive ecological areas with features that are characteristic of the landscape.
- To educate and inform the visitors and general public about the landscape and ecological objectives of the proposals.
- To provide long-term management of the landscape.

Landscaping within the interior of the Site.

- 10.6.9 The second element is landscaping associated with the 'public zones' within the development areas and as such would be centred on the principal access roads, spaces around buildings, car parks and footpath/cycleway links.
- 10.6.10 The main aim of the landscaping would be to provide a high quality setting to individual development areas as well as reducing the impact of areas such as car parks. In some cases landscaping would aim to define boundaries between public and private spaces and to provide privacy and security where necessary.
- 10.6.11 These elements provided the basis for the landscape strategy for the application sites:

Table 10.5: Landscape Mitigation Measures

<b>LANDSCAPE MITIGATION MEASURES</b>	
<b>Measures to avoid landscape impacts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locate all development outside the root-protection zone of important protected trees and other sensitive features wherever possible.</li> <li>• Retain and protect trees, hedgerows and sensitive landscape features with protection fencing to BS5837 standards.</li> <li>• Clearly define and protect public rights of way within the application site and the temporary footpath diversion</li> <li>• Utilise existing tracks around the lake margins wherever feasible.</li> <li>• No boating or launching on lake 104.</li> <li>• Service routes to be taken through highway corridors.</li> <li>• Avoid conflicts between users of public rights of way and access routes.</li> </ul>

<b>Measures to reduce landscape impacts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translocate any sections of hedgerow affected by works into gaps avoiding the bird-nesting season</li> <li>• Carry out re-profiling of lakes in a single phase.</li> <li>• Seed embankments to avoid erosion, with non-competitive grass seed mix to allow for natural colonisation of existing species.</li> <li>• Use a no-dig construction and porous surfaces for works that may encroach within any root protection areas (only as a last resort)</li> <li>• Use predominantly 3.5 wide gravel tracks with passing places to access the pavilions and apartments. Most pavilion and apartment car parks will be a rolled gravel surface to reduce the impact of hard surfaces in the landscape.</li> <li>• Use sustainable building materials such as Cotswold stone and timber from certified and renewable sources.</li> </ul>
<b>Compensatory measures to enhance the landscape</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plant significant tracts of new native scrub and tree planting around the lake margins and interspersed within the development</li> <li>• Reinforcement of existing hedges with native stock.</li> <li>• Plant new native hedgerows around the development.</li> <li>• Incorporate a fully sustainable drainage scheme by collecting surface water from hard surfaces and disposing into drainage ditches lined with reeds and swales.</li> <li>• Remove existing Leylandii hedge along the northern boundary of Milestone and replant with a native species hedgerow.</li> <li>• Re-install the inaccessible section of BFA 30 in the northeast corner of lake 104.</li> </ul>

Table 10.6: Visual Mitigation Measures

<b>VISUAL MITIGATION MEASURES</b>	
<b>Measures to avoid Visual impacts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retain important views across the lakes by keeping development away from the shores of lake 104.</li> <li>• Retain all vegetation which contributes towards filtering and screening views of the site from sensitive views.</li> <li>• Locate the Leisure facility close to the Milestone boundary out of direct line of site from the site entrance and maximum distance from BFA 30.</li> <li>• Keep the majority of buildings (85%) below a 10m ridge height and the balance (15%) a maximum of 12m to ridge. Majority of taller units located on the east shore of lake 103 and Milestone in less conspicuous locations from the public rights of way.</li> </ul>
<b>Measures to reduce Visual Impacts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plant gaps within existing boundary hedgerows with suitable mixed native species and manage to increase filtering of views from sensitive locations.</li> <li>• Plant significant tracts of tree belts and scrub within and around development areas, leisure facility and car parking areas.</li> <li>• Vary the roofscape and repetition of the same height and form thereby following the existing uneven treed horizon.</li> <li>• Green roofs on the leisure building and eco lodges located in Zone B.</li> <li>• In Zone B, use built form and material which absorb themselves into the landscape rather than contrast with it.</li> <li>• Avoid urbanisation by using small scale informal car park areas laid with gravel and reinforced grass serviced by narrow 3.5 wide tracks.</li> <li>• Align the access track down the east shore of lake 104 using the existing scrub to screen vehicle movements and small scale car parks from BFA 30 where it passes between lake 103 and 104</li> </ul>
<b>Compensatory measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create new vistas and viewpoints across the lakes from BFA 30 where it is aligned onto its definitive route.</li> <li>• Create additional drama and interest to users of the footpaths, though framed vistas, and views without detracting from the character of the area.</li> </ul>

## 10.7 Predicted Effects

- 10.7.1 The following assessments have evaluated the possible effects on the existing landscape and visual resources of the area.
- 10.7.2 The significance of the effects have been assessed during the construction and operational stages of development

### Construction Impacts

- 10.7.3 This period is defined as the building works up to the completion of a component of the development. The impacts are normally direct and temporary in terms of the project life cycle and generally result in the majority of adverse landscape and visual effects.

