

# Birdworld and Haskins Forest Lodge

Holt Pound, Farnham GU10 4LD

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## Design & Access Statement



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Client: Birdworld Ltd and Haskins Garden Centres Ltd

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Author: DJ

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# 01 Introduction

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## 1.1 Purpose

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of the planning application to deliver the redevelopment proposals of Birdworld and Haskins Garden Centres. The statement describes the proposed site, assesses the context and immediate setting and subsequently explains the design in response to these contextual issues. The design layout, massing and material approach has also been set out in this document.

All drawings in this report are for illustrative purposes only. The drawings which constitute the application have been submitted separately and should be referred to in all matters of record.

## 1.2 Scheme Background

In February 2020 Haskins took over Forest Lodge Garden Centre & Birdworld.

Birdworld is one of the largest independent tourist attractions in the south east and has been a popular local destination for the past 50 years.

Birdworld is a unique experience - it is the largest bird park in the U.K. It currently attracts over 100,000 visitors a year and has an extensive conservation and breeding program.

Haskins is a family-run Garden Centre Business founded in 1882 by Harry Haskins on the south coast. Today, Harry Haskins' great grandson Warren Haskins is the Chairman and is very much involved in developing the business.

The company is well respected nationally and internationally for its innovative and inventive approach to garden retailing.

## 1.3 The Project Summary & Description

The past few years have allowed Haskins to review the re-development proposals put in place by the previous owners and, from this hands on operation of Birdworld and Forest Lodge Garden Centre, to assess how best to improve both facilities so that they can deliver the very best customer and visitor experience.

### **Birdworld**

The key goals and aspirations for the project is to build on the brand DNA to create a profitable, sustainable, future proof and credible zoological destination that has unique and repeatable all year round offers and experiences for all ages.

### **Forest Lodge, Garden Centre**

The key aim of the proposed Forest Lodge Garden Centre is to build upon the successes of previous projects using a tested format to produce a high quality project that significantly enhances the existing site conditions, to provide a fit for purpose and desirable location for the public to visit and enjoy.

### **Planning Application Description:**

**'Improvements to, and new facilities at, Birdworld to include a new Entrance Building, Play Barn, Conservation and Breeding facility and an external Adventure Play Area. The re-development of Forest Lodge Garden Centre to include the demolition of the existing garden centre and the adjoining Garden Style structures to create a new garden centre (with covered and open sales areas, restaurant, plant, and warehouse). New service areas and car parking for both operations accessed from a new roundabout on the A235. The closure and removal of the existing Forest Lodge access. Enhanced landscaping throughout.'**

## 1.4 The Project Team

The key members of the Project Team were as follows:



