

Ribble Valley Country and Leisure Park Extension Design and Access Statement

Park Leisure

July 2021

LICHFIELDS

LICHFIELDS

Lichfields is the pre-eminent planning and development consultancy in the UK

We've been helping create great places
for over 50 years.

lichfields.uk

Contents

1.0	Introduction & Background	1
	Purpose of the Statement	1
	Background	1
2.0	Proposed Development	2
3.0	Policy Context	3
	National Planning Policy Framework	3
	National Planning Practice Guidance	4
	Core Strategy 2008 – 2028 Local Plan for Ribble Valley	4
	Landscape Character Strategy for Lancashire	4
4.0	Site Context and Constraints	6
	Location	6
	Topography	7
	Landscape Character	8
	Existing Access	8
	Visibility	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.0	Design Rationale	9
	Amount, Layout and Use	9
	Scale and Appearance	10
	Landscaping	10
	Access, Accessibility and Inclusive Design	10
6.0	Conclusion	11

1.0 Introduction & Background

Purpose of the Statement

- 1.1 This Design and Access Statement has been prepared by Lichfields on behalf of Park Leisure 2000 Limited [Park Leisure] to assist the Council in its consideration of a full planning application on land to the south-east of the existing Ribble Valley Country & Leisure Park, for:

“Change of use of land to form an extension of Ribble Valley Country and Leisure Park to facilitate an additional 95 static caravan pitches (allowing a total of 420 pitches across the park), associated highway works, sewage treatment plant and pumping station, improvements to the existing open space and the creation of additional open space, landscaping, and other associated works”

- 1.2 This statement has been prepared in line with the requirements of the Town & Country Planning (General Development Procedures Order) 2006 (as amended) and explains the design principles and concepts that have been applied to aspects of the development such as amount, layout, scale, landscaping, appearance and access.

Background

- 1.3 Park Leisure is a tourism and leisure operator who own several holiday parks around the UK including the well-established Ribble Valley Country & Leisure Park [the Park], which currently has planning permission for up to 325 pitches on site.
- 1.4 Demand for UK holiday parks and static pitches in particular has seen significant growth in recent years. This trend which has been intensified by Covid 19 and appears highly likely to continue in the post pandemic recovery period. In response to increasing demand, Park Leisure is looking to expand a number of sites across its portfolio including at the Ribble Valley Country & Leisure Park.

2.0 Proposed Development

- 2.1 This application seeks full planning permission for the extension of the existing Ribble Valley Country & Leisure Park, to accommodate 95 additional static pitches together with associated roadways and soft landscaping.
- 2.2 The Proposed Site Layout Plan shows the location of the proposed pitches and their orientation around a large central area of open and green amenity space. This layout has been determined by landscape analysis which has considered the topography and openness of the site.
- 2.3 This central area of open space opens out in the western part of the site to accommodate the existing Public Right of Way which passes through the site.
- 2.4 There is also further planting proposed to strengthen the existing woodland boundaries. This is principally focused in areas where there is reduced planting at present. There have been some issues with Ash Dieback in the vicinity of the site and the proposal would be to provide planting of more appropriate species. This will respond to a few small sections of the site periphery where additional planting will be beneficial, and will reinforce the existing established mature landscape setting of the site. The proposed development would enhance the enclosed nature of the expansion site.
- 2.5 The pitches themselves will accommodate a combination of single and twin units. The pitches have been set back considerably from the application site boundaries. The units are generously spaced and punctuated with breaks the rows to provide a degree of informality and soften the appearance of the development. The pitches will be used only for holiday purposes and none of them would be available for residential use. The static units would meet the definitions set out in the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 (as amended by the Caravan Sites Act 1968) and would be mobile structures, capable of being removed from the site with ease.
- 2.6 The pitches would be accessed from the existing internal estate road within the site. This will be extended to create a new loop to serve the additional pitches proposed. The access arrangements have been designed and located so as to minimise the extent of the hard-surfaced area while still providing suitable access to each pitch.
- 2.7 Wastewater will be dealt with through the extension and improvement of the existing package treatment plant which will serve the site via a pumping station. As per the existing arrangement this will provide treatment capacity to accommodate the site flows and discharging into the water course via an existing outlet.
- 2.8 There are above ground power lines which cross through the site alongside the existing gappy hedge. It is intended (subject to being able to reach agreement with Electricity North West [ENW]) that this will be rerouted underground. This could be undertaken now using existing permitted development rights, but is another benefit of the scheme.

