



Inspiring Learning Green Park

Planning, Design and Access and Statement

Prepared for



Inspiring Learning

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Document Control

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1.0 INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF APPLICATION

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This Planning, Design and Access Statement (PDAS) has been prepared in support of a planning application (part retrospective) made by Inspiring Learning Limited (the Applicant) to Buckinghamshire Council (the Council). The Proposed Development is shown on Planning Drawing 2885-02-02a and comprises the following:

- Retention of fifteen existing accommodation cabins (retrospective);
- Retention of three activity areas (retrospective);
- Retention of two zip wires and towers (retrospective);
- Four additional accommodation cabins;
- Temporary and permanent toilet cabins in the former climbing tower area;
- Removal of eco-domes;
- 8 cabins on the eco-dome area to be used as 4 classrooms;
- Change of use of existing dining hall / nursery space to provide additional accommodation;
- Ancillary works including access tracks and landscaping etc. (part retrospective).

1.1.2 The Proposed Development is located at Green Park, Aston Clinton, Aylesbury, HP22 5NE (the Site). The location of the Site is illustrated on Figure 1 – Site Location Plan and the planning application boundary is shown on Planning Drawing 2885-02-01.

1.2 Scheme Background

1.2.1 Prior to Inspiring Learning taking over the operation of Green Park, it was operated by the Adventure Learning Foundation (ALF) for approximately 20 years. The charity ran a similar operation to Inspiring Learning which included a temporary tented village on the Site which provided 150 beds. Inspiring Learning has now taken over the operation of the Site and in order to run a viable business and enhance the visitor experience, they need to upgrade the accommodation and activity offer at the Site. The purpose of the Proposed Development is to provide an improved accommodation alternative to the tents and an enhanced activity provision offer.



- 1.2.2 The Site has been the subject of previous planning applications. Planning application, reference 21/04112/APP, was submitted in October 2021 and sought consent for additional cabin accommodations at the Site. The application was refused in January 2022.
- 1.2.3 A further planning application (Ref: 22/00367/APP) was submitted in February 2022 that sought to address the reasons for refusal. Initial comments regarding the development were received from the Council, with the potential impact on designated Local Green Space being raised as the main concern. The Council could not support the application in its revised form and following further dialogue with the Council, it was agreed to amend planning application 22/00367/APP to address the concerns raised. Following further dialogue with the Council, the application was withdrawn in May 2023.
- 1.2.4 During the determination of the above planning application, Inspiring Learning constructed the accommodation cabins and activity equipment at the Site. In May 2023, the Council served an Enforcement Notice (the Notice) on the Inspiring Learning. The Notice related to the unlawful development comprising:
- i) construction of accommodation cabins and siting of toilet blocks;
 - ii) erection of outdoor climbing and recreational equipment; and
 - iii) formation of hardstanding, soil bunds and access tracks.
- 1.2.5 The development, by reason of its proximity and scale, was considered to have a detrimental impact on biodiversity, priority species and protected trees. The development was also considered inappropriate for development within a local green space designation.
- 1.2.6 This planning application therefore seeks to regularise the current unlawful development at the Site. Further details on the Proposed Development and compliance with the Notice are provided in Section 3.0.

1.3 The Applicant

- 1.3.1 The Applicant is Inspiring Learning who operate 11 residential outdoor recreation activity centres within the UK. Inspiring Learning has leased the Site from the Council



since 2021, a lease that committed the Applicant to significant capital enhancements, all of which revert to council ownership at the end of the lease.

1.3.2 With a track record of over 40 years in outdoor education and adventure, Inspiring Learning's purpose is to create life changing adventures for young people through educationally-rich residential activity breaks for schools and groups (e.g. Scouts, Girl Guides).

1.3.3 Inspiring Learning's primary focus is the development and delivery of residential outdoor educational programmes for school children. Whilst those programmes are open to school children aged 5-18, around 80% of the children are at primary school, with the most common age range being 8-11 year olds. Of the 20% of children that are at secondary school, these tend to be 11-13 years of age. Inspiring Learning offers a discount of 15% to all schools in the Buckinghamshire Council area.

1.4 **Scope of the Planning Application**

1.4.1 The PDAS was compiled and coordinated by Axis, a planning and environmental consultancy. A team of specialist consultants have provided expert assessment in respect of the following technical appendices and appraisals:

- i) Axis – Planning;
- ii) Axis – Landscape and Visual Assessment;
- iii) Avian Ecology – Ecology
- iv) KRS Enviro – Flood Risk and Drainage
- v) Steve Maros – Arboriculture

1.4.2 This introduction to the PDAS provides the general background to the Proposed Development and details of the Applicant. The PDAS also sets out a description of the Site, its surroundings and the Proposed Development. This is followed by a summary of the technical assessments undertaken, an assessment of the Proposed Development against relevant planning policy and material considerations is then provided and conclusions in respect of the acceptability of the Proposed Development are drawn based on the overall planning balance.

1.4.3 This PDAS is divided into six main sections as follows:

- i) **Section 1.0:** Introduction, Background and Scope of Application.



- ii) **Section 2.0:** The Site, Its Context and Planning History.
- iii) **Section 3.0:** The Proposed Development.
- iv) **Section 4.0:** Environmental Considerations.
- v) **Section 5.0:** Planning Policy Context and Appraisal.
- vi) **Section 6.0:** Conclusion.

Need for Environmental Impact Assessment

- 1.4.4 The Proposed Development has been considered in the context of The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England) Regulations 2017.
- 1.4.5 The Proposed Development would not represent a Schedule 1 development where an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is mandatory. As such, the Proposed Development would need to be considered under Schedule 2 (development that may be likely to give rise to significant environmental effects) and would fall under Part 12 'Tourism and Leisure'.
- 1.4.6 There are two possible descriptions within Part 12 which the Proposed Development could fall within as follows:
 - c) Holiday villages and hotel complexes outside urban areas and associated with developments where the area of the development exceeds 0.5 hectare*
 - e) Permanent camp sites and caravan sites where the area of development exceeds 1 hectare.*
- 1.4.7 The Officer's Report for the refused planning application (Ref: 21/04112/APP) states the Council's view is that the Proposed Development is more properly described as a 'Holiday Village' therefore the lower threshold of 0.5 hectares applies.
- 1.4.8 The Council's assessment of the refused development confirmed that the Site is not in an AONB, nor is it Green Belt, and the scale and characteristics of the proposed built form is limited in the context of EIA assessment. It is therefore considered that the same conclusions can be drawn for the Proposed Development and it would not be likely to give rise to significant environmental effects.

1.5 Design and Access Statement

Legislative Requirements



- 1.5.1 The legal requirement to provide a Design and Access Statement is set out in Article 9 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended). This is hereafter referred to as the DMPO.
- 1.5.2 A Design and Access Statement is required for development which is classified as 'major development'. The Proposed Development is a major development, and accordingly this document constitutes a combined Planning Statement and Design and Access Statement.
- 1.5.3 Paragraph 2 of Article 9 requires that a Design and Access Statement must include details of:
- i) the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the development; and
 - ii) how issues relating to access to the development have been dealt with.
- 1.5.4 In achieving this, Paragraph 3 of Article 9 requires that a Design and Access Statement must:
- i) explain the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the development;
 - ii) demonstrate the steps taken to appraise the context of the development and how the design of the development takes that context into account;
 - iii) explain the policy adopted as to access, and how policies relating to access in relevant local development documents have been taken into account;
 - iv) state what, if any, consultation has been undertaken on issues relating to access to the development and what account has been taken of the outcome of any such consultation; and
 - v) explain how any specific issues which might affect access to the development have been addressed.

National Planning Policy Guidance

- 1.5.5 The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) identifies that a Design and Access Statement should be a concise document. The Guidance (ref: Paragraph: 029 Reference ID: 14-029-20140306) identifies that:



“[Design and Access Statements] provide a framework for applicants to explain how the proposed development is a suitable response to the Site and its setting, and demonstrate that it can be adequately accessed by prospective users. Design and Access Statements can aid decision-making by enabling local planning authorities and third parties to better understand the analysis that has underpinned the design of a development proposal.

The level of detail in a Design and Access Statement should be proportionate to the complexity of the application but should not be long.”

- 1.5.6 The information necessary to satisfy the requirements of Article 9 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, in respect of Design and Access Statements are provided in Sections 3 and 5 of the PDAS and associated Technical Appendices. The level of detail provided is appropriate and proportionate to the nature and complexity of the scheme.