**Birdworld**

*Client*



**Haskins**

*Client*



**RPS Consulting**

*Project Management &  
Quantity Surveyor*



**MDA Associates**

*Planning Consultant*



**Roberts Limbrick**

*Architect*



**ION Consulting**

*M&E Engineer*



**Scott White & Hookins**

*Structural, Civil Engineer  
& CDM Consultants*



**The Richards Partnership**

*Landscape Architect*



**Ecology Solutions**

*Ecology Consultant*



**Impact Acoustics**

*Acoustic Consultant*



**Part B Group Ltd**

*Fire Consultant*



**iTransport**

*Highways Consultant*

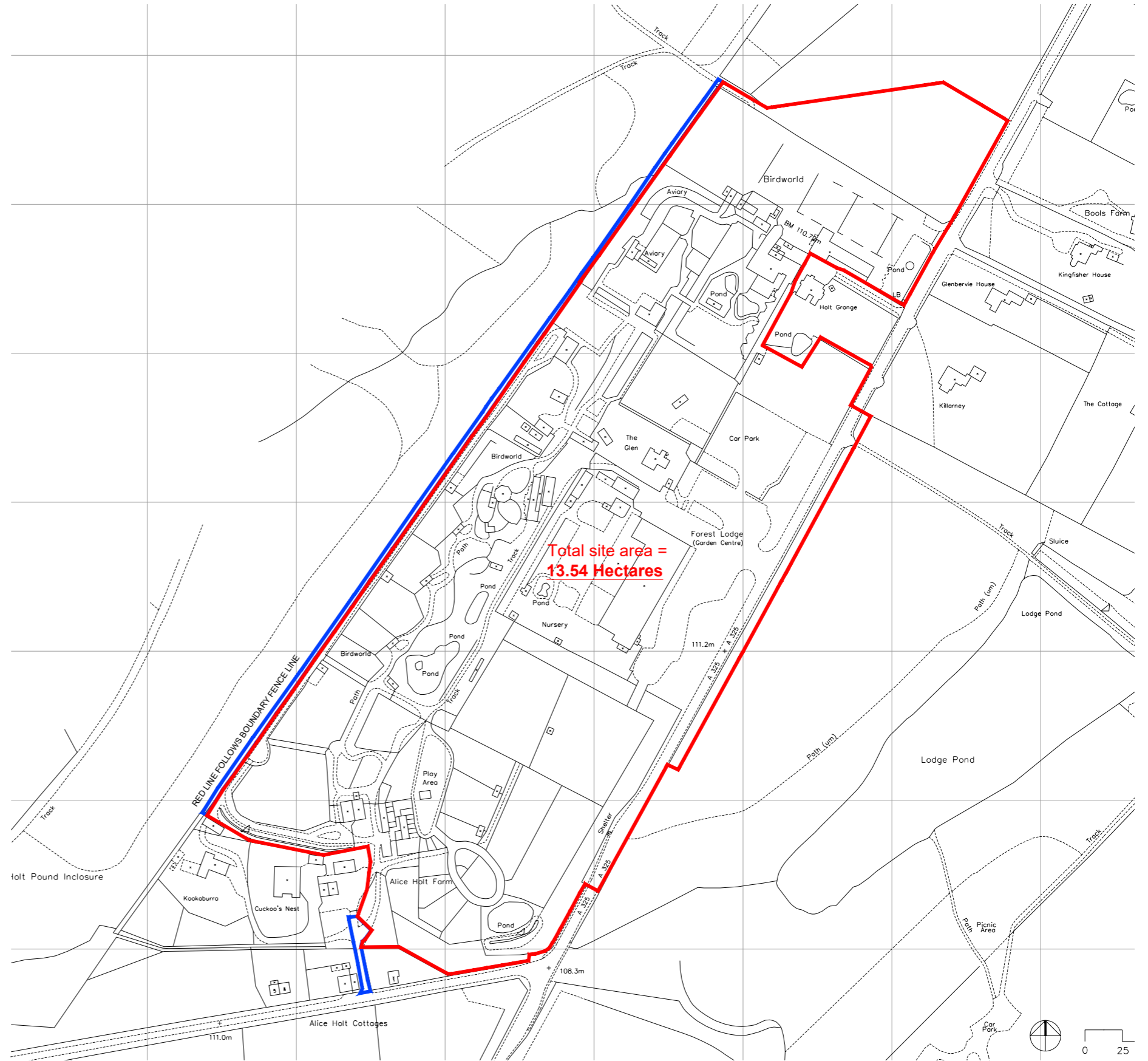


**Simon Jones Associates**

*Arboricultural Planning  
Consultants*

## 1.5 Site Location

The site, shown right, is located approximately 1.5km south of the A31 and 4.7km south west of the centre of Farnham, as the crow flies. The site sits west of the A325, with Gravel Hill Road running to the south of the site, connecting neighbouring properties.



# 02 Site Analysis

## 2.1 Site Context & Constraints

Birdworld is the United Kingdom’s largest bird park, covering 23 acres. It is located in the East Hampshire district, close to the village of Bucks Horn Oak and the surrounding Alice Holt Forest. It is part of the parent company Haskins Garden Centre Ltd., which also owns the nearby Forest Lodge garden centre.

