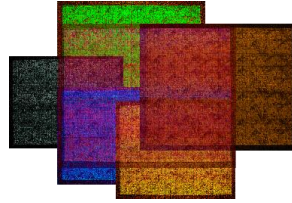


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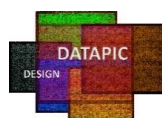


Design and Project Management Consultants

Planning, Design, and Access Statement

For the
proposed Trackways at: -

Dick Whittington Park,
Little London,
Longhope,
GL17 0PH.



Design and Project Management Consultants

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Planning Statement

Introduction

The Dick Whittington Park site began as a Farm Park with a blend of indoor and outdoor facilities for visitors.

When the Farm/Animal element of the park was removed the site became more concentrated on the Visitor Centre, Café, and Play Barn facilities.

Covid 19 wreaked havoc on this business. With most of the business offerings being indoors and with limited numbers able to attend due to Covid, it was decided to expand and diversify the business into other options.

From the devastation of covid there evolved the future plan for the site. Dick Whittington Park has always been an environmentally aware enterprise amongst the other activities around the site, but for the future, the new business plan for the Dick Whittington Park has at its core the prioritisation of its natural environmental potential due to its geographical location.

The plan coalesced during the immediate post covid period.

It took some time of hesitation, but like many businesses trying to recover from the effects of the covid lockdowns, the realisation that life, in some very fundamental ways, was never going to be the same again, became reality.

It had become obvious that the social anthropology of the U.K. and indeed many other countries around the world, was changing faster than could have been predicted without Covid.

People's work attitudes had changed with an emphasis on working from home, and a more relaxed attitude developed in what used to be the main workplace.

During covid, computer use jumped a few years of evolution, and the majority of people became far more computer literate.

For many people who were lucky enough to survive Covid, leisure activities took centre stage along with a genuine realisation, that Nature mattered.

The result

This application seeks to obtain permission for the installation of access Trackways around the Dick Whittington Leisure Park.

It is a large site with diverse ecosystems of open grassland and scrub, pasture, hedgerows, tree plantations and orchards from the past hundreds of years of farming, along with natural ancient woodland. It also has five lakes which have the potential to provide diverse ecosystems for many plant and animal species.

There are many changes to be made around the Park site, but the new business plans aims are to provide leisure and outdoor activities so that visitors and tourists can experience the many diverse ecosystems that the Valley setting has to offer.

The natural contours of the valley provide many opportunities for nature walking, one of which is to enjoy the viewpoints provided from the higher levels of the valley sides. However, to offer nature walks around the area, a series of paths and trackways will be required to make the site accessible to everyone.

Anticipating increasing footfall on the trackways as time goes by, the dimensions of the tracks have been chosen so that they are wide enough to incorporate group visits, along with individuals, families and disabled people, while at the same time not so wide that they dominate the landscape. There is also the issue that too narrow tracks may encourage people to wander off the tracks either to avoid other walkers, or simply to explore the fauna, which on a large scale would be detrimental to the biodiversity of the area.

The design of the proposed trackways is discussed below in the design statement, and the ease of access to the trackways is discussed below that, in the access statement.

Design Statement

The positioning of the trackways has been carefully chosen to avoid impacting existing trees and hedgerows on the site, while achieving the required access to previously inaccessible fauna and vantage points around the park.

The Tracks are to be 3 metres wide, and the necessary ground work will only remove top soil to a depth of 0.45 metres.

The top soil will be used for haunching along the sides of the trackways.

Any disruption to ground level biodiversity will therefore be at a minimum with only shallow rooted grass and scrub being affected.

The construction uses a variety of compacted gravels with a sub-base of broken rock hardcore.

(For full information on the trackways construction and positioning please see the Trackways Construction report).

Being very aware of the global problem of the use of too much plastic in manufacturing, it has been decided not to use any plastic in the design of the trackways around the Park site. Therefore, there will be no plastic membrane laid along the base of the track. Considering the metre length of the trackways this represents a considerable reduction to the potential plastic pollution. Instead, there will be the simple timeworn reliance on the everyday public usage of the tracks which will restrict the natural growth of unwanted invasive plant species by walking along the tracks. There will also be a regime of landscaping and maintenance undertaken by the gardeners of Dick Whittington Park.

The design of the Tracks has also been influenced by the necessity to allow occasional vehicle access along the trackways, enabling attention to be given to the landscaping demands of a large acreage of land which is no longer being farmed.

Access Statement

There will be no vehicular access allowed for the general public or visitors to use the Trackways. There is a large car park area situated to the southwest of the site specifically for the use of visitor's vehicle parking.

Access to the trackways can be achieved by using the existing layout of connected nature paths, or by the main entrance to the Trackways which has an access spur (Please see the Block Plan for details of its position) off the lane that runs through the Leisure Park valley from south to north.

From the car park visitors will have the choice of reaching the trackways on foot, either by using the paths around the lake next to the car park which connect with the trackways further along the valley, or they can walk up the existing lane.

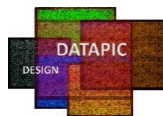
In order to accommodate disabled visitors, a northern portion of the car park is designated for them which is closer to the existing paths.

These paths around the lake have been levelled specifically to give easier access to the elderly and disabled visitor.

Visitor Numbers

Previous applications have approved an increase in the number of visitors to the site to circa 80,000 per annum. Currently the park is operating much lower than this number and so has significant scope for usage expansion within the approved visitor level.

The car park area and access roads are of good quality and size and will be able to accommodate enhanced visitor numbers.



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