

# ANCIENT SEMI-NATURAL WOODLAND STATEMENT:

Erection of 20 pre-fabricated glamping pods and associated footpaths, retrospective alterations to previously consented raised timber decking adjacent to driving range with addition of pergola and associated alterations, and erection of pergolas over clubhouse rear patio

Blacknest Golf & Country Club, Frith End Road, Blacknest, Alton, Hampshire, GU34 4QL

Applicant : 360 Beech Limited

Ref: 23-2675/FULPP/CF/ASNW/V2

Date: April 2023—revision A dated 15/02/2024



Figure 1: Map of Ancient, Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland & replanted Ancient Woodland on site & in locality  
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## COVERING STATEMENT:

This s73 application is to replace the consented cabin type with a new manufacturer and style of cabin. The cabins are slightly larger which has resulted in some minor amendments to the layout. The proposed layout does not encroach on the 15m buffer to the ancient woodland.

Following submission of the revised planning application in December 2022 with the proposed scheme discussed as the preferred layout option during the pre-application request, during the planning application's consultation period an issue was raised regarding the Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) to the West of the proposals.

Despite providing multiple examples of other glamping schemes within and adjacent to ancient woodland, including in the SDNPA, the result post liaison was that a 15m buffer zone should be included between the ASNW and cabins.

This buffer zone is to provide a 'protection zone' between the cabins' occupants and the ASNW, to reduce the impact of people accessing this area.

Refer to letter 24th March 2023 submitted in response to the consultee's comments.

The 15m buffer zone is proposed between the cabins and the ASNW adjacent to the proposals only.

The 15m buffer is not extended to include the pavilion, tipis or external areas associated with these, which were consented under SDNP/18/03009/FUL granted at appeal with no conditions or requirements relating to the ASNW.

The December 2022 proposals introduced a post and wire fence set behind the first trees on the woodland edge, which restricts pedestrian access over and above the consented scheme.