Birdworld is one of the largest independent tourist attractions in the south east and has been a popular local destination for the past 50 years. Spread over 23 acres with its own catering and retail facilities, it attracts over 100,000 visitors a year to the bird park, gardens and has an extensive conservation and breeding program. There are more than 180 different species of bird within the collection, 40 of which are listed as vulnerable, threatened or endangered on the IUCN Red List. These include the Bali starling, Montserrat oriole, northern bald ibis and the Kea.

### The Built Environment

In most instances the maximum building height is two stories made up of predominantly residential properties (use class D3 Dwellinghouse), located to the north east and south west of the site. Most of these properties are detached and are positioned in isolation to one another resulting in a low density building context. There is also an industrial use class B2/B8 to the west of the boundary.

### Local Plan / Masterplanning

Review of the Borough Council’s Interactive plan does not indicate a master plan for this area.

### Access to the Site

There are multiple bus stops along the A325 for bus services 17, 18 & 418. The nearest train station is Bentley at approximately 1.85km and Farnham at 4.8km away. Cycle routes are limited in this area and access would likely be achieved via other modes. Existing site access is directly off the A325 via T-junction.

### Listed Buildings & Conservation

The site is not located within a conservation area nor are there any listed buildings within close proximity to the development site.

### National Parks & Dark Skies

The site is located in close proximity to the SDNP/IDSR where obtrusive light into the night sky should be limited.

### Flood Map

The site is located within flood zone 1 and therefore there is a low probability of flooding from rivers and the sea.

### Public Utilities

South East Water’s utilities plan indicates that there is a water main running along the A325. Open Reach plan indicates their infrastructure enters the site north of the existing entrance. SGN’s utilities plan indicates a low pressure gas main running along the A325. Scottish & Southern’s Utility Plan shows a high voltage power line to the western boundary of the site which enters the site behind the existing garden centre. Similarly, SSU’s utility plan shows low voltage power lines within the site boundary.

### Key Views

Given that the immediate context consists of mature woodland trees, there are no key views that should be specifically maintained, however given the site context adjacent to the national park it is paramount that the development is considerate to this context.

### Alice Holt & Ancient Woodland

Alice Holt and the ancient woodland borders the western boundary of the site. The eastern side of the site over the A325 is also populated with ancient woodland, encapsulating the Birdworld and Haskins Garden Centre Sites.



Site Aerial (Ref: Google Earth)