### Operation and Management Impacts

- 10.7.4 These are impacts caused during the functioning of an individual component of the development, such as people, car, lorry and machinery movements, as well as the residual effects of landscape maturing. Most residual landscape effects are therefore generally beneficial and adverse views will normally decrease as planting matures. For the purposes of this assessment the impact has been assessed at seven years after the initial mitigation planting to show the effects of approximately some way to maturity.
- 10.7.5 Cumulative effects are a result of additional changes to the landscape or visual character of the application site caused by the development working in conjunction with other existing or in some cases proposed development in the area and is a particular issue raised by Cotswold District Council in their scoping opinion to be addressed in the ES.
- 10.7.6 Impact significance had been determined for each receptor group in accordance with the combined magnitude and sensitivity thresholds described in *Appendix 10.2* and are adverse unless stated as being beneficial or negligible.
- 10.7.7 Following the assessment of the likely effects of the development and the proposed mitigation it is then possible to identify potential residual effects (identified as permanent within the tables) and measure their significance. These can either be positive or negative effects as a result of the proposed landscape and development strategy.

## 10.8 Predicted Landscape Effects

*(Appendix 10.4 AIA and 10.5 Vegetation Affected)*

- 10.8.1 The most sensitive features of the development were identified through the BS5837 tree

survey and ecological assessment; refer to Chapter 9.0 and *Appendix 10.3 BS5837 Tree Survey*).

- 10.8.2 The proposals have been regularly tested for impacts on the sensitive landscape features of the application site and adjustments have been made to the masterplan layout to entirely remove or substantially reduce adverse effects.

*Factors affecting Landscape impacts*

- 10.8.3 The criteria used to evaluate the value of the landscape and its potential sensitivity to change are:

- Landscape quality
- Scenic quality
- Rarity
- Conservation interests
- Wildness/Tranquillity
- Associations

**Landscape Quality**

- 10.8.4 The boundaries around the lakes were historically left unmanaged to provide screening during the extraction process and many features were lost during the process. The majority of features that would have been managed within the agricultural landscape have been left to decline resulting in a landscape of varying and sometimes poor quality.
- 10.8.5 The most important and sensitive features are the hedges and mature trees that remain around the margins of the lakes.
- 10.8.6 The existing grassland has no landscape or significant ecological value.
- 10.8.7 The scrub and marginal planting around the lakes edges has ecological value but without appropriate management becomes quickly overgrown and collapses.
- 10.8.8 The land at Milestone has low landscape quality comprising gravel and hardstanding around small fishing lakes. Its most sensitive features are at the west and east boundaries as well as a mature beech on the north boundary. The Leylandi hedge is out of character with the predominantly native tree belt next to the A417 and has no value other than a temporary screen to construction works in that area.

### **Scenic Quality**

- 10.8.9 The scenic quality of the lakes varies considerably within the application area. Lake 104 being the most expansive lake is generally perceived as having the highest scenic value due to its assemblages of water and vegetation.
- 10.8.10 Lake 103 is less scenic being much smaller scale and more intensively managed without much vegetation on its shores. Nonetheless there are attractive vistas from the north and southern end of the lake
- 10.8.11 Lake 103A is smaller and more intimate and has an attractive assemblage of bankside vegetation tree and scrub without affording the longer more dramatic views around lake 104.
- 10.8.12 The land at Milestone House is a mixture of residential garden and haulage/storage yard and has very low scenic quality. The views into the site are currently screened by vegetation.

### **Rarity**

- 10.8.13 The application sites lies within the eastern section of the Cotswold water park, and forms part of a conglomeration of several other lakes and is by no means unique or rare. It is however unusual to have paths that circumnavigate such a large lake as 104 from which to experience this relatively new landscape.
- 10.8.14 Milestone is not rare and is perhaps typical of enterprises that grew up around the gravel industry when in active in this area.