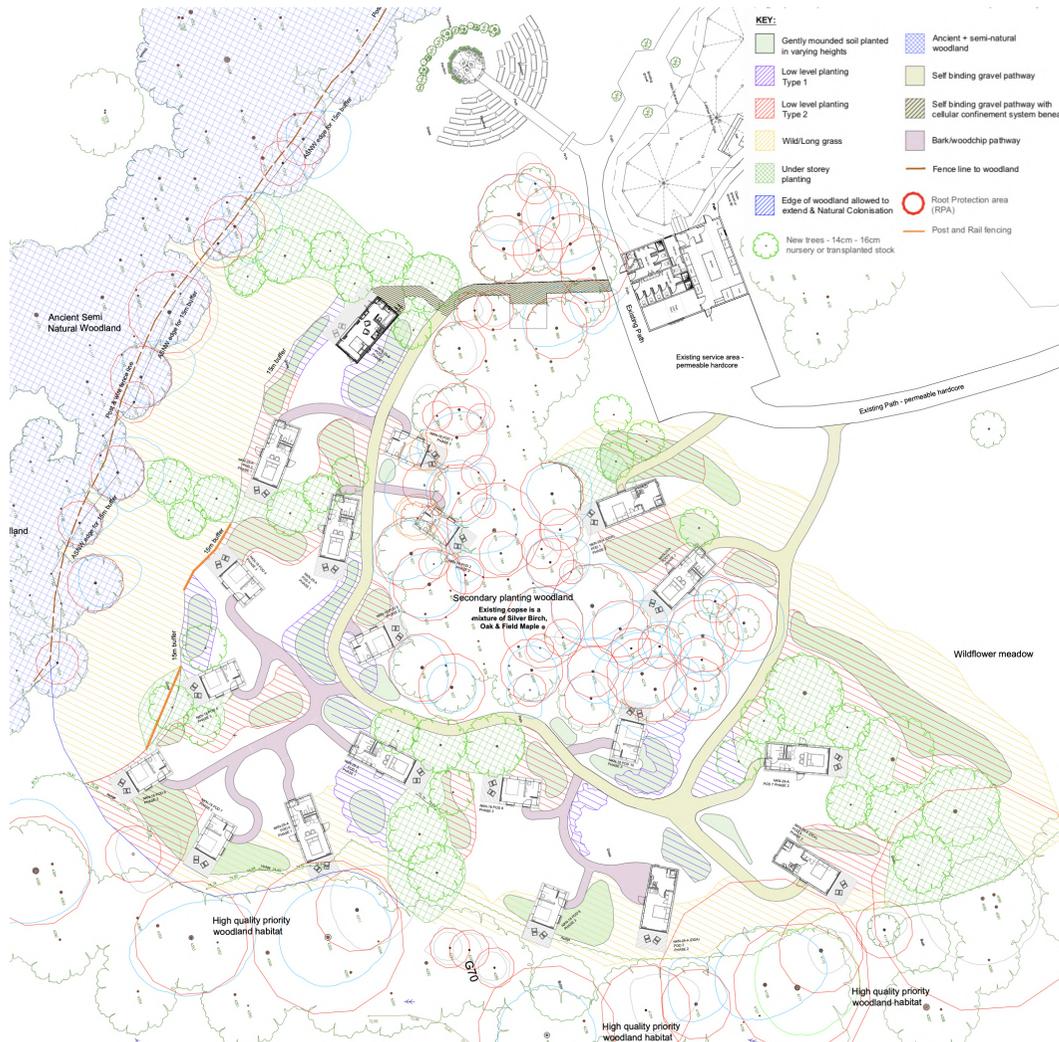


Figure 2: Proposed 15m buffer to Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland—part of drawing 20-2487-PX-06

The tipis, associated pavilion and external areas are not new proposals in this application nor altered by these proposals; to impose further restrictions on these existing uses is considered to be in conflict with the appeal inspector's determination.

## ECOLOGY & BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN CALCULATION ASSESSMENT:

The Ecological Assessment by GS Ecology dated 01/02/2023, refers to the ASNW on site on pages 8-9 section 3.3, page 14 section 4.1.3—4.1.4 and page 17 appendix 2 target note 3.

The ecologists summarised 'some of the glamping pods will be located within 5m of it. There may therefore be a small increase in disturbance to the woodland as a result of the development. However, given that the proposals will result in woodland planting which will extend this woodland around the glamping pods any minor adverse impact on the woodland will be mitigated'.

The consented proposals increased the separation distance from 5m to approximately 15m from the ASNW. This was considered to significantly reduce any likelihood of disturbance from the cabins occupants, especially as the edge of the buffer has a mainly natural separation feature of raised heavily planted landscaping mounds (0.5-0.7m high + planting), with use of timber post and rail fencing to the sides of cabin decking and between trees where use of landscaping mounds is not possible.

This allows cabin occupants to see the ASNW but physically hinders access as there's no direct access or paths into the meadow buffer. It is considered use of a timber post & rail fence along the whole buffer edge significantly negatively impacts the experiential natural feel of the proposals that has been stated as a requirement.

The Biodiversity Net Gain Calculation report by GS Ecology dated 01/02/2023 concludes the proposals would result in a 16.22% net gain. The revised proposals in April 2023 increased the planting and reduced the amount of mown grass, which likely increased the net gain achieved by the consented planning application

**These proposed revisions to the cabins and their layout does not impact the amount of low level planting proposed, which remains the same as the original consent. No change to the BNG achieved.**

## ARBORICULTURAL ASSESSMENT:

Referring to the Tree Report by SMW (Tree) Consultancy Ltd dated 29th November 2022. The revised proposals in April 2023 were considered to significantly reduce any likelihood of the cabins impacting the RPAs of the Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland.

The proposed cabins retain a similar layout to the consented scheme, and the cabins within the central copse are still proposed to use mini concrete pads for their EasyPad supports with land ramped up to the front door for flush access, or use of a step up onto the decking.

The 4 cabins within and adjacent to the copse are considered to have no detrimental impact on the trees subject to following the construction method statement in SMW's report with use of shallow concrete pads at surface level.

The revised design locates all other cabins outside of the RPAs of the existing trees, and located by new trees, as per the original consent.

The path adjustments moves the main path further away from the central tree copse.

It is considered the revised proposals do not impact on trees, and reflects the guidance and conclusions set out in SMW's tree report.

SMW's tree report sets out that a high percentage of the trees in the ASNW edge are Ash trees in decline with Ash Dieback disease. The report refers to tree T63 as a Common Ash Category B3 with declining crown and in terminal decline. This tree protrudes out of the woodland edge.