3.0 Policy Context

- 3.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 states that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 3.2 In this instance, the Development Plan comprises the Core Strategy 2008 – 2028 a Local Plan for Ribble Valley [the Core Strategy] (adopted December 2014), as well as the Housing and Economic Development – Development Plan Document [the DPD] (adopted October 2019).
- 3.3 National guidance is provided by the National Planning Policy Framework [the Framework] and the National Planning Practice Guidance [the Practice Guidance]. Both are material to the consideration and determination of this planning application.
- 3.4 The most pertinent policies, insofar as they relate to the Design and Access Statement, are set out below.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 3.5 The revised National Planning Policy Framework [the Framework] was published in February 2019 and sets out the government economic, environmental and social planning policies for England.
- 3.6 The overarching aim of the Framework is to proactively deliver sustainable development to support the government’s economic growth objectives. The Framework [§8] identifies three dimensions to sustainable development; economic, social and environmental. Decision makers should play an active role in guiding development toward sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area [§9].
- 3.7 The Framework identifies that the creation of high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve [§124]. Design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals. Early discussions between applicants and the local planning authority about the design and style of emerging scheme is important to clarify expectations and accounting for local commercial interests [§128].
- 3.8 Paragraph 82 of the Framework states that planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors.
- 3.9 The Framework sets out to support prosperous rural economy; Paragraph 83 states that sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas should be enabled, including sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside.
- 3.10 The Framework states that decision makers should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and locations that are not served well by public transport.
- 3.11 The Framework requires that planning should protect and enhance valued landscapes, *"recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it"* [§170].

National Planning Practice Guidance

- 3.12 On the 6th March 2014, the government launched the online Planning Practice Guidance and cancelled the majority of previous planning guidance documents. The guidance has been subject to various subsequent updates.
- 3.13 The Practice Guidance includes relevant sections on Design, Determining a Planning Application, the Natural Environment, Tree Preservation Orders, the Use of Planning Conditions and Water Supply, Wastewater and Water Quality, amongst other matters.
- 3.14 Due regard has been had to the Practice Guidance in the preparation of this planning application.

Core Strategy 2008 – 2028 Local Plan for Ribble Valley

- 3.15 The Core Strategy was adopted in December 2014 and forms the central document of the Local Development Framework, establishing the vision, underlying objectives and key principles that will guide the development of the area to 2028.
- 3.16 The following policies are considered to be particularly relevant to the proposed development:
- Policy DS2 (Sustainable Development)
 - Policy DMG1 (General Considerations) establishes a range of design principles which all developments must consider. It requires developments to be sympathetic to existing and proposed land uses in terms of size, intensity and nature as well as scale, massing, style, features and building materials. Applicants must consider the density, layout and relationship between buildings. Particular emphasis will be placed on visual appearance on landscape character. Sustainable construction technique should be used where possible, achieving energy efficiency.
 - Policy DMG2 (Strategic Considerations) identifies that, within the open countryside, development will be required to be in keeping with the character of the landscape and acknowledge the special qualities of the area.
 - Policy DME1 (Protecting Trees and Woodlands)
 - Policy DMB1 (Supporting Business Growth and the Local Economy) supports proposals that are intended to support business growth and the local economy. DMB1 states that the expansion of existing firms and land outside settlements will be allowed provided it is essential to maintain the existing source of employment and can be assimilated within the local landscape (having regard to the scale).
 - Policy DMB3 (Recreation and Tourism Development) states that development should not undermine the character, quality or visual amenities of the area.
 - Policy DMB5 (Footpaths and Bridleways) seeks to retain, maintain and improve existing public rights of way where possible.

