

12 SOCIO-ECONOMIC

12.1 Introduction

12.1.1 This section of the Environmental Statement provides an overview of the present socio-economic position within Cotswold District and particularly within the Cotswold Water Park, in relation to the following key aspects:

- A population profile in the District and the Water Park ;
- The present employment generators in the District;
- Location of key employment sites and uses within the District and the Water Park.

12.1.2 The analysis of each of the above key aspects provides a general summary of the present employment and social position within the District and the Water Park, in order to enable broad conclusions to be drawn on the contribution/affect the application proposals will make to the local economy and the potential social benefits to the local community that may be accrued.

12.1.3 This section of the ES also provides an overview of the existing tourism development and facilities situated within the Water Park and its immediate periphery. In addition, this section provides a summary of the assessment of the existing services and facilities contained within Fairford and Lechlade undertaken to inform the previous planning application, a comprehensive review of which has been agreed as unnecessary at the screening stage of the ES process. Whilst a summary of the assessment is included within this section, it is important to note that the previous Appeal Inspector concluded that the site had good access to a range of facilities and that the development would not adversely affect them.

12.2 Methodology

12.2.1 The data for the population and employment analysis is based on a number of sources, which principally include:

- Population Statistics from 2001 Census Data;
- Office for National Statistics Population Estimates (as at June 2007)
- Map based assessment to identify employment locations from OS Mapping and current/emerging Local Plan Proposals Maps;
- On-site survey work to identify existing employment locations within the Water Park and Key Employment Generators within the District; and,

- The land-use specification for the application proposals.

12.2.2 The assessment of existing tourism development within the Water Park has been undertaken on the basis of desk based analysis combined with on-site examination of each location presently in use for tourism and leisure activities.

Baseline Data – Population and Employment

12.2.3 The most up-to-date statistical information in respect of population presently available is contained within the 2001 Census (Office of National Statistics) and the Office for National Statistics Population Estimates (as at June 2007) , which provides a comprehensive overview of population based on administrative boundaries.

12.2.4 In relation to Cotswold District, the Office for National Statistics Population Estimates (as at June 2007) provides the following population profile:

12.2.5 In relation to Cotswold District, the Office for National Statistics Population Estimates (as at June 2007) and the 2001 Census Data provides the following population profiles (*Refer to Figure 12.1 for illustrative graphs*)

- Population by Age (Figure 1)
- Population Employment (Figure 2)

12.2.6 It is apparent from Figure 2 that:

- Although there are slight variations within the population age range, the proportion of individuals within each age range broadly reflects the national average;
- In relation to employment provision, the proportion of the District within the employed category exceeds the national average;
- The consequential level of unemployment is exceptionally low at 1.7%; and,
- In relation to key indicators of wealth within the District a high proportion (43.6%) of the District own 2 or more cars, and 69% of households are owner occupied, with 37.7% of houses being detached.

12.2.7 It is clear that on a District-wide basis Cotswold District consistently performs above the national average with key indicators of wealth such as car and house ownership performing well. In relation to employment, it is evident that unemployment levels are lower than the national average.

- 12.2.8 The Cotswold Water Park comprises the majority of the southern section of the District and includes the four administrative wards of:
- Fairford;
 - Hampton'
 - Kempsford-Lechlade; and,
 - Water Park
- 12.2.9 On the basis of the above administrative boundaries, a population profile in relation to age can be extrapolated from the Office for National Statistics Population Estimates (as at June 2007) (*Refer to Figure 12.2 – Figure 3*)
- 12.2.10 On the basis of the above administrative boundaries, a population profile in relation to employment can be extrapolated from the 2001 Census Data. (*Refer to Figure 12.2 – Figure 4*)
- 12.2.11 The more detailed breakdown of population set out above in respect of the Water Park indicates that the Wards within this area slightly outperform the District as a whole; however, the general trend remains the same. In this regard, it is apparent that the majority of the population within the Water Park are between the age range of 30 – 59 (Female) and 30-64 (Male) and are of a working age. In relation to employment it is evident that the Wards within the Water Park exceed the national average by approximately 10% in terms of full time employment, with the level of unemployed remaining below the national average.
- 12.2.12 When examining other indicators such as ownership of cars and housing, it would appear that in particular relation to cars, the level of ownership exceeds the national average by at least 15%. Whilst car ownership represents one of a number of potential indicators of wealth, it gives a good indication that households within the Water Park have an above average level of wealth. Fig 12.3 – Figure 5 provides a summary of a number of key indicators of wealth within the Water Park
- 12.2.13 In summary, the analysis of population within Cotswold District and more particularly within the Water Park has indicated the following general trends:
- The majority of the population within both the District and the Water Park are in the age range 30 – 59 (Female) and 30-64 (Male)
 - The District and the Water Park both have a higher than average level of full time employment and a level of unemployment that falls well below the national average;

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- An assessment of a number of indicators of wealth highlight the potential for a higher than average level of wealth within the Water Park and the District as a whole; and,
- Retired individuals represent a significant minority of the population within the Water Park and the District as a whole, and together with the indication of wealth in this area represent a proportion of the population that are likely to be in a position to make use of new high quality opportunities for leisure and recreation.