2.0 THE SITE, ITS CONTEXT AND PLANNING HISTORY

2.1 The Site and its Surroundings

- 2.1.1 Green Park forms part of the former Aston Clinton estate owned by the Rothschild family. The main building, Aston Clinton House was demolished between 1956 and 1958. Buckinghamshire County Council acquired Green Park in the 1950s to use for educational purposes and operated the Site until 2013. A number of the existing buildings on Site were erected during the Council's operation.
- 2.1.2 The Site comprises the entirety of Green Park Activity Centre which is utilised as a residential, adventure and outdoor activity centre under the operation of Inspiring Learning. It is located to the south of the village of Buckland and west of the village of Aston Clinton in Aylesbury Vale.
- 2.1.3 The Site is accessed via Stablebridge Road to the east. Upon entering the Site, the access road splits in two paths; one of which leads to the disused Grand Union Canal Wendover Arm and the other acts as an internal access road, providing vehicular access to the facilities within the Site.
- 2.1.4 The Site contains extensive areas of mature woodland, a number of existing accommodation blocks, sports hall and swimming pool, and associated infrastructure. These features, which do not form part of this application are shown on Figure 2 - Existing Site. Additionally, the Site has areas for low ropes activity, archery and footgolf. The application site is irregular in shape and circa 19 hectares.
- 2.1.5 The Site is bound to the south by the disused Grand Union Canal Wendover Arm, and to the north by Aston Clinton Park. The eastern boundary of the Site is bordered by the village of Buckland, and beyond the western boundary is agricultural land.
- 2.1.6 The Site lies to the north of a chalk scarp that is the northern boundary of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The Grand Union Canal Wendover Arm forms the boundary of the Chilterns AONB, and is also the northern boundary of a Green Belt designation. The Site is not within either the AONB or Green Belt.
- 2.1.7 Aston Clinton Park has a number of facilities such as Aston Clinton Football Team, Aston Park Tennis Club, Aston Clinton Cricket Club, and Aston Clinton Skate Park.



This is in addition to a number of other sport and activity facilities such as the Bowls Centre and a children's playground.

- 2.1.8 The nearest residential properties to the Site are those located on Roundhouse Close, approximately 160m to the east of the dining hall / nursery building, adjacent to the Site's eastern boundary. Due to the presence of existing vegetation and structures, there would be no views of the Proposed Development from these visual receptors.
- 2.1.9 There are two Grade II listed buildings within a 500m radius of the Site, the Old Rectory and 110 London Road, and these are located approximately 290m and 330m to the north of the eco-domes respectively. The Halton House Grade II Park and Garden is located approximately 730m to the southwest of the accommodation cabins.
- 2.1.10 The Site is located within Flood Zone 1. Hence, it is not considered to be at risk of flooding.
- 2.1.11 The Site sits within the Green Park Biological Notification Site, designated due to the presence of specimen trees, having 30 species of lichen and habitats including an arboretum and two miniature ravines. The closest Site of Special Scientific Interest (Aston Clinton Ragpits) is located circa 750m to the southeast of the Site. The Site is covered by a Tree Protection Order (Tree Preservation Order No. 23/00016/TPO).
- 2.1.12 The northern and western extents of the Site forms part of an area designated within the Aston Clinton Parish Neighbourhood Plan as Local Green Space. The extent of the Local Green Space is shown on Figure LV2 (Appendix A).
- 2.1.13 The specific siting of the Proposed Development is split across a number of locations. These are shown on Planning Drawings 2885-02-2b, 2885-02-2c and 2885-02-2d.
- 2.1.14 Planning Drawing 2885-02-2b illustrates the northeast part of the Site. This area comprises the internal access track, the dining hall / nursery building, the eco-domes and one activity area. The Proposed Development in this area comprises the construction of classroom cabins, one activity area and the change of use of the dining hall/nursery.

2.1.15 Planning Drawing 2885-02-2c illustrates the southern part of the Site. This area comprises predominantly woodland. The Proposed Development in this area comprises two activity areas, two zip wires, accommodation cabins and hardstanding / access tracks. Planning Drawing 2885-02-2d illustrates the central part of the Site and it is in this area where the accommodation cabins are sited.

2.2 Planning History

2.2.1 The Proposed Development would lie entirely within the Vale of Aylesbury administrative area of Buckinghamshire Council. A review of the Council's online search tool indicated that there have been several planning applications at the Site, these are summarised within Table 1.

Table 1 – Planning History

Planning Application Ref:	Description	Status
12/01203/ACC	Proposed construction of a 'smart barn' storage building Green Park Centre Green Park Stablebridge Road Aston Clinton Buckinghamshire HP22 5NE.	Granted 25 th September 2012
16/03931/APP	Single storey side extension and new side entrance. Internal alterations. Green Park Activities & Training Centre Stablebridge Road Aston Clinton Buckinghamshire HP22 5NE.	Granted 8 th December 2016
18/00901/APP	Erection of children's day nursery Green Park Activities & Training Centre Stablebridge Road Aston Clinton Buckinghamshire HP22 5NE.	Granted 2 nd July 2018
20/00799/APP	Eco dome (retrospective) Green Park Activities and Training Centre Green Park Stablebridge Road Aston Clinton Buckinghamshire HP22 5NE.	Granted 15 th September 2021

Planning Application Ref:	Description	Status
21/04112/APP	Construction of Accommodation Cabins Green Park Activities and Training Centre Green Park Stablebridge Road Aston Clinton Buckinghamshire HP22 5NE.	Refused 14 th January 2022
22/00367/APP	Construction of Accommodation Cabins Green Park Activities and Training Centre Green Park Stablebridge Road Aston Clinton Buckinghamshire HP22 5NE.	Withdrawn 15 th May 2023
Enforcement Notice - NC/23/00121/OPDEV	Enforcement Notice regarding the construction of accommodation cabins and siting of toilet blocks, the erection of outdoor climbing and recreational equipment and the formation of hardstanding, soil bunds and access tracks without planning permission.	Issued on 26 th May 2023 and took effect on 1 st August 2023



3.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 This section provides a description of the Proposed Development, together with details regarding its operation.

3.1.2 The key components of the Proposed Development are as follows:

- i) 15 no. 8 bed children cabins;
- ii) 4 no. staff cabins;
- iii) 5no. temporary toilet and shower blocks
- iv) 4 no. permanent toilet blocks;
- v) 4 no. classroom cabins;
- vi) 3 no. activity areas;
- vii) 2 no zip lines and associated apparatus; and
- viii) The change of use of the existing dining hall / nursery space into additional bedroom accommodation comprising:
 - a) 13 no. 6 bed rooms;
 - b) 9 no. 4 bed rooms;
 - c) A single 8 bed room;
 - d) 4 no. teacher rooms with ensuite showers;
 - e) A teacher's retreat room;
 - f) Gender separated shower block and toilets; and
 - g) A storeroom.
- ix) Removal of eco-domes

3.2 Description of the Proposed Development

Accommodation Cabins

3.2.1 The accommodation cabins are located to the southwest of the existing sports hall. This part of the development comprises fifteen 8 no. bed student cabins, four staff cabins, and four toilet blocks. As illustrated on Planning Drawing 2885-02-02a and 2885-01-02d, the student cabins are located along the northern, eastern and southern boundaries of the square grassland area and the toilet blocks would be located along the western boundary. 11 accommodation cabins have already been



constructed and therefore, this application seeks to retrospectively apply for planning permission for this part of the development. A further 4 student cabins are proposed in this area as shown on the drawing.

- 3.2.2 The spaces between the student cabins and along the northern, eastern and southern boundaries are to be covered with bark chippings. Bark chippings will also be located around the perimeter of the staff cabins.
- 3.2.3 All buildings introduced by the Proposed Development would comprise natural styled timber cladding to minimise any potential visual impact on the surrounding environment and to in-keep with the existing buildings present at the Site.
- 3.2.4 The student cabins have a monopitched roof with an external length and width of 4.8m. The existing cabins are shown on Figure 3.
- 3.2.5 The staff cabins have a monopitched roof with an external length 6.1m and a width of 5.5m. Both the staff and children cabins have an external height of approximately 3m.