## 2.2 Site Photographs - Birdworld



Penguin Beach external view



Birdworld Gift Shop and Entrance



Play Area External View



Underwater World - Now closed

## 2.3 Site Photographs - Haskins



Garden Centre Covered Sales External View



Forest Lodge Garden Centre Entrance



Garden Centre Internal View



Outdoor Plant Sales View

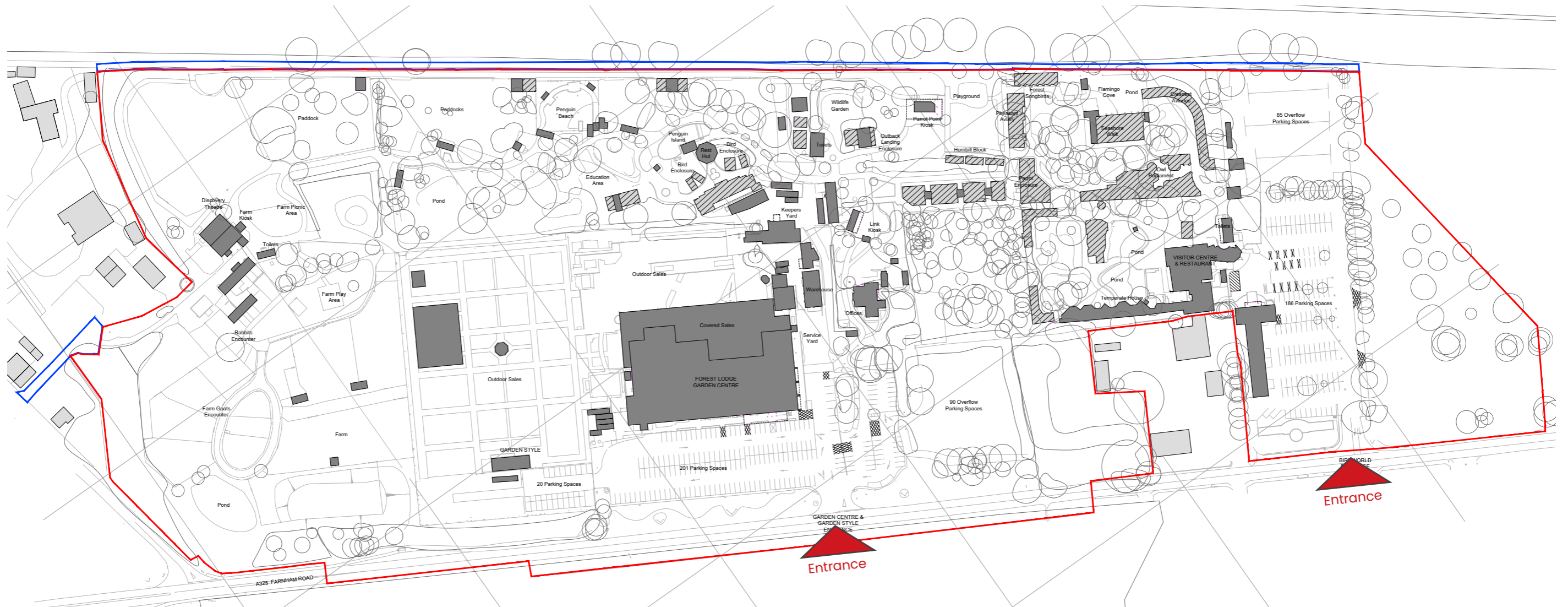
## 2.4 Existing Site

The plan overleaf illustrates the site as existing. The following identifies some of the key constraints within the site:

- There are two junctions into the site, one for Birdworld and one for Haskins Gardens Centres. Neither of these junctions have dedicated right turn entry.
- The entrance for Haskins Garden Centres is confused and clashes with the adjoining car parking.
- The existing garden centre's delivery access into the service yard via the main car park creates conflict with pedestrians and customer vehicles.
- The car parking features long banks of spaces which encourages increased speed and impacts on customer safety.
- The arrangement, layout and overall building conditions of the combined sites of Birdworld and Haskins, are poor. Existing buildings are outdated and do not meet current building standards in terms of thermal/energy performance and sustainability.
- Finally, the existing narrow shape of Birdworld results in an 'out and back' path structure resulting in a poor customer experience.