12.2.14 The assessment of present employment generators and the location of employment sites within the District has been based on a combined approach that includes desk based analysis of Local Plan mapping and OS data, together with on-site investigation.

12.2.15 In relation to present employment generators within the District it is relevant to note the following characteristics of the area:

- Cotswold District is situated within the Cotswolds, which represents one of the key tourism centres in the UK, and attracts tourists from throughout the country and from overseas, for a wide range of leisure and tourism related activities;
- Tourism represents the key employment generator within the District, with secondary generators comprising the administrative centre of Cirencester, a number of MOD and RAF establishments, and mineral extraction;
- The Water Park comprises one of the largest areas of gravel extraction in the country and its landscape has been formed by decades of continuous mineral extraction and land reclamation and remediation work;
- Whilst sections of the park have been worked out and remediation has been completed for some years, upto 25 years in places, sections of the park are still active mineral extraction sites;
- The remediated areas of the Park have been formed into lakes and now represent a unique man-made landscape, which acts as a valuable base resource for leisure and tourism activities;
- The presence of remaining mineral extraction sites provides an economic draw for the Park's original use and does lead to conflicts (in-part) with the emerging tourism and leisure activities;
- In summary, the two key employment generators within the Water Park comprise tourism and the leisure industry, and mineral extraction.

12.2.16 It is therefore evident that the key employment generator in the District is centred on tourism and the leisure industry, with a number of secondary generators linked to specific settlements,

establishments, or natural resources. It is also relevant to note that the two significant settlements of Swindon (to the south) and Gloucester (to the north west) also act as employment generators for the District, although they both fall outside of its administrative boundaries.

- 12.2.17 Within the Water Park itself, employment generation is focussed to the two specific areas of tourism and mineral extraction with a number of peripheral 'conventional' employment sources such as B1 light industry and B8 storage and distribution.
- 12.2.18 Tourism development therefore represents a key element of the employment development for the District and contributes towards the main source of economic activity within the area. It is important that this source of employment generation is maintained and consolidated particularly in growth areas such as the Cotswold Water Park where the leisure and tourism industry continues to expand.
- 12.2.19 It is apparent that the eastern section of the Water Park is lagging behind the western section both in terms of the provision of tourism and other employment sites, including mineral extraction. The western section of the Water Park also benefits from its proximity to Cirencester, which represents the administrative centre of the District and offers a range of conventional employment opportunities.
- 12.2.20 In this respect, new tourism related development in the eastern section of the Water Park provides an opportunity to redress the balance and provide increased employment opportunities in this area of the Water Park, in a sustainable manner.

Baseline Data – Tourism and Services & Facilities

- 12.2.21 The assessment of tourism development has identified a total of 36 individual locations throughout the Water Park that presently provide either tourism or leisure facilities. The facilities presently offered within the Park vary from the provision of fishing lakes with no support services through to fully serviced and purpose built tourism accommodation at developments such as The Watermark, Lower Mill Estate and Holburne Leisure.
- 12.2.22 In specific relation to the distribution of facilities throughout the park, the following observations are of relevance:
- The majority (29 sites) of tourist and leisure facilities within the Water Park are situated in the Western area of the park to the West of A419(T);
 - In the western area a total of 7 locations currently provide tourism accommodation with the principal providers being located at The Watermark, Lower Mill Estate, Friday Island and, Holburne Holidays;

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- The western area also provides a range of active and passive leisure activities both on and around the lakes, which include:
- Gloucestershire County Council RYA sailing and water activities centre;
- Rowing and jet skiing;
- Course fishing; and,
- Nature reserves and lakeside footpaths.
- The eastern area of the park presently only accounts for 7 locations providing tourist and leisure facilities;
- In the eastern area only 2 locations presently provides a proportion of tourist accommodation: Fairford Waterski Club, which is situated adjacent to Lake 105; and, Coln Park (Yoo Development);
- Planning permission has been granted for sustainable development on land known as Coln Park (Yoo Development) to the east of Whelford Road comprising a mixed-use development of residential homes, recreational activities and a hotel. The development is currently being completed in phases.

12.2.23 It is evident from the above observations that the eastern side of the park is 'lagging' behind the tourist development in the western area, and that significant opportunities therefore exist to address the present imbalance between the two areas of the Park. In addition, it would appear that the eastern side of the park is presently lacking in tourist accommodation and more structured leisure facilities.

12.2.24 The recently completed Cotswold Water Park Masterplan recognises the disjointed provision of leisure and recreation facilities within the Water Park, and seeks to re-address this imbalance through a broad masterplan indicating potential locations for various facilities which would provide a more balanced provision of such facilities across the Water Park.