Toilets

- 3.2.6 This application seeks to apply for permission for both temporary and permanent toilet accommodation at the Site. The temporary toilets would enable the Applicant to accommodate the visitors attending the Site between May and October 2024, before replacing these with permanent toilet blocks. The temporary toilet accommodation comprises two shower blocks, two toilet blocks and an accessible toilet and shower block.
- 3.2.7 The shower blocks and toilet blocks would have an external length of approximately 6m, an external width of 3.27m and an external height of 2.61m. The details of the permanent toilet blocks are shown on Planning Drawing 2885-02-05. The toilets would also comprise natural styled timber cladding. The location and layout of the permanent toilet and shower blocks are illustrated on Planning Drawing 2885-02-02a.
- 3.2.8 The temporary toilet and shower block details are shown on Planning Drawings 2885-02-02d, 2885-02-10, 2885-02-11a, 2885-02-11b and 2885-02-11c. The accessible toilet and shower would have an external length of 3m, an external width



of 2.90m and an external height of 2.6m. The male and female toilets would be approximately 6m in length, 3.3m in width and 2.6m in height. The temporary toilets would be of modular construction.

Classrooms

- 3.2.9 This application seeks permission for the construction of four classroom cabins within the grounds of the existing eco domes. The proposed classroom cabins are illustrated on Planning Drawing 2885-02-02b. The classrooms would comprise natural styled timber cladding. The classrooms would have an external length of 9.2m, an external width of 4.6m and an external height of 3.058m.
- 3.2.10 The existing eco domes are located on a rectangular area of hardstanding and therefore, this part of the development would not result in the loss of permeable land or encroach on the local green space.

Activity Apparatus

- 3.2.11 The activity apparatus for the Site comprises three activity areas, each which comprise a climbing or abseil tower and ropes park and two zip lines with associated apparatus. All of the activity apparatus is already on Site, therefore this part of the application is for retrospective consent. The activities are within the woodland area in the southern extent of the Site.
- 3.2.12 An activity area is located to the south of the internal access road, approximately 75m of the proposed classroom cabins. Another is located approximately 35m to the northwest of the southern boundary and approximately 75m to the southeast of the proposed student accommodation cabins. The final activity area is located in the southwestern corner of the Site, approximately 20-25m to the north of the boundary¹. The activity area is shown on Figure 4.
- 3.2.13 A zip line is located approximately 40m to the northwest of the southern boundary and it runs parallel with the southern boundary. One of the zip line platforms is located approximately 105m to the east of the southern extent of the accommodation

¹ There is a fourth activity area on site which will be removed pursuant to the Enforcement Notice requirements.



cabins and the other platform is located approximately 140m south of the classrooms.

- 3.2.14 The second zip line is located in the west of the Site, again running parallel with the southern boundary. One of the zip line platforms is located approximately 20-25m to the northeast of the western boundary with the remaining platform located approximately 70m to the west of the accommodation cabins. The Zip Wire is shown on Figure 5.

Dining Hall / Nursery Area

- 3.2.15 This application seeks a change of use of the existing dining hall / nursery space to thirteen 6 no. bed bedrooms, nine 4 no. bed bedrooms, a single 8 no. bed bedroom, four staff bedrooms with ensuite showers, a teachers retreat room and separate gender toilet and shower blocks.

Removal of Eco-domes

- 3.2.16 This application is seeking permission for the removal of three eco-domes that are currently present within the northeastern extent of the Site. The eco-domes are located on an area of hardstanding which would be retained. The largest dome is approximately 6m in height and the two smaller domes are approximately 4m in height. provide the foundations for the abovementioned classroom cabins.

Other Ancillary Development

- 3.2.17 This application seeks retrospective permission for the hardstanding and access tracks. Where hardstanding needs to be removed to alleviate any impact on trees, a separate TPO application will be applied for. The hardstanding and access tracks are shown on Planning Drawing 2885-02-02a.

Access

- 3.2.18 Access to the Proposed Development would be from the existing access road that travels west from Stablebridge Lane. The road currently consists of hardstanding and would therefore be suitable for transport needs during the additional construction activities.



- 3.2.19 It is not anticipated that traffic movements would be significantly impacted by the Proposed Development. During the construction phase, delivery of materials would be limited appropriately, and post-development traffic would be negligible owing to all anticipated visits from schools etc. being unchanged and transported by bus or coach.
- 3.2.20 The access route through the Site consists of an unbound stone track as shown on Planning Drawing 2885-01-02a. Historic maps and aerial photographs indicate that is a long-established construction. Whilst its method of construction has not been investigated it appears to be of a standard construction type which is that a sub grade will have been prepared (shaping and levelling the existing subsoils to line and level), followed by laying a coarse stone sub base and then a surface layer of finer stone / gravel. These materials will have been consolidated but are not rigidly bound (in the way that a concrete or tarmac road would be). The unbound nature of the material means that it is permeable. These surfaces are only suitable for relatively light traffic and wear and tear will occur through use. For that reason, such tracks need to be maintained regularly by applying fresh layers of surface stone. In the case of the application, a section of road (approximately 100m in length as shown on Figure 2) located to the west of the accommodation cabins, has had a slightly coarser stone applied in anticipation of larger than usual vehicles running over the surface – which would damage the structure of the track otherwise. This ‘reinforcement’ is also unbound.

Landscaping

- 3.2.21 The proposed landscaping details are shown on Planning Drawing 2885-02-08. The landscaping would comprise additional boundary tree and hedgerow planting, additional amenity and rough grassland.

3.3 Operation

- 3.3.1 The cabins and activity equipment would be present all year-round as permanent buildings and structures. However, the use of these would be limited between the months of April and October.
- 3.3.2 The proposed change of use of the dining hall would provide additional onsite accommodation and these units would be available for use all year-round.



- 3.3.3 Students and children utilising the Green Park facilities would typically stay onsite for 3-4 nights.
- 3.3.4 The classroom cabins introduced by the Proposed Development would provide a suitable space for indoor learning and these units will be available for use all year-round.
- 3.3.5 Furthermore, all trips made to the Site relating to transporting students/children will be done exclusively by bus or coach, minimising all possible impacts on local traffic congestion as far as reasonably possible.

Activity Equipment

- 3.3.6 Each of the 3 Ropes Parks can run 3 groups of young people in the morning and 3 groups in the afternoon. Each group consists of a maximum of 16 young people meaning that a maximum of 96 young people will use each rope park during the day.
- 3.3.7 The Climbing Tower can run 2 groups of young people in the morning and 2 groups in the afternoon. Each group consists of a maximum of 16 young people meaning that a maximum of 64 young people will use the climbing tower during the day.
- 3.3.8 The Abseil tower can run 1 group of young people in the morning and 1 group in the afternoon. Each group consists of a maximum of 16 young people meaning that a maximum of 32 young people will use the abseil tower during the day.
- 3.3.9 The Zip Wire can run 1 group of young in the morning and 1 group in the afternoon. Each group consists of a maximum of 16 young people meaning that a maximum of 32 young people will use the zip wire during the day.
- 3.3.10 The Quick Zip can run 2 groups of young people in the morning and 2 groups in the afternoon. Each group consists of a maximum of 16 young people meaning that a maximum of 64 young people will use the Quick Zip during the day.
- 3.3.11 Below are other activities that can be run at Green Park. Groups of 16 will be applicable and they can be used morning and afternoon.
- Archery x 2 groups
 - Buggy build x 3 groups
 - Fencing x 2 groups

- Orienteering x 3 groups
- Night Light x 3 groups
- Bushcraft x 5 groups
- Mini Beast x 1 group
- Low Ropes x 2 groups
- Problem Solving x 2 groups.

3.4 Compliance with Enforcement Notice

3.4.1 Section 5 of the Notice requires a number of actions to be undertaken in order to comply with it. The following sub-section provides further information with regards to compliance with each item listed in the Notice.

1. This application seeks consent for nineteen existing accommodation cabins comprising fifteen cabins for students and four cabins for staff. The cabins located within the Local Green Space, illustrated on Figure 2 will be removed in accordance with the Notice.
2. The toilet blocks have already been removed in accordance with the Notice. This application seeks permission for new temporary and permanent toilet blocks, which will be located adjacent to the accommodation cabins.
3. The outdoor climbing and recreational equipment within the south west of the Site marked under 'R6' on Figure 2 will be removed in accordance with the Notice. This application is seeking permission for the other three activity areas and two zip wires.
4. This application seeks consent for the hardstanding and access tracks. Where hardstanding needs to be removed to alleviate any impact on trees, a separate TPO application will be applied for.
5. All machinery, equipment and building materials not required for the lawful use of the land will be removed, as per the Notice, as will any debris arising from the removal of the above development from the Site.
6. Lastly, after the removal of the cabins within the Local Green Space the land will be restored to the condition it was prior to the relocation of the cabins in accordance with the Notice.