### **Conservation Interests**

- 10.8.15 There are no conservation designations on either of the application sites. Two SSSI site abut the southern boundary of lake 104 and the western boundary of lake 103a.
- 10.8.16 There are several habitats that have ecological interest. These have been outlined within Chapter 9.0 These habitats are currently being monitored and managed onsite and will be further enhanced and developed as part of the proposals.
- 10.8.17 The habitat within lake 103 is currently of low significance. The re-profiling of the banks to allow the development of margins will increase the habitat potential.
- 10.8.18 The trees around lake 104, 103 and 103a are protected by Tree Preservation Order 15 (1993). The TPO does cover Milestone.

### **Wildness/Tranquility**

- 10.8.19 The application sites are identified within the CPRE map as average tranquility. Site visits have provided a variety of experiences, due to the adjacent detractors of the A417, the Water Ski centre and RAF Fairford. The overall experience is predominately quiet with a background noise from the A417 with occasional louder detractors from aircraft at RAF Fairford and boats on lake 105.
- 10.8.20 Lake 104 is easily accessible from Fairford and used regularly as a circuit by walkers. Lake 103 is not accessible to the public and lake 103a access is restricted to the northern boundary and is not as widely used.

### **Associations**

- 10.8.21 There are no historical or local associations with any of the application sites

### Summary of Landscape Effects Tables (See Appendix 10.2 for full evaluation)

#### **Grassland**

- 10.8.22 There will be a **minor** loss of poor quality grassland during construction in the northeast corner of lake 104 as well as on the banks of lakes 103 and 103a where development takes place. Mitigation through encouraging low fertility swards and other types of grassland in disturbed areas during operation will reduce the effect to negligible or **minor** positive.

#### **Hedgerows**

- 10.8.23 The primary **moderate** impact on hedgerows will occur at the new site entrance off the A417, but other effects elsewhere on site are **minor** during construction activity. These overall **minor** effects on the hedgerow systems can be mitigated through compensatory planting of native hedges resulting in a **moderate** positive effect in the operation period in the medium term.

#### **Trees**

- 10.8.24 The primary direct **moderate** effects on scrub will occur during road, car park and built form construction with potential for **minor to moderate** indirect effects on trees protected by TPO during operation through root compaction. These effects will be compensated by substantial new native trees and scrub planting interspersed throughout the development resulting in **negligible** effect around lake 104 and **negligible to minor** positive around Milestone, 103 and 103A.

### Footpaths

- 10.8.25 The effects to the footpath network will be **moderate** positive through upgrading the surfaces to provide year round access for people of all abilities and realignment of the path onto its definitive route in the northeast corner of lake 104.

### Lakeside Character

- 10.8.26 There will be a short term **minor to moderate** effect on the character of the north east and eastern shore of lake 104 to construct the leisure facility, new access track and realign BFA 30. The effect can be mitigated by translocating vegetation and compensated by the realignment of BFA 30 and new scrub and tree planting around the leisure facility. Overall the assemblage of landscape features will remain unaffected remaining landscape dominated in accordance with the Zone B status and **negligible** overall.

### Policy Effects

- 10.8.27 These proposals have been prepared against the background of two previously failed planning applications on the application site where the SOS following the most recent Inquiry concluded that there were conflicts with PPS 7, Structure and Local Plan policies and was seriously at odds with the SPG zoning guidance. It is considered that this application now fully complies with the SPG guidance and fully accords with the development plan, national and regional policies in respect of protecting and enhancing the environment.

## 10.9 Predicted Visual Effects

- 10.9.1 While not wholly exclusive, the principal factors, which influence the visual impact of this proposal are:

- Landform
- Backdrop
- Landscape Scale
- Vegetation Cover
- Building Design – scale, mass, form, colour and texture
- Seasonality
- Lighting
- Height of eye

### **Landform**

- 10.9.2 Landform can be used to reduce the impact of a development by making use of low-lying areas of land to site the most intrusive elements of development. It can also be used to screen or reduce the perceived scale of buildings and services. Care must be taken not to provide intrusive landform features that are out of character with their surroundings. The site lies in a gently sloping predominantly flat topography resulting in limited opportunity for views from elevated vantage points. This also has the effect of substantially foreshortening the horizon particularly where there are tree belts and scrub vegetation around the lakes.
- 10.9.3 The re-profiling of the landform around the lakes is significantly reduced from the previous application and has taken account of the comments made by the inspector by removing the 'jetty' development in lake 103.