Landscape Character Strategy for Lancashire

- 3.17 Lancashire County Council published a Landscape Strategy for Lancashire in 2000. The study identified 20 Landscape Character Types and the site is located in Type 5 - Undulating Lowland Farmland. The Landscape Character Area (LCA) is 5F: Lower Ribblesdale (Gisburn to Hellifield). It is described as follows:

“This character area follows the upper reaches of the River Ribble between (Clitheroe to Bolton-by-Boland and Long Preston on limestone geology. It occurs in Gisburn) the fringes of the Slaiburn Rolling Upland Farmland between 100 and 150m AOD. It is a highly rural area which is dominated by lush green pastures divided by hedgerows with many hedgerow trees. The mixed plantation woodlands associated with the states of Bolton Hall and Halton Place and the ancient woodlands along the Ribble itself contribute to the wooded character of the landscape character area.”

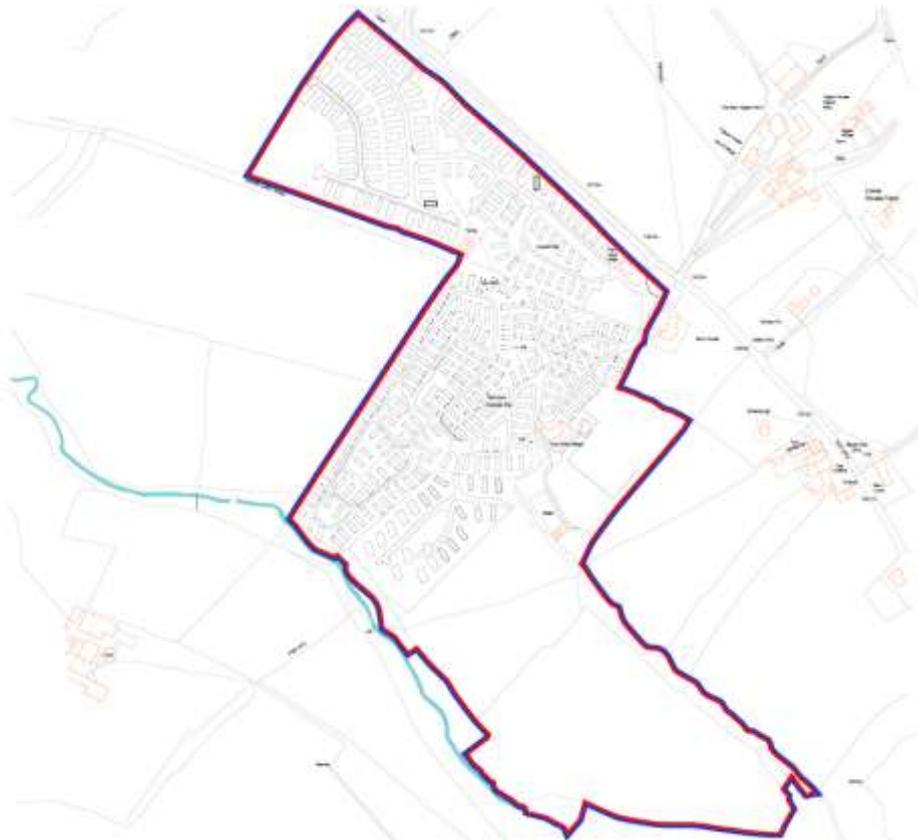
3.18 A range of existing holiday parks are found throughout this character area.

4.0 Site Context and Constraints

Location

- 4.1 The Ribble Valley Country & Leisure Park is located adjacent to the small village of Paythorne, Clitheroe. The wider surroundings of the Park are predominantly rural, comprising of moorland, agricultural land and several farms. The nearest town is Barnoldswick, which is situated circa 7 km to the south-east.
- 4.2 The planning application red edge site boundary extends to 16.8 hectares [Ha] as defined on the Site Location Plan (ref. 4528-100B) submitted with the application and shown below for reference.