3.5 Benefits of the Proposed Development

Social Benefits

3.5.1 Green Park Residential and Outdoor Activity Centre provides the following benefits:

- i) Educationally rich activities which meet curriculum standards and teacher's objectives;
- ii) Learning safely outdoors about healthy lifestyles and active minds;
- iii) Learning how to take risks in a safe and secure environment through having fun, and engaging in, and inspiring challenges;
- iv) Learn to work as a team, demonstrating support, tolerance and encouragement for others. Time away from home inspires confidence and independence and key life skills include decision making, leadership, initiative and problem solving;
- v) Children gain valuable social skills, broadening their horizons to the opportunities available and non-academic ways of learning – increasing their appetite for learning and in turn, raising standards of attainment;
- vi) Employment and training opportunities for local communities, with a particular focus on young adults, with opportunities to gain nationally recognised qualifications and training – providing foundations for long term economic regeneration of the wider area;
- vii) Attraction of new visitors and staff to the area and the creation of new jobs to support the local economy; and
- viii) Accessible to disabled visitors, teachers and staff with provision of disabled access, parking and other facilities.

3.5.2 As such, the primary social benefits / value associated with the Proposed Development would be derived from the programmes that Inspiring Learning are able provide to young people. There is significant research that evidences the benefits of outdoor learning. In particular: The Educational Endowment Foundation (“EEF”), which is an independent charity dedicated to breaking the link between family income and educational achievement, researched the effects of outdoor adventure learning in 2018. It summarised the evidence of its effectiveness by stating: “Overall, studies of adventure learning interventions consistently show positive benefits on academic learning. On average, pupils who participate in adventure learning interventions



make approximately four additional months' progress. There is also evidence of an impact on non-cognitive outcomes such as self-confidence.”

- 3.5.3 The Proposed Development would facilitate outdoor adventure learning for young people through providing additional and improved accommodation and indoor learning space. Subsequently, this would enable the Applicant to meet demand for their educational activity services and ensure the ongoing presence of the business at the Site.

Economic Benefits

- 3.5.4 In terms of employment, Inspiring Learning expect Green Park to employ between 50 and 60 people (mainly from the local area) across a range of skills / trades. Given the seasonal nature of the business, this will include seasonal workers.
- 3.5.5 In addition to offering employment opportunities on centre, Inspiring Learning utilise local businesses to support Green Park, including for centre maintenance and repair, transport, recruitment, general supplies, amongst other things.
- 3.5.6 Additionally, the ongoing presence of the business at Green Park and subsequent future investment into the Site, to maintain and enhance the services and activities on offer, would also ensure that existing buildings present onsite that are considered to be important to the local community are well maintained and where possible, enhanced.
- 3.5.7 Paragraph 6.33 of the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) requires that planning decisions are not unduly restrictive to limiting the development of existing accommodation to support existing businesses. Hence, expansion and enhancement of built accommodation already on offer may be permitted, subject to no significant harm to the surrounding area.
- 3.5.8 Previous accommodation at the Site was provided through a temporary tented village and this accommodation was of a lower quality to that of the proposed. Hence, as per paragraph 6.33 of the VALP, improvement to the accommodation site should be permitted if it is demonstrated that no significant harm to the area would arise.
- 3.5.9 As the tented village has been removed, the accommodation available at the Site is not viable to maintain continuous operation of the business. Without additional onsite



accommodation, Inspiring Learning would not be able to operate the services and activities that facilitate the abovementioned benefits made possible through Kingswood's presence at the Site.

- 3.5.10 The enhanced facilities not only allow the Site to provide a much-needed improvement in the experience for visitors but also, they enable the Site to be one that is financially viable not only during the current lease term, but for occupiers in the long term.

Community Benefits

- 3.5.11 The proposed change of use of the dining hall / nursery building presents an opportunity to secure additional accommodation at the Site without compromising the surrounding environment, open countryside, landscape character and designated Local Green Space.

- 3.5.12 Furthermore, policy E8 (Tourist Accommodation) of the VALP requires tourist accommodation to be supported where it would support sustainable tourism and enhance community facilities. The Proposed Development would be integral to continued success and growth of Kingswood Green Park. Support for the Proposed Development is provided within the Aston Clinton Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2013-2033; *"main comments raised by local people... retain facilities at Green Park and encourage... enhancement where possible"*. Other significant benefits to the local community include:

- i) Outdoor education facilities accessible to local schools, uniform groups and other not-for-profit youth organisations;
- ii) National Citizenship Service (NCS): Inspiring Learning is also one of the leading providers of the residential phase of the NCS scheme. The NCS scheme was set up in 2011 and is a scheme for 15 to 17 year olds who reside in England. The NCS aims to bring together young people from different backgrounds to support their local community and their transition into adulthood through developing teamwork, leadership and communication skills.
- iii) Camp Beaumont: Inspiring Learning run non-residential activity camps during the school holidays for young people between the ages of 3 and 14 yrs old. Day camps are a much valued day care service for working parents from the local



area including for those families accessing the Holiday Activity and Food fund from Buckinghamshire Council.

- iv) Continuity of use: Inspiring Learning's involvement will ensure the long term future of Green Park as a place for outdoor learning and adventure for young people of all ages and from all socio-economic backgrounds and was originally intended and has been the case for decades.



4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The following section provides details of the technical assessments undertaken with regards to landscape, ecology arboriculture and flood risk and drainage.

4.2 Ecology

4.2.1 The Ecological Assessment (Appendix B) confirms that no direct or indirect impacts upon any other statutory or non-statutory designated site are anticipated due to a lack of functional linkages, implementation of good practice measures and the restricted scale and nature of the Proposed Development.

4.2.2 The Assessment includes a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment. This shows a net gain of 2.8% in accordance with local policy when assessing the Site as a whole. However, if the assessment only includes the areas that will be impacted the Proposed Development delivers 40.61% net gain. The Proposed Development would provide a significant amount of additional landscaping as well as bird and bat boxes.

4.2.3 Table 5.1 within the Ecological Assessment sets out the constraints and opportunities associated with the Proposed Development. This sets out a series of protective measures which will be implemented in order to protect the habitats at the Site.

4.3 Arboriculture

4.3.1 An Arboricultural Impact Assessment (Appendix C) was undertaken by Steve Maros. The purpose of the assessment is to demonstrate that the Proposed Development can be implemented whilst retaining and adequately protecting valuable tree assets of importance to the amenity and character of the local area.

4.3.2 Trees growing within and immediately adjacent to the Proposed Development site, which might be affected by the works, were inspected.

4.3.3 The assessment confirms there would be no impact on any trees as a result of constructing the cabins on the eco-domes area.



4.3.4 With regards to the accommodation cabins, the majority are already in situ and whilst some root protection areas (RPA) of neighbouring trees are within this development, the cabins were attached to ground screws rather than foundations being excavated, therefore the impact on tree roots is negligible. The trees are far enough away for there to be no conflict or physical damage caused to them. The addition of three more cabins to the existing site will have no impact upon the existing trees outside the fence as they will also be fixed using ground screws, the same as the rest of the cabins were.

4.3.5 With regards to the activity areas, additional work has been identified and agreed with the Tree Officer in order to limit any further impact to the trees.

4.3.6 An arboricultural method statement has additionally been compiled to act as a code of practice for the Applicant and any construction contractors. In this regard it provides information pertinent to the protection and successful retention of selected trees on or adjacent to the proposed development site. For further details, please see Appendix.

4.4 Flood Risk and Drainage

4.4.1 This application is supported by a Flood Risk and Drainage Strategy, this is located at Appendix D. The Site is not at risk of flooding from a major source (e.g. fluvial and/or tidal). The Site has a 'low probability' of fluvial/tidal flooding as the Site is located within Flood Zone 1 with less than a 1 in 1000 annual probability of river or sea flooding in any year (<0.1%). A secondary flooding source has been identified which may pose a low significant risk to the Site which is surface water flooding. The flooding source would only inundate the Site to a relatively low water depth and water velocity, would only last a short period of time, in very extreme cases and would not have an impact on the whole of the Proposed Development Site.