12.2.25 The summary assessment of services and facilities within Fairford highlighted the following:

- Fairford town centre contains a good range of retail opportunities including key local facilities such as a post office, library, banks, and general store;
- In terms of other key facilities Fairford also has primary and secondary schools, a local NHS trust health centre (Fairford Hospital), bowling, tennis and football clubs, a fire station and village hall; and,
- With regard to employment opportunities within the town, two small business/industrial areas are situated on the periphery of the settlement.

12.2.26 In relation to Lechlade, the following observations were made in respect of service provision:

- The town centre provides a good range of retail opportunities including key local facilities such as a post office, banks, and a general store;
- The settlement is less well served with other key facilities than Fairford, with only primary school provision, although the Lechlade Memorial Hall and sports complex provides a range of recreation opportunities; and,
- The settlement has limited employment opportunities outside of the core retail uses within the central area and also a number of small marina complexes along the River Thames.

12.2.27 The assessment indicated that Fairford represents a sustainable location with a good range of local services and facilities including key facilities, education provision and employment opportunities. Whilst Lechlade would appear to represent the larger of the two settlements, it has access to smaller range of local services and facilities. In this regard, development proposals within the Water Park east situated in close proximity to Fairford have good potential to benefit from the range of services and facilities available within the town.

Assessment – Tourism and Services & Facilities

12.2.28 On the basis of the above assessment of existing tourism and leisure developments within the Water Park together with the summary assessment of services and facilities in Fairford and Lechlade, the following key issues are apparent in the consideration of the development of the application site:

- There is presently an imbalance between tourism and leisure development in the western and eastern sections of the Water Park, with the majority emphasis currently being in the western area;
- There is a need to consolidate the existing tourism and leisure development in the western section of the Water Park and to concentrate on the development of new tourism facilities in the eastern section;
- Existing tourism accommodation development in the eastern section of the Water Park remains limited and there is opportunity to provide high quality tourist accommodation in a comprehensive manner in this area;
- In relation to services and facilities, although Fairford would appear to represent the smaller settlement when compared with Lechlade it presently provides a greater range of services and facilities including key facilities; and,
- Development in the eastern section of the Water Park that is situated in close

proximity to Fairford would benefit from the current range of facilities available.

12.3 Predicted Effects

12.3.1 The application proposals seek to provide tourist accommodation and a leisure building for both future residents of the development and the existing local community. The accompanying landscape masterplan and ecological enhancement proposals will ensure that the external opportunities for informal leisure are enhanced, which will include, pedestrian linkages and nature conservation areas.

12.3.2 The proposed development will therefore generate an income from the residents and users of the leisure facilities, which will feed into the local economy through the creation of employment opportunities within the leisure facility and also serving/maintaining the external areas of the site. The development is anticipated to generate approximately 12 jobs spread between the leisure complex and management of the site.

12.3.3 It is anticipated that the generated income would also serve to preserve and create new job opportunities off site within the town of Fairford and the wider area.

12.3.4 In relation to the issues examined in this section of the Environmental Statement, it is evident from the above that the application proposals will result in two key areas of affect on the Cotswold Water Park, principally:

1. Provision of new and enhanced facilities:

12.3.5 The first area relates to the provision of new tourist accommodation and leisure facilities within the eastern section of the Water Park on Lakes 103, 103A and on land at Milestone. The assessment of the existing position within the Water Park indicates that there is a need for new tourism and leisure development in the eastern section to help re-address the current imbalance. This is confirmed by the recently completed Water Park Masterplan. In addition, there is a need for new high quality tourist accommodation within the eastern section to meet a currently unmet need as part of the re-balancing of development in the Water Park.

12.3.6 Additionally, the assessment of existing services and facilities indicates that Fairford presently provide a greater range of local services including key facilities. In this respect it is considered that the location of the proposed development in close proximity to the facilities within Fairford represents a sustainable approach to the development of the site that will enable users of the new tourist accommodation to access facilities within Fairford, which will in turn serve to reinforce and consolidate the viability of these facilities.

12.4 Summary

12.4.1 In summary, it is considered that the proposed development on the application site will result in the following affects:

- The development will help to re-balance tourist and leisure development across the Water Park as a whole;
- The provision of high quality tourist accommodation development will help meet a shortfall in tourist accommodation within the eastern section of the Water Park; and,
- The site's location in close proximity to Fairford will enable use by residents of the development of the existing good level of service provision within the town, which will in turn assist in consolidating its viability.

12.4.2 It is therefore considered that the proposed development will result in a positive affect in respect of tourist accommodation, services and facilities.

2. Employment generation:

12.4.3 The second area relates to the creation of employment opportunities through the development of the site for tourist accommodation and leisure activities. It is apparent from the assessment of existing employment opportunities within the park that the principal employment generator is presently the tourism and leisure industry, together with mineral extraction. Outside of the Water Park the key employment generators are located within Cirencester, Gloucester and Swindon.

12.4.4 In this respect, the proposed development would provide further employment opportunity within the Water Park that would be available locally. The creation of approximately 12 jobs serving the leisure facility and the surrounding accommodation on the application site is considered to represent a positive affect resulting from the proposed development that will benefit the existing local community.