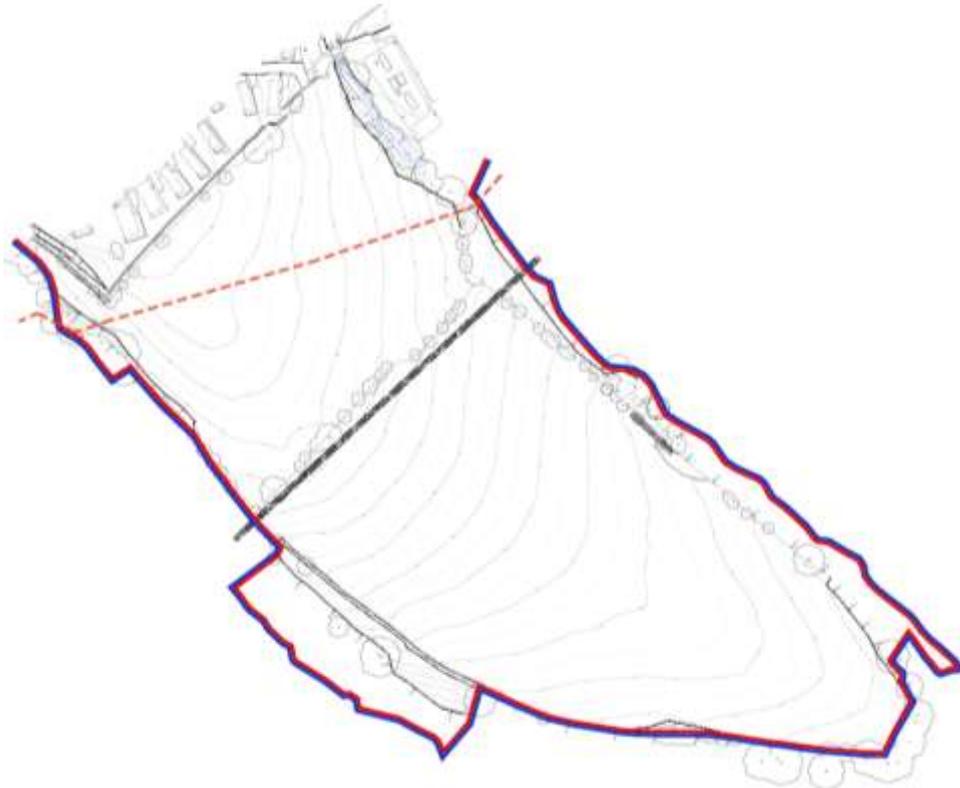
Figure 4.1 Application Site Boundary



- 4.3 This includes 11.1 Ha comprising the core area of the existing Holiday Park which is proposed to be retained, and 5.7 Ha to accommodate the proposed extension. The application seeks the change of use of the extension land from agriculture to facilitate the expansion of the Holiday Park. There is no physical development proposed within the existing Holiday Park as part of this application to the retained site area except the improved open space. The existing Holiday Park benefits from an extant permission for that use (a detailed planning history is set out in the following section of this report). The planning application is submitted with the red edge around the entire proposed holiday park to include the proposed open space improvements and so that the operational relationship between the existing Holiday Park and the proposed extension is clear.

- 4.4 The impact of the proposed development is focused in the location of the proposed extension (as shown edged red in Figure 4.2 below), and it is for this reason that this report focuses on this part of the site.