4.4.2 The SuDS Strategy ensures that a sustainable drainage solution can be achieved which reduces the peak discharge rate to manage and reduce the flood risk posed by the surface water runoff from the Site. The proposed SuDS Strategy will take the form of:

- i) Permeable surfaces - crushed stone.
- ii) Swales for conveyance



iii) Attenuation storage with a restricted runoff rate of 2.00l/s before discharge to the watercourse.

4.4.3 Please refer to the accompanying Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy for further details.

4.5 Landscape and Visual

4.5.1 The Site is located away from any existing residential developments, the closest being circa 500m to the east as noted above. In addition, multiple natural and built environmental features are located between the Site and any potential visual receptors.

4.5.2 As stated in the accompanying Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) (Appendix A), the Proposed Development across the Inspiring Learning site would be of limited visibility due to the extent of existing vegetation within Green Park and the wider landscape.

4.5.3 The only direct views of the Proposed Development would be towards the classroom cabins in the east of the site. The classroom cabins are in the position currently occupied by the eco-domes, which would be removed. The classroom cabins would be of a notably lower height than the eco-domes and their structural and material appearance would be more characteristic of the area than the eco-domes. The visual impact of the classroom cabins would therefore be a beneficial change compared to the eco-domes, which are somewhat incongruous in the view.

4.5.4 The effect on visual amenity from the Proposed Development would therefore be very limited not only in magnitude, but also in geographical extent. The rural setting of Aston Clinton Park would not be affected by the Proposed Development due to its limited visibility, the separation between the park and the Site, and the nature of views from the park onto adjacent countryside. The characteristics of the local landscape would not be adversely impacted.

4.5.5 The perception of openness from within Aston Clinton Park and for views from Old Rectory Farm would not be substantially harmed by the introduction of the Proposed Development.



- 4.5.6 The parts of the Proposed Development within the Green Park Local Green Space (zip wires and access track) would have a limited footprint and would not be visible from public locations. They would preserve the openness of the Local Green Space and would therefore be an appropriate form of development with reference to Paragraph 154b of the NPPF.
- 4.5.7 The Proposed Development would have a negligible visual impact on the surrounding landscape and would be in keeping with the existing landscape character of the Green Park site. The Proposed Development would therefore be in accordance with each of the criteria set out under Policy NE4 of the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan.



5.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT AND APPRAISAL

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 This section provides an appraisal of the Proposed Development in the context of the current planning policy framework.

Local Development Plan

5.1.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (PCPA) requires applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. At the time of drafting, the adopted Development Plan, relevant to the Proposed Development comprises:

- i) Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) (Adopted September 2021); and
- ii) Aston Clinton Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2013-2033 Referendum Version (Adopted May 2018).

5.1.3 The VALP manages and directs growth in the region up until 2033, in a way that will protect what makes the Vale of Aylesbury a special place. The VALP will play a significant part over the coming years, allowing the region to build on the vibrant communities already in place.

5.1.4 On the 1st April 2020 Buckinghamshire Council was formed; the unitary authority replaced four district councils, including the Vale of Aylesbury, as well as Buckinghamshire County Council. The newly formed Council is currently in the process of producing a Local Plan for the area and it is expected to be adopted in 2025. Once adopted, the new Buckinghamshire Local Plan will supersede the VALP, however, until then, the VALP will continue to guide development within the region.

Material Considerations

5.1.5 There is no definition of what constitutes a ‘material consideration’ in planning legislation, although case law indicates that any consideration, which relates to the use or development of land is capable of being a material consideration in the determination of a planning application.



5.1.6 Such considerations can include the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), emerging planning policies, government policy and strategy, and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs).

5.1.7 The Council are currently preparing a new Local Plan, however, a first draft of the document has not been published and therefore, this is not considered further.

5.1.8 The Council are also preparing various SPDs in support of the new Local Plan and have already adopted a number of SPDs, these include:

- i) Biodiversity Net Gain;
- ii) Travel Plans for New Developments; and
- iii) Parking Guidance for New Developments.

5.2 Planning Policy Appraisal

5.2.1 The following section appraises the policies which are considered of most relevance to the determination of the proposal for which planning permission is sought.

Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan

5.2.2 The detailed objectives of the VALP focus on sustainability and are set out in section 2 of the Local Plan. Of the overarching objectives, objectives three and eight are pertinent to the Proposed Development. These are in brief:

- i) Objective 3 – The council, working with its partners, will secure timely and well-located provision of infrastructure, services and facilities needed to sustain and enhance existing and new communities including ... education, training and access to community facilities such as shops and community buildings ... accessible green infrastructure and associated sport, recreational and cultural facilities; and
- ii) Objective 8 – The council will promote provision of, and support for, measures and initiatives that strengthen the quality of life for new and existing residents of Aylesbury Vale, address pockets of deprivation and health inequalities, especially within Aylesbury town, and improve access to services and facilities across Aylesbury Vale as a whole.



5.2.3 The Proposed Development would assist Buckinghamshire Council in achieving these objectives through the following points:

- i) The development is necessary to secure investment to allow the business to continue to operate and grow which would bring employment opportunities and economic prosperity to the area;
- ii) The development would increase economic engagement by increasing the capabilities of the facility to provide educational outdoor activities to visitors, improving knowledge of the environment; and
- iii) The proposed application would ensure the Applicant can continue to deliver high quality active education services to visitors and promote teamwork, sport and activity in visitors and local residents.

Policy S1 Sustainable Development for Aylesbury Vale

5.2.4 Policy S1 states that, “*all development must comply with the principles of sustainable development set out in the NPPF...Proposals that are in accordance with the development plan will be approved without delay unless material considerations indicate otherwise.*”

5.2.5 This PDAS demonstrates that the Proposed Development accords with the broad objectives and relevant policies of the Development Plan, that there are no material considerations that would outweigh the benefits associated with the development and as such, should be approved without delay.

Policy S2 Spatial Strategy for Growth

5.2.6 Policy S2 sets out the spatial strategy for growth which is to focus growth in the most sustainable locations including main settlements and villages, as identified in the settlement hierarchy (Policy S3). Policy S2 will help deliver facilities and services needed as well as enable an integrated and balanced approach to the provision of homes, jobs and leisure. The policy directs development towards the most sustainable locations, such as main settlements and larger villages. The Site is located outside of the settlement boundaries identified in the VALP, and within a countryside location.

Policy S3 Settlement Hierarchy and Cohesive Development



5.2.7 Policy S3 states that, “the *scale and distribution of development should accord with the settlement hierarchy set out in Table 2, the site allocation policies that arise from it and the requirements of Policy S1 [noted above]...new development in the countryside should be avoided, especially where it would: a. compromise the character of the countryside between settlements, and b. result in a negative impact on the identities of neighbouring settlements or communities leading to their coalescence*” [brackets added].

5.2.8 As set out above, the Site does not fall within an identified settlement boundary and is located in the countryside. However, the Proposed Development does not constitute either of the noted definitions for inappropriate development and is of an appropriate scale given its location. In addition, there is a site-specific need for the Proposed Development, as it is required to facilitate growth of the business and is located strategically within the Site, retaining the openness of the green space and ensuring the safety of its users (school students). The Proposed Development could also not be suitably located within a settlement boundary. As such, it is considered that the Proposed Development accords with the Vale of Aylesbury’s spatial strategy for growth (Policy S2) and would not be in breach of Policy S3.

Policy E8 Tourist Accommodation

5.2.9 The Officer’s Report for the refused planning application, Ref: 21/04112/APP, states the Council’s view is that the Proposed Development is more properly described as a ‘Holiday Village’ and would therefore be subject to policy regarding tourist accommodation. Additionally, the Decision Notice of the same planning application indicated that the development conflicted with Policy E8 (g).

5.2.10 Policy E8 states that “*Tourist accommodation in smaller villages, other settlements or in the countryside outside the Green Belt will be supported where: ...*

c. It would involve the conversion of existing buildings in accordance with policy C1

d. It would be sustainable and accessible by a choice of transport modes

e. The applicant has satisfactorily demonstrated that the facilities are required to support a particular rural tourist facility or countryside attraction

f. It would support sustainable tourism or leisure development, benefit the local economy and enhance community facilities, and

g. The scale, design and use of the proposal is compatible with its wider landscape,



surrounding environment or townscape setting and would not detract from the character or appearance of the area.”

