Hadleigh Farm & Country Park
Olympic Legacy Project

Planning Submission for Recreation Trails & Visitor Facilities

Environmental Statement
Non-Technical Summary
INTRODUCTION

An Environmental Impact Assessment of the Proposed Development has been undertaken in line with good practice, and to comply with the requirements of statutory regulations. The findings of the Environmental Impact Assessment have been documented within an Environmental Statement which accompanies the planning application submitted to the planning authority, Castle Point Borough Council.

The purpose of the Environmental Statement is to ensure identification and full consideration of the likely significant environmental effects of the Proposed Development so that decisions can be made with knowledge of the environmental consequences. It identifies ways in which potential significant environmental effects can be addressed through design or mitigation measures, and the likely success of such measures in rendering such effects insignificant.

The Environmental Statement is subject to public consultation as part of the statutory process. This enables the planning authority to take account of any material issues raised by stakeholders relating to the environmental effects of the Proposed Development before making a decision on whether to grant consent.

This document is a summary of the Environmental Statement. It is provided to enable the main findings of the Environmental Impact Assessment to be understood in plain and non-technical language.
BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

Castle Point is a host borough for the London 2012 Olympic Games, with the Olympic Mountain Bike event to be held on a specially designed course and venue at Hadleigh Farm adjacent to Hadleigh Country Park on the 11th and 12th August. The Olympic Games are anticipated to generate increased interest in sports participation and healthy lifestyles, particularly amongst families and children.

It is in this context that Essex County Council and The Salvation Army have come together in a unique partnership called the ‘Hadleigh Farm and Country Park Olympic Legacy Project’. The Project represents the long standing commitment of both organisations to bringing forward legacy proposals for the post-Games use of the Olympic Mountain Bike course.

Planning permission is being sought to provide new and improved recreational trails and visitor facilities on land at Hadleigh Farm and Hadleigh Country Park. These proposals are at the centre of the Project's Vision for expanding and enhancing Hadleigh Country Park, providing opportunities for people to more fully access, enjoy and appreciate the area's natural and historic environment assets.

The Project aims to deliver substantial benefits both for local communities and visitors, and help secure the long term future of Hadleigh Country Park as a valuable green space for communities in Castle Point and throughout South Essex.

The Project brings together the heritage of Hadleigh Farm and the Country Park alongside the legacy of the Olympic Mountain Bike Course by:

- Retaining and adapting the Olympic Mountain Bike Course for use by the public.
- Improving the wider network of trails and paths for a range of users.
- Delivering projects to protect and enhance the natural and historic environment.
- Improving facilities for the community and visitors to the area.

The proposals have been developed following extensive consultation with the local community and other stakeholders, which showed strong support for providing improved access and recreational facilities at Hadleigh Farm and Hadleigh Country Park.
THE SITE

The Site is an area of particular environmental sensitivity, and it is also of considerable amenity and recreational value for local residents and visitors alike.

Hadleigh Country Park

Hadleigh Country Park is managed by Essex County Council, and provides one of the largest publically accessible natural greenspaces in South Essex. The Park is used by around 125,000 visitors every year for a range of informal recreational activities such as walking, cycling, picnicing, kite flying and bird watching.

Hadleigh Farm

The Salvation Army provides opportunities for vulnerable people to serve the community and reach their full potential through training and work experience placements on Hadleigh Farm, and at the Rare Breeds Centre, Tea Rooms and Training Centre based at Home Farm. The Olympic Mountain Bike course is situated on land within Hadleigh Farm, and The Salvation Army also owns the collection of buildings at Sayers Farm.
KEY ELEMENTS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- **Recreational Trails** – creation of a Recreational Trail network on land at Hadleigh Farm and in the Hadleigh Country Park, comprising mountain biking Trails based on the retention and modification of the existing Olympic Mountain Bike course and additional new surfaced Trails focussed on Hadleigh Farm, linked to a wider network of walking, leisure cycling and equestrian, running and orienteering/way finding Trails in and around the Country Park.

- **Hub Development** – construction of a new Visitor Centre on land at and around Sayers Farm comprising visitor facilities incorporating a café, toilets/changing rooms, equipment hire/shop, community space and ancillary offices; construction of Replacement Business Units; and construction of New Ancillary Infrastructure including car parking, access, landscaping and utility services.

Proposed environmental enhancements include:

- Grassland habitat creation and restoration in the Country Park, including opening up views of the Thames Estuary through scrub removal.

- Substantial wildlife habitat connectivity enhancements on land within Hadleigh Farm.

- New heritage interpretation panels, signage and seating throughout the trails network.