Figure 4.2 Expansion Site

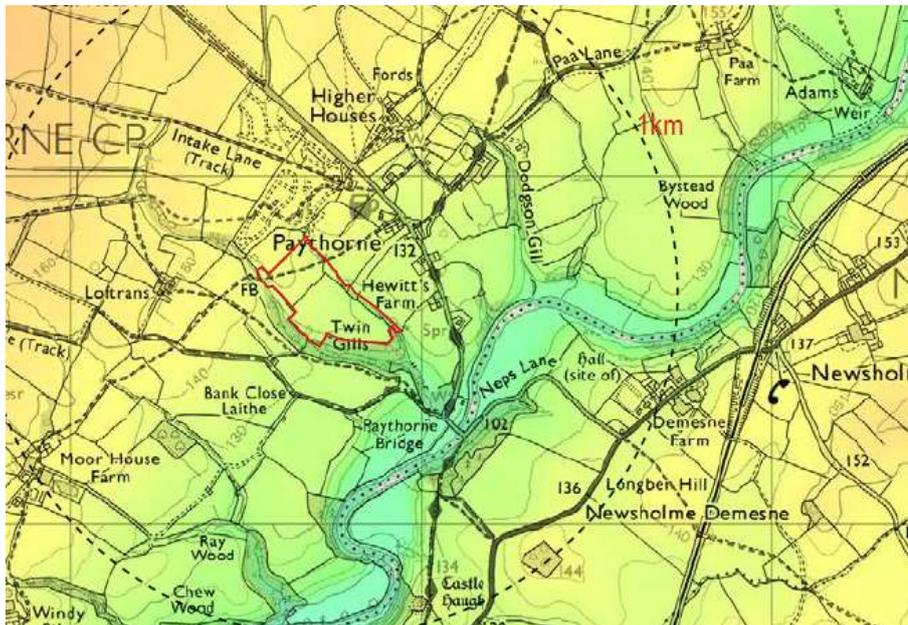


- 4.5 The proposed expansion area comprises two parcels of vacant, greenfield land to the immediate south-east of the existing Park; adjoining its south/south eastern boundary. The immediately adjoining section of the Park is occupied by a cluster of holiday homes which comprise the most recent development at the Park and these parcels of land (i.e. the expansion site) represent the most logical extension to the Park.

Topography

- 4.6 The proposed expansion site forms part of an undulating and rolling landscape with local variations created by numerous river valleys and the Bowland Fells to the west, and Pendle Hill to the south. The most dominant feature is the Ribble Valley to the south-east of the site. In general, the application site (and all land around it) slope down towards the River Ribble. As the wider landscape falls towards the Ribble, it is incised by a series of short and narrow gills (or gyhls) at right angles to the river. These gills give the landscape an undulating character.

Figure 4.3 Local Topography



- 4.7 The expansion site follows this trend, sloping gradually down towards the east, as well as falling away on the northern and southern boundaries towards the Twin Gills.

Landscape Character

- 4.8 The expansion site comprises two grassed pasture fields with linear woodland boundaries. The site directly adjoins the existing Ribble Valley Country and Leisure Park. The existing park is located on higher land and can be seen from all parts of the extension land.
- 4.9 As set out in the previous section of this report, the site falls within the Lower Ribblesdale (Gisburn to Hellifield) Landscape Character Area [LCA] which is a highly rural area dominated by green pastures divided by hedgerows and trees. Holiday parks are a common feature of the LCA, and do not appear onwards with its rural landscape character.
- 4.10 The Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is located approximately 1.3km to the west of the site. In this heavily treed, gently rolling landscape, the application site is generally screened from view.

Existing Access

- 4.11 A Public Right of Way cuts through the site on a broadly east-west orientation, running west from Paythorne, cutting through the Twin Gills, passing through the site and heading further west onto Moor House Farm. Fieldwork indicates that this footpath is rarely used and is not easily identified. The site does not currently benefit from vehicular access.

Existing Views

- 4.12 Asides from views available from the Public Right of Way which cuts through the western part of the site (and is seldom used), external views of the existing site are very limited due to the woodland boundaries currently present. The site is fully enclosed in this regard.

5.0 Design Rationale

Amount, Layout and Use

- 5.1 The proposed development comprises an expansion to the existing Ribble Valley Country and Leisure Park to accommodate 95 additional pitches. The layout and scale of the development have been driven by a combination of the operational requirements of Park Leisure, and opportunities and constraints of the application site as two self-contained plots of land which immediately adjoin the Park.
- 5.2 The long, thin shape of the expansion site (as well as the topography which rises towards the central part of the site) lends itself to the loop layout shown in Figure 5.1 below.