Aerial View of Site



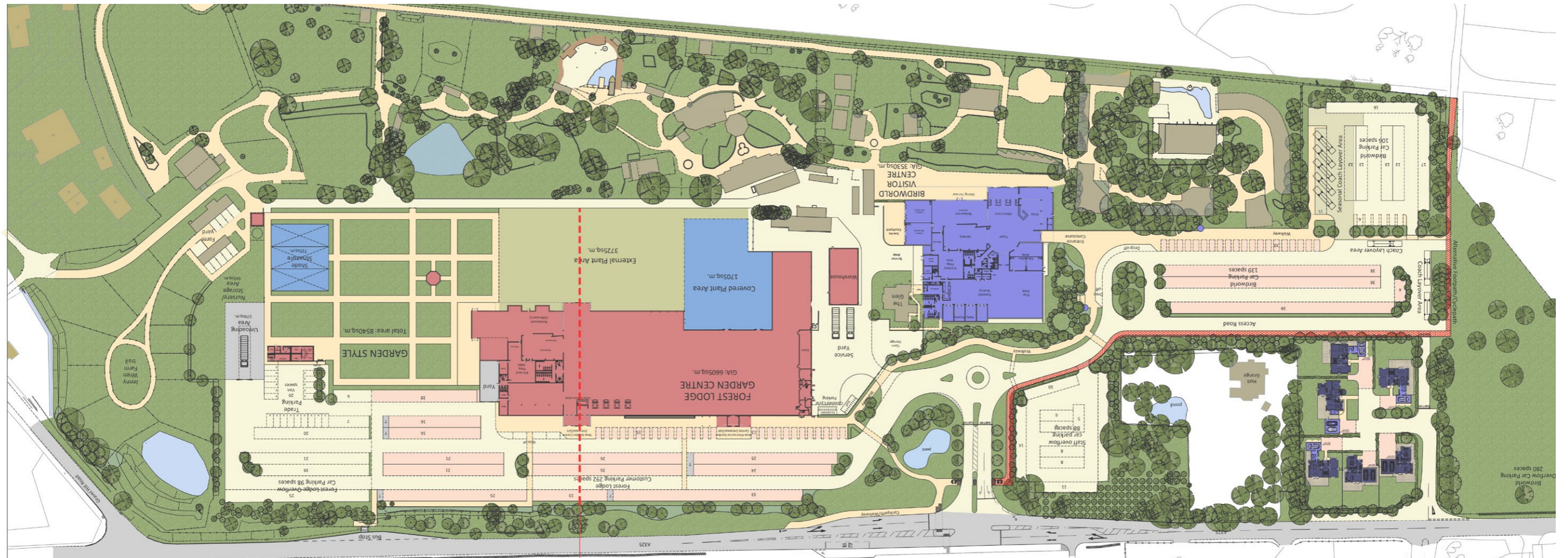
Existing Site Plan

## 2.5 Previous Application

At the start of the design process a full review of the previous planning application approval was carried out which highlighted the following constraints:

- Proposed entrance to the site has a short 'run off' which could result in tailbacks at peak times.
- The prominent location of the proposed service area is inappropriately located on arrival to site.
- The retention and extension of the existing Garden Centre creates constraints and issues particularly with the layout and configuration of the adjoining car parking.
- The location of the Garden Centre and New Visitors Centre exaggerate the long, thin nature of the Birdworld site creating issues with the customer journey and creating a disjointed and elongated site.
- Garden Centre shape and form creates numerous operational issues.
- HGV access to Garden Style passes through the Garden Centre car park creating safety issues.
- Housing Development poses constraints on the development.

**See next page for previously approved site plan.**



Site Master Plan - Previously Approved

# 03 The Design Process

## 3.1 Detailed Design Process

Having established the brief and undertaken an assessment of the existing site and its surroundings, we were able to start considering the best solution or solutions for the project.

### Design Approach.

The detailed design process recognises the importance of Birdworld and Forest Lodge to the Local Area. The Client and project team worked closely to develop a vision and project brief for the redevelopment of the site which considered, in a coordinated and considered way, the redevelopment featuring the following key elements:

### Site Access and Layout.

It was established early in the design process that the access to the site would need fundamentally reviewing as the existing provision and that of the previous planning approval were both unsuitable. In addition to this the existing operation of both Birdworld and the garden centre is hindered by a poor internal layout. A series of options were reviewed for the new access to the site and a new roundabout was considered to be the most appropriate, as it would improve access to the site whilst also reducing speeds and increasing the safety of the traffic on the A325. This has allowed the existing

entrances to be combined to one single entrance from the A325. Via the new site access road there is a new roundabout serving two distinct areas of parking for both of the site uses.

The proposed Car Park layouts are carefully designed to give excellent circulation and give clear and legible pedestrian access to the entrances of both Birdworld and the Garden Centre.

The service yards and Coach Parking is carefully located to ensure that larger vehicles can access the site without travelling through the Public Car Parking Areas. Please refer to the Highway Consultants report for more detail of the site access and highways designs.