### **Backdrop**

- 10.9.4 Visual impact will be strongly influenced by the backdrop against which it is viewed. A building will be at its most prominent when viewed against an open skyline and at its least intrusive when viewed against a darkened background i.e. woodlands, tree belts and mature hedgerows.
- 10.9.5 The visual analysis supported by photographs throughout the application site show that development will in the majority be set against a wooded or treed horizon. It is inevitable that some skyline views will be available when the observer is in close proximity to the pavilions or leisure building. Additional planting will further reinforce the backdrop against which development will be viewed.

### **Landscape Scale**

- 10.9.6 Impacts can increase as result of developments being out of scale with their surrounding landscape. The application site benefits from a mature landscape setting and with the exception of 103A, the scale of lake 103 and Milestone is capable of accommodating intensive development. The leisure facility is the largest of the buildings and will be set in the northeast meadow of lake 104 set within mature trees as its backdrop and will rise above it. Lake 103 warrants less intensive development to respect its smaller scale.

### **Vegetation Cover**

- 10.9.7 The magnitude and eventual significance of impact can be substantially reduced by utilising existing groups of trees and hedgerows to screen views towards development.

Chapter 10.0  
Landscape and Visual

- 10.9.8 The site benefits from remnants of mature hedges and tree belts around its margins which in a very short space of time have been supplemented by wetland scrub growing around the shorelines, which help to filter and block views into the site from short and long views. The landscape strategy has also provided for substantial planting works in mitigation against significant visual impacts.

### **Building Design**

- 10.9.9 Building design, mass, colour and texture will all individually influence visual impact. This relatively newly created landscape around lake affords the potential for a contemporary innovative development that does not have to replicate the Cotswold vernacular. The built form is proposed to be contemporary using high quality materials such as steel, wood, glass and stone that through their detailing will minimise unsightly horizontal massing, providing varied rooflines and dramatic vistas.

### **Seasonality**

- 10.9.10 Winter views are often more exaggerated than in summer due to lack of leaf cover, but there is generally little reduced effect where there are dense hedges, thick scrub and woodlands screening views. Long distance views are often affected by poor winter light but exaggerated in summer. The analysis has shown that some views through gappy hedges such as from BFA 30 looking towards lake 103 will do significantly increase and should be reinforced.

### **Lighting**

- 10.9.11 Lighting has been considered for its potential visual impact and the detailed proposals must make every effort to mitigate against significant light pollution. The Institute of Lighting Engineers have published guidance on how to minimise light pollution and the scheme should comply with best practice in rural areas to avoid significant light pollution. This implies a raft of measures such as height, duration, lux level intensity, luminaire design to avoid spread and upward pollution and need.

### **Height of Eye**

- 10.9.12 While a fairly obvious consideration, the magnitude of impact is normally increased the higher the viewpoint. Elevated viewpoints also offer a different perspective of a site and roofscape may become an important consideration. There are no elevated viewpoints within or immediately adjacent to the site that are available to the public. There is scope to use small sculptural earth domes strategically located to allow visitors and the public to gain some elevated views across the water and buildings

Summary of Visual Effects Tables (See Appendix 10.2 for full evaluation)

**Views from Dwellings**

- 10.9.13 Generally, because of its rural location, there are very limited opportunities for views of the site from dwellings.
- 10.9.14 The highest potential for impacts comes from houses located to the southeast of Fairford at Beaumoor Barn House, Bull Pens & Meadowcroft which will all have potential for **minor to negligible** views of construction activities and development from upper floor rooms. Mitigation through new planting, retention and management of existing features will be effective in rendering views **negligible** in the moderate term.

**Views from Public Rights of Way**

Outside The Application Site

- 10.9.15 Generally the proposals will only be viewed from the footpaths within the site within the application site itself.
- 10.9.16 The section of BFA 31 located between Fairford and the mid west boundary of lake 104 which appears less frequently used than other paths near the site, has the potential for **minor to negligible** glimpses of development. Mitigation through new planting, retention and management of existing features will be effective in rendering views **negligible** in the moderate term.
- 10.9.17 Mature vegetation groups prevent views from other Footpaths BFA 21 23, 29, 34 and BKD 32 between Fairford and the application site to the west and are **negligible** during construction and operation.
- 10.9.18 Close **minor to moderate** filtered views of lake 103a and 103 are available from BFA 32 where it circumnavigates the south shore of lake 105 as far as the static caravan site. Views are block further east. Mitigation through new planting, retention and management of existing hedgerow H8/H9 on the east boundary of the application site will be effective in rendering views **minor to negligible** in the short to moderate term.