Figure 5.1 Proposed Layout



- 5.3 The built form is concentrated to the lower peripheral areas to utilise screening with the existing woodland boundaries. This will help to screen views from the wider area and the residential properties to the north/east within and around the village of Paythorne.
- 5.4 The holiday homes themselves have been positioned to take advantage of light and views, and present short 'end' elevations to potential views from the surrounding landscape, minimising potential for visual impact. This also maximises the benefit of the existing landscape screening which surrounds the site and ensures that the site is isolated from its wider context.

Scale and Appearance

- 5.5 The development will respect the established landscape and wildlife features within the site. Despite the relatively large size of the expansion site, on account of the retention of the perimeter planting, additional planting and the likely height and appearance of the static units, the development would barely be visible from outside of the site.
- 5.6 From within the site, the proposed development will appear softer, more open and naturalistic than the existing site, due to the lower density of the scheme and large areas of landscaping. This reflects the latest trends in demand for a higher level of amenity.
- 5.7 The static units will be compliant with the statutory definition of a caravan and will reflect the character and appearance of the existing units situated in the park. The units will stand on suitable hard surface-bases, and will be supplied by electricity, gas and water.

Landscaping

- 5.8 The Landscape Strategy has driven the site layout, and sets out to improve the amenity of users, whilst at the same time minimising the loss of trees or hedgerows, mitigating any visual impacts for neighbouring residents, tourists and retaining the landscape character of the locality.
- 5.9 The proposed development will create a large natural open space area within the centre of the site, which would be maintained as a wildflower meadow/heathland with limited scrub, including green pathways and nature walks, nature interpretation boards, signage and informal seating. Peripheral units face into this open space from either side.
- 5.10 Defensive planting and planting enhancement will strengthen woodland boundaries and prevent access to the areas of woodland with ecological value, and help steer users to the designated footpaths.

Access, Accessibility and Inclusive Design

- 5.11 The proposed development has been designed in a way to be inclusive for all people, regardless of their age, mobility or circumstances. Care has been taken to avoid any disabling barriers that could exclude some people, or create separation.
- 5.12 Access to the proposed expansion site will be taken through the existing Park, punching through a section of hedgerow to provide access via an extended internal road.
- 5.13 The access track will be surface such that use by vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists and wheelchair users is possible. The curved road layout will not detract from the rural character of the site or encourage vehicles to travel at speed.
- 5.14 The existing Public Right of Way which is currently difficult to identify will be preserved and enhanced, forming a key driver behind the site layout and areas of open space.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 This Statement and the other documents which accompany the application have demonstrated that the proposals will create a high quality and well-designed expansion to the South Ribble Country and Leisure Park.
- 6.2 The proposed development has been developed in response to the identification of site constraints and characteristics, identified through detailed analysis of the site and surrounding area.
- 6.3 The design has sought to maximise the natural elements and characteristics of the site including the topography, plot shape and wooded boundaries.
- 6.4 The proposal has been designed in a fair and inclusive way which will not restrict or cause undue barriers to use of the site by all age groups and those with limited mobility.
- 6.5 The development has been designed so as to assimilate the proposals into the landscape as far as practically possible.

Birmingham
0121 713 1530
birmingham@lichfields.uk

Edinburgh
0131 285 0670
edinburgh@lichfields.uk

Manchester
0161 837 6130
manchester@lichfields.uk

Bristol
0117 403 1980
bristol@lichfields.uk

Leeds
0113 397 1397
leeds@lichfields.uk

Newcastle
0191 261 5685
newcastle@lichfields.uk

Cardiff
029 2043 5880
cardiff@lichfields.uk

London
020 7837 4477
london@lichfields.uk

Thames Valley
0118 334 1920
thamesvalley@lichfields.uk