- New and improved interpretation of WWII historic features on the Site.
KEY ELEMENTS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Recreational Trail Network:
- Mountain Bike Trails
- Multi-User and Other Trails
- Proposed Public Footpath 28 Diversion
- Proposed Public Footpath 28 Extinguishment

Hub Development:
- Visitor Centre
- Visitor Parking
- Replacement Business Units
ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

As part of the justification for the Proposed Development, the Environmental Statement outlines the main alternatives considered.

An alternative location for the Olympic Legacy Project has not been considered as the creation of a Legacy, involving the Olympic Mountain Bike course at Hadleigh Farm, and enduring beyond the London 2012 Olympics event, can only happen on this site and no other.

Under the ‘do nothing’ scenario, if the Olympic Legacy Project was not to take place the Olympic Mountain Bike course on Hadleigh Farm would be removed, and the site restored to its previous condition.

RECREATIONAL TRAILS OPTIONS

Originally three options for the Recreational Trails network were considered: a ‘do minimum’ option; an option which largely utilised the existing Olympic Mountain Bike course; and thirdly an option which retained and expanded the Olympic Mountain Bike course, provided new Trails and a Visitor Hub. The third option involving a full trail centre concept was felt to deliver the greatest legacy benefits, but following consultation with Natural England a fourth option based on a variant of option 3 was developed that reduced the impact of trails within the SSSI. Option 4 was ultimately selected as the preferred option for the Recreational Trails network.
RECREATIONAL TRAILS OPTIONS

- Red Grade Mountain Bike Trails
- Blue Grade Multi-User Trails
- Green Grade Multi-User Trails
- Equestrian Trails
- Visitor Hub
- Site of Special Scientific Interest

OPTION 1

OPTION 2

OPTION 3

OPTION 4
HUB DEVELOPMENT SITE MASTERPLAN OPTIONS

OPTION 1

OPTION 2

OPTION 3

OPTION 4

Vehicular Access Route
Main Visitor Parking
Overflow Visitor Parking
Strengthened Planting
Existing Planting
Primary Pedestrian Route
Service Access
Business Units
Service Yard
Visitor Centre
Service Area
Mountain Bike Skills Area
Picnic/Play Area
Visitor Access into Country Park/Recreational Trails
Views from Visitor Centre
Replacement Business Units
New Visitor Centre
Retained Sayers Farmhouse
Retained Roundhouse
Retained Toilet Block

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Chris Blandford Associates

May 2012
HUB DEVELOPMENT SITE MASTERPLAN OPTIONS

As a consequence of selecting option 4 for the Recreational Trails, a site for the Hub Development was required. Of the two sites considered, Sayers Farm was considered to best meet operational requirements and have the least environmental impact in comparison to the alternative site of Home Farm. Following the selection of the Sayers Farm site, four options for the layout of the Hub Development were considered as part of the iterative masterplanning and Environmental Impact Assessment process. These ranged from a ‘do minimum’ option to options involving realignment of the Country Park car park access road. Option 4 was ultimately selected as the preferred option for the layout of the Hub Development.

SCOPE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The Planning Authority and statutory environmental bodies were consulted on a Scoping Report which identified the proposed issues to be addressed by the Environmental Impact Assessment. The topics assessed are as follows:

- Historic Environment
- Landscape Character and Visual Amenity
- Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
- Air Quality
- Noise and Vibration
- Geology and Soils
- Water Quality, Drainage and Hydrology
- Recreation
- Socio-Economic Effects
- Transportation
- Climate Change
- Waste

The potential effects of the Proposed Development on each of the environmental topics, and any identified mitigation measures, are reported in detail within the Environmental Statement.
KEY FINDINGS OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The ES has determined that there is potential for impacts on the local environment as a result of the Proposed Development.

Where a risk of an adverse impact has been identified, these have been mitigated as far as possible by ‘designing out’ risks through modifications to the layout and design of the Proposed Development.

The need for effective environmental management of the Site during both construction and operation of the Proposed Development was a key concern raised by environmental consultees.

Environmental risks will be managed through the implementation of effective environmental management plans, controls and monitoring to ensure that the potential adverse construction and operational impacts of the Proposed Development identified within the Environmental Statement are duly addressed by appropriate mitigation or compensation measures.

Construction Environmental Management

The principles and measures for controlling and monitoring risks of harm to environmentally sensitive areas/features during construction works, including measures for minimising impacts on the amenity of local residents and countryside recreation users, are set out in an Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan.

Taking into account the specialist assessments, and the mitigation measures set out in the Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan, it is concluded that the Proposed Development would have No Significant Construction Impact on the environment.

Operational Environmental Management

An Operational Environmental Management Strategy has been developed in consultation with Natural England to establish a long-term framework for the management of recreational activities and the environment at Hadleigh Farm and Country Park. The Strategy includes appropriate measures to protect and enhance features of ecological and historic value.