There are 2 cabins that are partly within the 15m buffer of this tree, T63. These cabins are not considered to have a negative impact on the requested buffer zone as the cabins are separated from the tree and meadow by the landscaping features and post and rail fencing, and services can be trenched outside of the 15m buffer zone, and the cabins are well outside of the actual RPA of the trees with a shallow hardcore base and a large landscaping mound along the edge of the buffer hindering pedestrian access into the buffer zone.

Moving these 2 cabins fully outside of the buffer would significantly impact the scheme even further than the consented scheme to the detriment of the experiential natural setting for at least 8 cabins. Reducing the number of cabins restricts the viability and flexibility of the proposals.

## POTENTIAL POST DEVELOPMENT PRESSURE ISSUES:

The Tree Officer's consultee comments referred to the potential post development pressure issues on the ASNW, which were responded to in letter dated 24th March 2023 as follows:

Collection of dead wood for firewood:

- This is not applicable to these proposals as the applicants do not wish guests to have their own private BBQs or small bonfires on site.
- There is a formal 'fire-pit' available for events in the tipis, which is a controlled fire contained within a moveable raised fire pit. The 'fire-pit' is controlled by the employees and is monitored during the event and put out once an event is finished. Wood used for this fire pit comes from the Club's own seasoned log store.
- The site also hosts BBQs for guests, and private events. Again, these are managed by the site.
- Cabin guests will be advised at point of booking and on arrival no BBQs or bonfires are allowed.
- FYI, it is common for glamping sites that do allow for fires to strictly impose that only logs purchased from the site can be used on their fire pits.

Disturbance by dogs:

- It is normal for golf courses to control dogs on site, or not allow them at all. There is an existing public Right of Way to the West of the site. The applicants cannot stop dogs from entering the site from this location.
- Referencing other glamping cabin sites, quite a few state no dogs are allowed on site at all with the reasoning that this is to protect the natural environment, and more commonly sites state dogs have to be kept on a lead at all times, which stops them wandering.
- In these proposals, any dogs associated with the glamping cabins can be required to be kept on a lead or 'staked' at all times. There is a 'D' ring outside each cabin to provide a tie down point. This is consistent with many local glamping sites.

#### Anti-social behaviour:

- The users of the cabins are expected to cover a wide demographic, including guests on golfing trips, walkers/cyclists and tourists exploring the local area or visiting friends and family nearby, and guests attending events.
- The sizes and types of cabins allow for couples, small and larger family or friends groups to stay.
- Anti-social behaviour is not tolerated on site, and this will also apply to the cabin guests.
- There should be no need for cabin guests to dispose of food or drinks or other fluids outside of the cabins as all 20 of the cabins have mains connected en-suites, along with additional toilet and shower facilities within a couple of minutes walk in the facilities outbuilding, with a café/restaurant and bar facilities in the main clubhouse, that also provides breakfast and further wc and shower facilities.
- External lighting is restricted to downwards shielded and by the front doors to the cabins and at key junctions on the pathways for wayfinding. There are no flood lights proposed on the cabins.
- There are 24/7 live-in employees on site and CCTV, so antisocial behaviour can be picked up and dealt with promptly – see below under security measures for further information.

#### Security measures as existing and already proposed:

- There is existing CCTV installed inside and outside of the tipis and facilities outbuilding. It is proposed to install at minimum one wide angle camera per group of cabins. Cameras have night vision capability and are monitored. CCTV is also recorded to allow reviewing of past events.
- There are 24/7 live-in staff on site whose accommodation windows face across the site in multiple directions.
- For guests staying in the cabins associated with a tipis event, current procedure for events in the tipis requires employees to remain at the tipis until all guests have either left the site, or made their way to their overnight accommodation and are being quiet.

## CONCLUSION:

These revised proposals do not alter how the site will be operated, and considered to reflect the previous consent's ecology and arboricultural benefits, retaining the 15m separation distance between the Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and the cabins.

The proposed alternative cabin design reduces their impact on ecology by having no rooflights, which the originally consented cabins had. This has an increased positive benefit on the local wildlife.

We trust the above assessments and statements set out the further positive impacts of the revised proposals on the ecology, biodiversity and trees on site.