### Existing and New Buildings

The majority of the existing buildings on the site are of poor condition and are approaching the end of their effective lifespan. Options were reviewed to retain the existing garden centre, but this would have been compromised due to its outdated construction and its existing poor condition. It was decided that the most appropriate solution was to demolish the existing Garden Centre and rebuild it to meet modern building standards of building efficiency and levels of insulation.

In Birdworld the existing entrance building is of poor condition and would become obsolete, as the main entrance, once the new combined site entrance is introduced therefore a new Entrance Building was proposed which would include ticket sales, staff and office accommodation and shop.

The existing Birdworld Back of House/Bird Care facilities are of extremely poor condition and as such will be replaced with the new Living Collections Building and further buildings within the service yard for the storage of waste, buggy parking, storage, and workshop.

The Play Barn offers a new experience to visitors to the site. The building is simple in form and will offer indoor play, café, party rooms and all associated supporting facilities.

### Existing Site Context.

The context of the site and its relationship to the South Downs National Park and the adjoining ancient woodland of Alice Holt was recognised as being vitally important in retaining the character and enhancing the setting of the proposed development. Careful consideration has been given to the setting and a well thought out and considered landscaping scheme has

been proposed that respects the sites location and the ancient woodland at the rear of the site by creating a 15m wide 'No New Construction' Buffer Zone. More detail of the landscape proposals can be seen in the Landscape Architects Report.

#### **Building Massing and Scale.**

In order to reduce the visual impact of the proposal the massing and scale of all the proposed new buildings is kept low. All new buildings (with the exception of plant mezzanines) are single storey; heights vary but as an indication see below:

- Garden Centre - 4.000m eaves height & 6.800m ridge height
- Birdworld Entrance Building - 2.400m > 5.100 eaves height & 4.500m > 8.000m ridge height
- Birdworld Play Barn - 3.500 > 4.000m eaves height & 8.000m ridge height.



Birdworld Penguin Enclosure



## 3.2 Summary of the Project Brief

### Site Entrance.

- Improve the safety and arrival of the entrance to the site from the A325.
- Create separation of Delivery Vehicles from Public Car Parking Areas
- Provide safe and clearly legible circulation and pedestrian routes through the car parks to the Birdworld and Garden Centre Entrances.
- Provide appropriately located accessible parking, cycling and EV Charging provision.
- Provide Coach parking with a safe and legible pedestrian route to the Birdworld and Garden Centre Entrances.

### Birdworld.

- Clear and well-defined customer approach to the Entrance of Birdworld
- Create a new Entrance Experience for Customers with a new Entrance building incorporating Ticket Sales, Entrance Control, Visitor Shop, Customer Toilets and Staff/Office Facilities.
- Create a further enhancement to the customer experience with a new play barn to provide indoor play, café, party rooms and all supporting facilities.
- Living Collections which will provide supporting and

husbandry facilities for the care and support of the Birds ensuring that Birdworld maintains its position as number one Bird Park in the UK and to maintain it's conservation work.

- Supporting 'Grounds' Buildings provided within the Birdworld Service Yard.
- Birdworld will also feature an area dedicated to outdoor Adventure Play. This is intended to be a woodland theme play area which reflects the context of the site, to be developed with specialist input.

### Haskins Forest Lodge Garden Centre.

- Garden Centre Design to be based on the tried and tested model as recently delivered at Haskins Garden Centre, Snowhill.
- Clear and well-defined customer approach to the Garden Centre Entrance.
- Indoor retail
- Covered External Plant Sales area
- External Plant Sales Area
- Restaurant and external Dining Terrace
- Kitchen, Office and B.O.H. Areas
- Warehouse and adjoining screened service and delivery area

### Landscaped Setting.

The site currently has it's own unique landscaped character and Birdworld in particular is set in an existing landscape with many mature trees. It is important that this character is retained and enhanced with any proposals. This is particularly important with the site's proximity to Alice Holt and the ancient woodland which runs along the rear boundary, the sites location in respect of the South Downs National Park and the associated Dark Skies requirements.

Landscaping and Lighting proposals will also need careful consideration to respect this unique setting.