Within The Application Site

- 10.9.19 Vegetation groups to the north shore of lake 104 and application boundary initially block views – **negligible** as the paths enters the application site from the northwest.
- 10.9.20 Views will become **minor to moderate** as the path heads east and breaks out of the enclosed

woodland corridor south of the business park increasing to **major** in the short term when in close proximity to the leisure facility and associated infrastructure. Views remain **minor** to **moderate** as the path heads south between lakes 103 and 104, with occasional **major** framed views of the leisure facility when looking north and glimpses of development on the west shore of lake 103 through gaps in the hedgerow. Mitigation through diversion of footpath BFA30 in the northeast corner; new planting, retention and management of existing hedgerow H1 on the boundary between the two lakes and planting to the south of the leisure facility will be effective in rendering views **minor** to **moderate** in the short to moderate term. Views of parking areas for pavilions on the west shore of lake 103 located on the lake 104 promontory will be **negligible**.

10.9.21 Mature vegetation groups and scrub block the majority of views from BFA 32 along the south shore of lake 104 – negligible. There are occasional gaps in the vegetation and at the southeast shore affording **minor** to **moderate** views of development heavily blocked and interrupted by scrub vegetation on the east shore of lake 104 and hedgerows H1/H6 & 7. Key mitigation through restricting the majority of building heights on the west shore of lake 103, 103A and leisure facility to 10m to ridge height; new planting, retention and management of existing scrub will be effective in rendering views **minor** to **negligible** in the short to moderate term.

10.9.22 Mature vegetation groups on the north, east and southwest shore filter and block views of development areas and only glimpses of the upper portion of buildings will be visible occasionally rising above the foreground vegetation – **minor** to **moderate**.

### Views from Highways

10.9.23 The A417 to the east and west of the site is contained between mature linear roadside hedge and tree groups that serves to restrict views of individual parcels of land during transition along its route. Mature treed hedge H20 prevents significant views of the majority of the site but there will be minor increasing to moderate glimpsed views in a narrow arc when opposite the new entrance to the site looking towards proposed carparking areas and leisure facility. Key mitigation in the form of: no tall lighting columns; new hedge and tree planting, retention and management of existing hedgerow H20 will be effective in rendering views **minor** to **negligible** in the short to moderate term. Views of parking areas for pavilions on the west shore of lake 103 located on the lake 104 promontory will be **negligible**. Views from the proposed shared footway and cycleway will remain **moderate**. The urbanisation of the highway will be **minor** in context of the limited widening of the highway, lack of street lighting and its proximity to the Whelford Rd Junction and approaches to Fairford.

10.9.24 The Whelford Road is similarly enclosed by mature vegetation and affords little opportunity for

views of the site. A glimpsed filtered **minor** view is available towards Milestone and lake 103 near the junction with the A417 intervened by a low hedge surrounding lake 105 and a taller hedge on the east boundary of the application sites. Taller apartment buildings at maximum 12m to ridge will initially rise above the boundary hedgerow (5-6m) partially blocked at ground and first floor level. Key mitigation through new planting, retention and management of existing hedgerow H4 will be effective in rendering views **minor** to **negligible** in the moderate to longer term.

### Others

- 10.9.25 There is potential for **minor** upper floor views of development in the northeast corner of lake 104 from office development located to the northwest of the application site. Milestone and lake 103 will be heavily filtered and **negligible**.
- 10.9.26 Tall but occasionally gappy hedgerows H3, H4, H8 & H9 between lake 104 and lake 103/103a and Milestone affords opportunity for **minor** to **moderate** partially broken views from low timber lodges ski club and caravan park at Lake 105. Views are most **moderately** significant from lodges on the north shore looking towards apartments across the less intact lower hedge H4. Key mitigation through new planting, retention and management of the existing hedgerows on the application site east boundaries will be effective in rendering views **minor** in the short to moderate term. In scoping the EIA, cumulative visual effects of the development were not considered of primary importance for sound reasons.

### Cumulative Effects

- 10.9.27 The Council in their scoping have stated that cumulative effects occurring as a result of other tourism development on the water park should be addressed and was also a reason for refusal in the previous application. The inspector with respect to the previous scheme found through evidence presented at the Inquiry and his own site observations that the proposals for that much larger scale and form of development would not have.... *"a significant cumulative effect working in conjunction with the Coln Park development"* or .. *"would unacceptably detract from the character and appearance of the area as perceived from the A417"*.
- 10.9.28 Given the much reduced scale, location and quantum of the development proposals; the reduction and relocation of the leisure facility to the northeast corner of lake 104; the significantly reduced impact on existing landscape features it is assessed that these proposals will have **negligible** cumulative effects, even when taking into consideration the application for development at Milestone.
- 10.9.29 The development adjacent to Lake 105 is not similar in form, layout, function or appearance

Chapter 10.0  
Landscape and Visual

being aimed towards lower key log cabin accommodation, watersports and permanent caravans. There is not therefore the cumulative build up of the same type of development.