Taking into account the specialist assessments, and the mitigation and compensation measures set out in the Operational Environmental Management Strategy, it is concluded that the Proposed Development would have No Significant Operational Impact on the environment.
SUMMARY OF OVERALL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

• No significant adverse impacts on the historic environment are predicted
• The scheme would not have any significant adverse impacts on biodiversity
• Significant adverse impacts on the landscape or views would be avoided
• There would be no significant adverse impacts on residential amenity
• Substantial beneficial impacts for recreation users and communities

Historic Environment

The proposed Recreation Trails and Hub Development are assessed as having no significant adverse impacts on the historic environment.

The proposed scale, form, design, height and materials for the replacement buildings have been selected to be sympathetic to the rural character of their surroundings and nearby buildings, and have been carefully sited to respect the setting of the locally listed Sayers Farmhouse.

The proposals for protecting, conserving and enhancing the historic value of the Site and the wider landscape would make a substantial contribution to the delivery of the Thames Gateway South Essex Green Grid Strategy.

Biodiversity

The proposed Recreation Trails and Hub Development are assessed as having no significant adverse impacts on biodiversity or geological conservation.

The proposals for protecting, conserving and enhancing the biodiversity value of the Site and the wider landscape would also make a substantial contribution to the delivery of the Thames Gateway South Essex Green Grid Strategy, through the creation, enhancement and management of green infrastructure connections.
Landscape and Views

The Proposed Development is assessed as having no significant adverse impacts on the landscape or views.

The proposed Hub Development includes a comprehensive landscape scheme, which would enhance the appearance of the Green Belt as it has been carefully designed to respond well to the rural character and history of the area. A strong sense of place would be achieved through:

- The unified approach to the design and materials for the visitor centre and replacement business units, which provides consistency across the site as a whole;
- By restricting the size, general lines and form of the replacement buildings to be similar to that of the existing buildings; and
- Through variation in building forms to echo the ‘organic’ character of traditional Essex farms and avoid the more uniform appearance of modern agricultural outbuildings.

The Recreational Trails are assessed as not having significant adverse impacts on the Special Landscape Area.

Residential Amenity

The proposed Recreation Trails and Hub Development are assessed as having no significant adverse impacts on residential amenity.

Substantial strengthened and new boundary planting is proposed to screen adjacent residential properties from the buildings, access roads and parking areas within the Hub Development Site.
A 2m high earth mound and screen planting around the perimeter of the replacement business units would reduce noise for adjacent residential properties, and the privacy of these properties would not be affected by the Hub Development. Residential properties along Chapel Lane would not experience significant changes in noise levels.

**Recreation and Communities**

The Proposed Development is assessed as having as having a substantial beneficial impact for recreation users and communities.

The proposals would expand and enhance the current facilities provided by the Country Park for a wide variety of existing and new users (including expanded countryside access and recreation opportunities, and improved environmental/heritage educational programmes for local schools provided by ECC Country Parks).

The proposals would make a significant contribution to improving the health and well-being of communities by increasing access to high quality open space, enhanced sport, recreation and children’s playspace provision, and public rights of way improvements for a range of users (including walkers, runners, cyclists and horse-riders).

The proposals would also offer expanded training opportunities for adults with learning difficulties, and provide a new family counselling facility and a community/cultural activities space within the Visitor Centre.

In addition, the assessment demonstrates that the Proposed Development would support businesses and provide new employment opportunities in the tourism, retail and construction sectors, help address out-commuting from Castle Point and would generate significant off-site visitor expenditure in the local and South Essex area.
CONCLUSION

Taking into account the proposed comprehensive package of mitigation and compensation measures, the Environmental Statement concludes that the Proposed Development would not have any Significant Adverse Impacts on the environment as a whole.

The Environmental Statement also concludes that the proposals would have major health benefits by increasing people’s participation in outdoor sports and recreation, and providing enhanced opportunities for enjoyment of the natural and historic environment.
OPPORTUNITIES TO COMMENT

The full Environmental Statement comprises:

- **Non-Technical Summary** (included in the Environmental Statement and as a stand-alone document)
- **Volume 1 (Text)** contains the detailed technical assessments
- **Volume 2 (Figures)** contains plans referred to in Volume 1
- **Volume 3 (Appendices)** contains data and technical reports to support the assessments in Volume 1.

Hard copies of the above documents are available for public inspection during normal opening hours at the Castle Point Borough Council offices.

The full Environmental Statement can also be viewed and downloaded via the planning applications section of the Council’s website at [www.castlepoint.gov.uk](http://www.castlepoint.gov.uk)