- 5.2.11 The Proposed Development has reduced in scale in comparison to the refused planning application, reference 21/04112/APP. The number of proposed accommodation cabins and has reduced from 36 to 19 and these are concentrated within a single screened location within the woodland, as opposed to the one location
- 5.2.12 As illustrated by Planning Drawing 2885-02-02, the Proposed Development would be screened by the woodland and would not impact on the wider landscape or detract from the character or appearance of the area.
- 5.2.13 It should also be noted that whilst the reason for refusal refers to Policy E8, the nature of the development does not reflect a tourist facility. The provision of additional accommodation at the Site is predominantly to enable a greater number of children to attend the facility and not for the purpose of meeting tourist accommodation demand within the local area.
- 5.2.14 As such, the Proposed Development does not conflict with the requirements of Policy E8 regarding tourist accommodation in smaller villages or in the countryside, and therefore, the Proposed Development is supported by Policy E8.

Policy T4 Capacity of the Transport Network to Deliver Development

- 5.2.15 Policy T4 states that *“New development will be permitted where there is evidence that there is sufficient capacity in the transport network to accommodate the increase in travel demand as a result of the development ... Buckinghamshire Council’s guidelines for Transport Assessment thresholds for development should be used to in [sic] considering whether a transport impact assessment and travel plan will be required...”*
- 5.2.16 The Proposed Development is classified as ‘C2 Residential institutions – residential education’. Table 18 sets out the Councils thresholds for Transport Assessments, the proposed sleeping capacity of 254 no. beds classifies the development as ‘Major’ development.
- 5.2.17 However, it should be noted that the existing site, the aforementioned temporary tented village, provided accommodation for 150 students. As such, the total net



increase of capacity would be 104 beds. Furthermore, these spaces would only be filled by additional students who would arrive at the Site by the same means of transport, most likely by bus/coach. Considering this, the existing transport network would be more than able to accommodate the negligible increase in traffic of which is expected to be a maximum of 3-4 no. busses/coaches at peak times. Consequently, it is considered that a Transport Assessment for the Proposed Development would be inappropriate, owing to the minor net-increase in accommodation capacity, and the minimal increase in expected traffic.

- 5.2.18 Hence, whilst the Proposed Development does not specifically meet the requirements of VALP Policy T4, the reasoning for the policy is to ensure there is sufficient capacity in the transport network. Clearly given the limited increase in vehicle moments associated with the Proposed Development the capacity of the transport network is not impacted. Impacts on the highway was not a reason for refusal for the previous application and the highways department had no objection to the development subject to the imposition of conditions.

Policy BE2 Design of New Development

- 5.2.19 Policy BE2 states “All new development proposals shall respect and complement the following criteria:

- a. the physical characteristics of the site and its surroundings including the scale and context of the site and its setting;*
- b. the local distinctiveness and vernacular character of the locality, in terms of ordering, form, proportions, architectural detailing and materials;*
- c. the natural qualities and features of the area; and*
- d. the effect on important public views and skylines.”*

- 5.2.20 All buildings introduced by the Proposed Development would have natural styled timber cladding to minimise any potential visual impact on the surrounding environment. Additionally, the development is situated in an area that has limited visibility from sensitive receptors owing to surrounding environmental features, particularly the extensive woodland area where the activity equipment and accommodation cabins are located. As such, the development would fit within the context of the existing setting; would retain the local area’s distinctiveness; and would



not detract from the features of the area or wider public views. As such, the Proposed Development complies with the requirements set out in Policy BE2.

Policy BE1 Heritage Assets

- 5.2.21 The Notice confirms the Site is located within an Archaeological Notification Area and is considered to be a Non-Designated Heritage Asset. Policy BE1 confirms that proposals which affect the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be properly considered, weighing the direct and indirect impacts upon the asset and its setting. There will be a presumption in favour of retaining heritage assets wherever practical. The Council will support proposals that do not cause harm to, or which better reveal the significance of heritage assets.
- 5.2.22 Buckinghamshire's Historic Environment Record confirms the Site forms part of Aston Clinton Park and House, a nineteenth century park and gardens. The former mansion house at the Site has been demolished. The landscape park remains and would be enhanced through the provision of a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan. As such, there would be no impacts upon the setting of the asset in accordance with this policy.

Policy NE1 Biodiversity and Geodiversity

- 5.2.23 Policy NE1 confirms that internationally or nationally important sites will be protected. Development proposals that would lead to an individual or cumulative adverse impact on an internationally or nationally important Protected Site or species, such as SSSIs or irreplaceable habitats such as ancient woodland or ancient trees, will be refused unless exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated as follows:
- a) the benefits of the development at this site significantly and demonstrably outweigh both the impacts that it is likely to have on the features of the site that make it internationally or nationally important and any broader impacts on the national network – for example of Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and
 - b) the loss can be mitigated and compensation can be provided to achieve a net gain in biodiversity/geodiversity.



- 5.2.24 It also states that, *“A net gain in biodiversity on minor and major developments will be sought by protecting, managing, enhancing and extending existing biodiversity resources, and by creating new biodiversity resources.”*
- 5.2.25 The Ecological Assessment (Appendix B) confirms that no direct or indirect impacts upon any other statutory or non-statutory designated site are anticipated due to a lack of functional linkages, implementation of good practice measures and the restricted scale and nature of the Proposed Development.
- 5.2.26 The Assessment includes a biodiversity net gain assessment. This shows a net gain of 2.8% in accordance with this policy when assessing the Site as a whole. However, if the assessment only includes the areas that will be impacted the Proposed Development delivers 40.6% net gain. The Proposed Development would provide a significant amount of additional landscaping as well as bird and bat boxes. This is illustrated on Planning Drawing 2885-02-08.

Policy NE2 River and Stream Corridors

- 5.2.27 Policy NE2 confirms that development proposals must not have an adverse impact on the functions and setting of any watercourse and its associated corridor. They should conserve and enhance the biodiversity, landscape and consider the recreational value of the watercourse and its corridor through good design. It confirms that development proposals adjacent to or containing a watercourse shall provide or retain a 10m ecological buffer from the top of the watercourse bank and the development. There is a small watercourse which runs through the Site. The Enforcement Notice found that the development was contrary to Policy NE2. The Proposed Development would not have an adverse impact on the functions and setting of any watercourse and its associated corridor. As such, the Proposed Development is in accordance with Policy NE2.

Policy NE4 Landscape Character and Locally Important Landscapes

- 5.2.28 Policy NE4 states *“Development should consider the characteristics of the landscape character area by meeting all of the following criteria:*
- a. Minimise impact on visual amenity*
 - b. Be located to avoid the loss of important on-site views and off-site views towards important landscape features*



c. Respect local character and distinctiveness in terms of settlement form and field pattern, topography and ecological value

d. Carefully consider spacing, height, scale, plot shape and size, elevations, roofline and pitch, overall colour palette, texture and boundary treatment (walls, hedges, fences, and gates)

e. Minimise the impact of lighting to avoid blurring the distinction between urban and rural areas, and in areas which are intrinsically dark and to avoid light pollution to the night sky

f. Ensure that the development is not visually prominent in the landscape, and

g. Not generate an unacceptable level and/or frequency of noise in areas relatively undisturbed by noise and valued for their recreational or amenity value”

5.2.29 All buildings within the Proposed Development will be timber cladded and the majority would not stand above 3m in height. The activity equipment would be approximately 12m in height. Neither the accommodation cabins nor the activity equipment can be seen from outside of the woodland. These elements of the Proposed Development would not impact on the character of the landscape.

5.2.30 The only direct views of the Proposed Development would be towards the classroom cabins in the east of the Site. The classroom cabins are in the position currently occupied by the eco-domes, which would be removed. The classroom cabins would be of a notably lower height than the eco-domes and their structural and material appearance would be more characteristic of the area than the eco-domes. The visual impact of the classroom cabins would therefore be a beneficial change compared to the eco-domes, which are somewhat incongruous in the view.

5.2.31 Any additional lighting for the Proposed Development would be secured through condition. All lighting would adhere to design guidance including directional control. Health and safety guidance would be kept to, and designs would be sensitive to the environment and akin to the appropriate British standards.