- 10.9.30 Unlike other developments on the A417 which sit on the road frontage such as the petrol station and concrete works at the junction of Welford Road, these proposals are set back from the road and views are filtered or screened by mature landscape features.

## 10.10 Summary

### Landscape

- 10.10.1 The landscape assessment carried out for the site has shown that the Lakes share many of the same characteristics of other restored Lakes in the Cotswold Water Park and are not rare but nonetheless have attractive assemblages of water, grass, hedgerows trees and scrub around the lake margins. Each of the Lakes have different characters mainly relating to their scale enclosure and management.
- 10.10.2 The proposals are for a much reduced scale and form of development compared with the previous application and intensive uses have been confined to those zones and areas identified in the SPG.
- 10.10.3 The leisure facility at lake 104 will not encourage intensive activities outside the building and is perceived to be broadly compatible with the SPG
- 10.10.4 Low intensity, widely spaced pavilions around 103a will be designed to be exemplars of sustainable development with minimum impact on the landscape as opposed to the more commonly constructed second homes in the western water park which tend to contrast with it.
- 10.10.5 There will only be minor direct impacts on the existing features such as the hedgerow H20 where the main access road enters the site off the A417 but this effect will be appropriately compensated by substantial new planting regimes and improved management regimes. The arboricultural impact assessment has also identified potential indirect effects such as root compaction and impacts will be negligible if the proposed mitigation measures are followed.
- 10.10.6 There will be a high change to the landscape character of 103 and Milestone, allocated as Zone C suitable for intensive uses in the SPG. The landscape character and integrity of existing features will remain intact around lakes 103a and 104 where low intensity uses have been proposed and its associated features are enhanced and protected.
- 10.10.7 Impacts on the character outside the application site will remain unchanged and there will not be a significant cumulative adverse effect when the proposals work in combination with other tourism and leisure development in the countryside. Mitigation measures are aimed at

protecting and enhancing existing site features, creating new landscape features in compensation for those being lost.

*Landscape Residual Effects.*

- 10.10.8 The assessment has demonstrated that the minor and occasionally moderate effects upon landscape features of the sites can be mitigated through avoidance, protection during construction and translocation. Permanent losses of hedgerow/tree lines at the A417 will be appropriately compensated by the substantial tree and hedgerow planting; infilling existing gaps and replacing non native *Leylandii* species; as well as improved management of existing features. Overall there will be a **minor to moderate** positive beneficial gain as a result of the landscape mitigation measures being taken.

**Visual**

- 10.10.9 Visually, the proposals will remain relatively inconspicuous integrating into the landscape from most public places and rights of way. Some residual filtered views will be available from the footpaths around the northeast, east and southeast shore of lake 104 and the footpath between the 103 and 103A but they will not be of a nature or significance that would obtrusively detract from the enjoyment of the walks in those areas.
- 10.10.10 The visual impact from the A417 will be similarly insignificant.
- 10.10.11 The scheme affords many positive contributions towards protection and enhancement of the landscape in compensation for those direct effects and residual changes to character.

*Residual Visual Effects*

- 10.10.12 Following the mitigations measures described above the residual effects relate to views of proposed built form from the public rights of way when in close proximity to the leisure facility and lake 103. However the proposed tree, scrub and hedge planting will have a major role in reducing adverse effects to an acceptable level of **minor** and occasionally **moderate** significance that would not detract from the character and enjoyment of the sites and surrounding area.

**10.11 References**

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Chapter 10.0  
Landscape and Visual

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## 10.12 Abbreviations

AIA                      Arboricultural Impact Assessment

CPRE                    Campaign to protect Rural England

<i>LVIA</i>	<i>Landscape and visual impact assessments</i>
<i>PRoW</i>	<i>Public Rights of Way</i>
<i>PRV</i>	<i>Principal Representative Viewpoints</i>
<i>RPA</i>	<i>Root Protection Area</i>
<i>SPG</i>	<i>Supplementary Planning Guidance</i>
<i>TPO</i>	<i>Tree Preservation Order</i>