5.2.32 Finally, the Proposed Development would not generate significant levels of noise. It would not significantly change the existing noise levels at the Site, especially as the Proposed Development would rarely be at full capacity. The Site's remoteness from sensitive receptors would also ensure any potential noise pollution is minimal.



5.2.33 The supporting LVA (Appendix B) confirms that the Site can be developed without impacting on the landscape character of the area. The Proposed Development would sensitively consider all environmental features and reasonable measures would be taken to protect and conserve the landscape. Therefore, the LVA demonstrates that the Proposed Development meets the requirements of Policy NE4.

Policy NE6 Local Green Space

5.2.34 Policy NE6 states that where land is identified as local green space on the policies map of a made neighbourhood plan, national policy will be applied. This means that new development will not be permitted other than in very special circumstances.

5.2.35 Policy NE6, supports development in the Local Green Space subject to a number of criteria as set out below:

- i) Small scale development;
- ii) Appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and recreational facilities;
- iii) Does not conflict with 'special significance' of the Local Green Space;
- iv) Preserves the purpose of the designation of the Local Green Space.

5.2.36 The extent of the Local Green Space is shown on Figure 2. The only part of the development which is in the Local Green Space development is one zip wire. This is small in scale, of an appropriate character, and is essentially required for the operation of the facility and would not have unacceptable effects on the Local Green Space in accordance with this Policy.

Policy NE8 Trees, Hedgerows and Woodlands

5.2.37 Policy NE8 states, “*development that would result in the unacceptable loss of, or damage to, or threaten the continued well-being of any trees, hedgerows, community orchards, veteran trees or woodland...will be resisted.*”

5.2.38 The policy also states that developers should aspire to retain a 25m nature buffer around woodlands for the benefit of wildlife, incorporating a dark corridor with no lighting.

5.2.39 The Site is covered by extensive woodland across the majority of Green Park. There are two group Tree Protection Orders (Tree Preservation Order No. 2 1971 and No.



4 1955) which cover the Site. Given the nature of the existing and proposed operations within the woodland. The policy aspirations for a woodland buffer are not applicable. The supporting Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Woodland Management Plan (Appendix C) confirms that whilst there has been impacts upon trees, these impacts can be mitigated through additional tree planting and site management to ensure the long term protection of the trees and woodland on the Site in accordance with this policy.

Policy I3 Community Facilities, Infrastructure and Assets of Community Value

5.2.40 Policy I3 states that proposals for the change of use of community buildings and facilities for which there is a demonstrable local need will be resisted unless the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better.

5.2.41 The Proposed Development would result in the loss of the existing nursery on the Site. This part of the development would not be implemented until an alternative suitable location was found for the nursery. There is a non-exhaustive list under Paragraph 11.2.6 of the VALP provides a list of the types of uses which constitute a community facility. Whilst it does not list private nurseries or outdoor recreation centres as community uses, it is considered that both the existing and proposed use would fall within the definition of community facilities. This has been agreed with the Council. As such, there would be no overall loss to community facilities at the Site and therefore, the Proposed Development is in accordance with Policy I3.

Policy I4 Flooding

5.2.42 Policy I4 requires Flood Risk Assessments where the development proposal is over 1ha. Its also requires development proposals to adhere to the advice within the latest version of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and ensure development layouts are informed by drainage strategies incorporating sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).

5.2.43 By virtue of insufficient information, the Enforcement Notice stated that the development was contrary to Policy I4. This application is supported by a Flood Risk and Drainage Strategy, this is located at Appendix D. The Site is not at risk of flooding from a major source (e.g. fluvial and/or tidal). The Site has a 'low probability' of fluvial/tidal flooding as the Site is located within Flood Zone 1 with less than a 1 in 1000 annual probability of river or sea flooding in any year (<0.1%). A secondary



flooding source has been identified which may pose a low significant risk to the Site which is surface water flooding. The flooding source would only inundate the Site to a relatively low water depth and water velocity, would only last a short period of time, in very extreme cases and would not have an impact on the whole of the Proposed Development Site.

5.2.44 The SuDS Strategy ensures that a sustainable drainage solution can be achieved which reduces the peak discharge rate to manage and reduce the flood risk posed by the surface water runoff from the Site. The proposed SuDS Strategy will take the form of:

- i) Permeable surfaces - crushed stone.
- ii) Swales for conveyance
- iii) Attenuation storage with a restricted runoff rate of 2.00l/s before discharge to the watercourse.

5.2.45 The Proposed Development is therefore in accordance with Policy I4.

Aston Clinton Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2013-2033

5.2.46 Aston Clinton Parish Council published the Aston Clinton Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2013-2033 (ACPN) in May 2018.

5.2.47 The ACPN directly references the Site (Green Park). Paragraph 1.19 recognises the provision of recreational and educational facilities for young people at Green Park and provides detail of the facilities onsite. The ACPN acknowledges that all facilities will require further investment in future years. This sentiment is reinforced by the ACPN's Core Objectives regarding leisure, of which states that the main comments raised by local people during the consultation were *"to retain facilities at Green Park and encourage more use and enhancement where possible."*

5.2.48 This is a clear statement of support to the continued growth of the Green Park site. The change of operator since the publication of the ACPN should not affect this objective and it could be argued to be supported by it, owing to the fact that Inspiring Learning has shown clear intentions to enhance the Site.

5.2.49 The ACNP was adopted in 2018, since this time there have been significant changes in wider planning policy at both national and local level. National Planning Practice



Guidance (NPPG) paragraph 084 (Ref ID 41-084-20190509) confirms that policies within a Neighbourhood Plan may become out of date if they conflict with policies in a Local Plan covering the neighbourhood area that is adopted after the making of the neighbourhood plan. Where this occurs, the more recent plan policy takes precedence.

Policy B1 Community Facilities

5.2.50 Policy B1 states *“It is important that the Parish retains important community facilities, including...Green Park buildings...Proposals to expand or alter existing community, retail or employment uses will be supported as long as they respect heritage...as well as all other relevant plan policies.”*

5.2.51 The Proposed Development would have no impact on the built heritage assets in Aston Clinton. The Proposed Development represents a commitment from the Applicant into both the Site and the local community. The continued growth and success of the business would ensure that the Green Park buildings, considered important community facilities as per Policy B1 of the ACPN, are well maintained and/or enhanced throughout the Applicant’s occupation at the Site.

Policy T1 Traffic Mitigation

5.2.52 Policy T1 states *“Development proposals will need to demonstrate that appropriate site access and traffic mitigation can be delivered”*.

5.2.53 As noted within this Section, all additional traffic to the Site would be minimal, owing to all new students arriving at the Site being transported via bus or coach. Therefore, Policy T1 of the ACPN is adhered to by the Proposed Development.

Policy EN1 Development Impact on Biodiversity

5.2.54 Similar to Policy NE1 of the VALP, Policy EN1 requires development to respect nationally protected SSSIs and woodlands as well as retain trees and hedgerows where possible. Where trees and hedgerows are lost, replacement trees and hedgerows using species of native provenance must be provided, such that no overall loss arises.

Policy EN2 Protecting Biodiversity



5.2.55 Policy EN2 states “Trees with tree preservation orders (TPO) must also be protected. Development that results in the loss, damage or deterioration of these will be resisted.”

5.2.56 As mentioned above, Ecological Assessment (Appendix B) includes a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment. This shows a net gain of 2.8% in accordance with this policy when assessing the Site as a whole. However, if the assessment only includes the areas that will be impacted the Proposed Development delivers 40.6% net gain. The Proposed Development would provide a significant amount of additional landscaping as well as bird and bat boxes. This is illustrated on Planning Drawing 2885-02-08. As such, the Proposed Development is in accordance with Policy EN1.

5.2.57 The supporting Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Woodland Management Plan (Appendix C) confirms that whilst there has been impacts upon trees, these impacts can be mitigated through additional tree planting and site management to ensure the long-term protection of the trees and woodland on the Site in accordance with this policy.

Policy EN3 Local Green Space

5.2.58 Policy EN3 designates the northern and western area of the Site that adjoins Aston Clinton Park as Local Green Space. In accordance with paragraph 107 of the National Planning Policy Framework, policies for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with those for Green Belts.

5.2.59 As set out above, in accordance with the PPG, policies within a Neighbourhood Plan may become out of date if they conflict with policies covering the area after the making of the Neighbourhood Plan. Where this occurs, the more recent plan policy takes precedence.

5.2.60 In this instance, the VALP, which was adopted in 2021 also provides a Local Green Space Policy. Policy NE6, supports development in the Local Green Space subject to a number of criteria as set out below:

- i) Small scale development;
- ii) Appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and recreational facilities;
- iii) Does not conflict with ‘special significance’ of the Local Green Space;
- iv) Preserves the purpose of the designation of the Local Green Space.

5.2.61 Policy EN3 of the ACNP states that development in the Local Green Space will be supported in the following circumstances:

- i) Small scale increase in facilities;
- ii) In character with 'surrounding buildings' (if any); and
- iii) Where the open character of the Local Green Space is preserved.

5.2.62 Having regard to the requirements of the PPG, the relevance of EN3 is now limited and has in effect been superseded by Policy NE6 of the VALP. Notwithstanding our position in respect of this policy, the development within the Local Green Space comprises a small scale increase in facilities and would therefore accord with this policy.

5.3 Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023)

5.3.1 Paragraph 7 of the NPPF states that *“The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development...”*. Paragraph 8 further defines the three objectives associated with achieving sustainable development:

a) “an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being; and

c) an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.”



- 5.3.2 The increased provision of accommodation and activity facilities is necessary to secure investment to allow the business to continue to operate and grow which would bring employment opportunities and economic prosperity to the area, whilst safeguarding the existing employment opportunities at the Site.
- 5.3.3 The Proposed Development would increase the capabilities of the facility to provide educational outdoor activities to visitors whilst improving knowledge of the environment. The educational and skill-based aspects of the activities and services offered by the Applicant at Green Park are beneficial to the development of children and adolescents and the absence of development from the designated Local Green Space maintains open space within the community. Additionally, the commitment of the Applicant to both the Site and the local community would ensure that the existing buildings onsite, considered important to the local community, would be maintained and where possible, enhanced.
- 5.3.4 The Proposed Development would also deliver BNG and secure a long term habitat management plan for the Site. The Proposed Development makes efficient use of land through utilising existing hardstanding and through converting the existing dining hall and nursery space into accommodation space.
- 5.3.5 This application demonstrates that the Proposed Development contributes to all three objectives to achieving sustainable development.
- 5.3.6 Paragraphs 11 – 14 detail the meaning of the ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’. Paragraph 11c notes the presumption with regard to decision making requires “*approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay*”.

Supplementary Planning Documents

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 5.3.7 The Biodiversity Net Gain SPD provides guidance on how BNG is to be achieved using the government’s biodiversity metric and mitigation hierarchy. The SPD sets out the BNG process from project inception to the monitoring and management stages. The SPD states that the BNG process is to be done in accordance with the relevant Chartered Institute of Ecologists and Environmental (CIEEM) guidance and recommended structures.



5.3.8 The ecological appraisal and BNG assessment submitted in support of this application have been undertaken in accordance with DEFRA 4.0, the latest available metric, and the relevant CIEEM guidance and recommended structures.

5.3.9 The BNG assessment and associated Ecological Appraisal are presented as Appendix B of this application. The assessment demonstrates compliance with the relevant local and national BNG policy.

5.4 Summary

5.4.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 provides the statutory status that applications for planning permission should be determined against the policies of the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. A material planning consideration is one that is relevant to the planning decision, and consequently the scope of what a material consideration is, is wide, but in any event includes national policy of relevance to the application.

5.4.2 The Proposed Development has been considered in the context of the policies of most relevance to the determination of the application contained within the statutory Development Plan. The Decision Notice of planning application 21/04112/APP identified that the development conflicted with policies S1, S2, S3, NE4, E8(g) and BE2 of the VALP, with policies HQD1 and EN3 of the ACNP, against the guidance within Section 12 of the NPPF. The Enforcement Notice identified that the development would be contrary to Paragraphs 186 and 187 of the NPPF, policies NE1, NE2, NE4, NE8 and I4 of the VALP and Policy EN3 of the ACNP.

5.4.3 The Proposed Development has been found to be in accordance with all policies that are considered of relevance to the determination of the application. In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and the presumption in favour of Sustainable Development, set out within Paragraph 11 of the NPPF, for decision taking this means that planning permission should be approved without delay.



6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 The following Section provides a summary of this PDAS and how the Proposed Development has addressed the reasons provided for refusing planning application 21/04112/APP and the Enforcement Notice where relevant to the Proposed Development.

6.1.2 This Section also draws a series of concise conclusions and provides an overall Planning Balance to demonstrate that planning permission should be granted.

6.2 The Applicant, the Site and the Proposed Development

6.2.1 Inspiring Learning, the Applicant, operate educational activity centres across the UK providing outdoor education and adventure programmes. One of their centres is located at Green Park, Aston Clinton and is the subject of this application.

6.2.2 The Site is not subject to any landscape designations and is not located in an area at risk to flooding. The northern and western extent of the Site is located within a designated Local Green Space. The Site is accessed via Stablebridge Road to the east.

6.2.3 The Site is approximately 19 hectares and comprises extensive areas of mature woodland, a number of existing accommodation blocks, office space, sports halls, eco-domes, play equipment and associated infrastructure.

6.2.4 The Site has been subject to several planning applications, notably planning application 21/04112/APP (refused 14th January 2022) and 22/00367/APP (withdrawn 15th May 2023), both of which were for the construction of accommodation cabins.

6.2.5 The Proposed Development is split across a number of locations as shown on 2885-02a-02d. The activity equipment is located within the extensive woodland area in the southern extent of the Site.

6.2.6 The Proposed Development comprises 254 no. beds in total with 128 no. beds proposed in the cabins in the woodland and 126 no. beds proposed through the conversion of the dining room / nursery. As set out previously, this change of use



would not occur until a replacement location for the use of the nursery could be secured.

6.2.7 All cabins onsite will comprise natural styled timber cladding to minimise any potential visual impact on the surrounding environment and to in-keep with the existing buildings present at the Site.

6.3 Addressing Reasons for Refusal and Enforcement Notice

6.3.1 Planning application 21/04112/APP, the construction of accommodation cabins, was refused on the 14th of January 2022. The Decision Notice provided 3 reasons for refusal, these can be summarised as:

- i) A lack of compliance with policies S1, S2, S3, NE4, E8(g) and BE2 of the VALP, with policies HQD1 and EN3 of the ACNP, to the guidance within Section 12 of the NPPF, and to the guidance within Section C1 of the National Design Guide 2021. This resulted in a proposal that would be visually intrusive on open countryside and contribute to the loss of landscape character and openness of the designated Local Green Space;
- ii) The application, by virtue of lack of accompanying preliminary ecological appraisal, failed to assess the potential impact upon protected species and habitats; and
- iii) The application, by virtue of insufficient information, failed to demonstrate whether the proposed surface water drainage system would be appropriate for the Site such to prevent an increase in flood risk.

6.3.2 The Enforcement Notice stated that the unlawful development is contrary to Policy NE1, NE2, NE4, I4 AND BE1 of the VALP and EN3 of the ACNP.

6.3.3 This revised planning submission PDAS addresses concerns regarding compliance with local and national policy and guidance. Section 5.0 of this PDAS demonstrates that the Proposed Development does not conflict with the above policies.

6.3.4 The reduced number of accommodation cabins across the Site and a reduction in built development within the Local Green Space ensures that the Proposed Development is not visually intrusive in the open countryside and would not equate



to the loss of landscape character or the loss of openness of the designated Local Green Space.

6.3.5 As demonstrated under Section 4.0 of this PS, and at Appendix B, this application has sufficiently assessed the potential impact upon protected species and habitats and concluded that with the additional planting and mitigation proposed, the Proposed Development would not result in any significant impacts on protected species and habitats.

6.3.6 This application has also demonstrated under Section 4.0 of this PDAS, and at Appendix D, that the proposed surface water drainage system would be appropriate for the Site such to prevent an increase in flood risk.

6.4 Planning Balance

6.4.1 The Proposed Development has been considered in the context of the policies of most relevance to the determination of the application contained within the Statutory Development Plan.

6.4.2 The Proposed Development has been found to be in accordance with all policies that are considered of relevance to the determination of the application. In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and the presumption in favour of Sustainable Development, set out within Paragraph 11 of the NPPF, for decision taking this means that planning permission should be approved without delay.

