

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE 16th JUNE 2025

Case No: 25/00577/FUL

Proposal: ENHANCEMENT WORKS TO HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK, TO INCLUDE AN EXTENSION TO THE EXISTING COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE, NEW CAR PARKING (TO INCLUDE NEW ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING), IMPROVED ACCESS, BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENTS AND OTHER ASSOCIATED IMPROVEMENTS AND WORKS

**Location: HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK,
HINCHINGBROOKE PARK ROAD, HUNTINGDON**

Applicant: HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Grid Ref: 522073 271679

Date of Registration: 27th March 2025

Parish: HUNTINGDON

RECOMMENDATION – APPROVE

This application is referred to the Development Management Committee (DMC) as the application has been submitted by Huntingdonshire District Council for its own development.

1. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

The site

- 1.1 Hinchingsbrooke Country Park covers an area of approximately 150 acres comprising open grassland, mature woodland and lakes. It includes a café, water sports centre, visitor centre and countryside centre. The application site measures 3.56ha which includes the northern part of the County Park where the existing car park, play area and countryside centre are located as well as existing footpaths in the southern part of the park.
- 1.2 The site falls within the Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan area and the Great Ouse Valley Green Infrastructure Priority area wherein Policy LP3 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan applies. The site is within the wider Hinchingsbrooke Gravel Pits County Wildlife Site and parts of the site are covered by a blanket Tree Preservation Order (TPO 003/59). Public Footpaths 24 and 47 Huntingdon run through the site.

- 1.3 The site falls outside the Huntingdon Conservation Area which is the east of the site and further east is Hinchbrooke House (Grade I) and its grounds.
- 1.4 The northern parts of the site fall within Flood Zone 1 but some areas are shown as being at risk of surface water flooding. The southern parts of the site, notably around the existing lakes, fall within Flood Zones 2 and 3b on the Environment Agency's Flood Maps for Planning and Huntingdonshire's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024).

The proposal

- 1.5 The application seeks planning permission for enhancement works to Hinchbrooke Country Park, to include an extension to the existing countryside centre, new car parking (to include new electric vehicle charging), improved access, biodiversity enhancements and other associated improvements and works.
- 1.6 Enhancements to the visitor facilities at Hinchbrooke Country Park are a corporate priority project as set out in paragraph 59 of Huntingdonshire District Council's Corporate Plan 2023 – 2028.
- 1.7 The proposed extension to the existing countryside centre would provide new toilet facilities, new café/dining area, new function space, kitchen and bar/servery. This would widen the use of the facility for corporate events, exhibitions, weddings, local groups and meetings.
- 1.8 The proposed car park extension would create 116 additional car parking spaces including disabled and electric vehicle charging spaces. The proposal also includes the resurfacing of existing footpaths to improve accessibility for all park users and the widening of the existing internal access road.
- 1.9 This application follows a previous application for a similar scheme (reference 23/01377/FUL) which was subsequently withdrawn and seeks to address consultation comments received during that application.

2. NATIONAL GUIDANCE

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2024) sets out the three objectives - economic, social and environmental - of the planning system to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The NPPF 2024 at paragraph 10 provides as follows: 'So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11).'

- 2.2 The NPPF 2024 sets out the Government's planning policies for (amongst other things):
- delivering a sufficient supply of homes;
 - building a strong, competitive economy;
 - achieving well-designed, beautiful and safe places;
 - conserving and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment.

For full details visit the government website [National Guidance](#)

3. PLANNING POLICIES

- 3.1 Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (Adopted 15th May 2019)
- Policy LP1 - Amount of Development
 - Policy LP2 – Strategy for Development
 - Policy LP3 – Green Infrastructure
 - Policy LP4 – Contributing to Infrastructure Delivery
 - Policy LP5 – Flood Risk
 - Policy LP7 – Spatial Planning Areas
 - Policy LP10 – The Countryside
 - Policy LP11 – Design Context
 - Policy LP12 – Design Implementation
 - Policy LP14 – Amenity
 - Policy LP15 – Surface Water
 - Policy LP16 – Sustainable Travel
 - Policy LP17 – Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement
 - Policy LP22 – Local Services and Community Facilities
 - Policy LP23 – Tourism and Recreation
 - Policy LP30 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity
 - Policy LP31 – Trees, Woodland, Hedges and Hedgerows
 - Policy LP32 – Protection of Open Space
 - Policy LP34 – Heritage Assets and their Settings
- 3.2 Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2029 (Adopted 9 October 2019)
- Policy TL2 – Leisure and Community Facilities
 - Policy NE2 – Open Space and Green Infrastructure
 - Policy NE3 – Setting of Huntingdon
 - Policy BE1 – Design and Landscaping
 - Policy BE2 – Local Distinctiveness and Aesthetics
 - Policy BE3 – Heritage Assets
 - Policy TT1 – Sustainable Transport
- 3.3 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and Guidance:
- Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2017)
 - Developer Contributions SPD (2011)
 - Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape Assessment (2022)
 - Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD (2017)

- Huntingdonshire Tree Guidance Note 3

For full details visit HDC's website [Local policies](#)

4. PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 8700988CCC - Use of land as Country Park including access road, bridges, car park & visitor centre, APPROVED 20.10.1987
- 4.2 0802246FUL – Extension to cafe at visitors centre, APPROVED 26.08.2008
- 4.3 23/01377/FUL – Enhancement works to Hinchbrook Country Park, to include an extension to the existing countryside centre, new car parking (to include new electric vehicle charging), improved access and lighting, biodiversity enhancements and other associated improvements and works – Withdrawn

5. CONSULTATIONS

- 5.1 Huntingdon Town Council – Recommend approval. HTC supports the application on the basis of policy NE3 from the Neighbourhood Plan due to its positive contribution to the recreational use of the park.
- 5.2 Environment Agency – No objection, providing the footpath improvements are undertaken in accordance with the landscape drawings:
 - All footpath and surfacing improvements other than the two sections of the Lakeside Footpath – East Side will not include land raising and finished levels will be flush with the existing ground levels.
 - The land raising detailed on drawing NCSP 508/3-024 of the Lakeside Footpath – East Side includes two sections of land raising up to 600mm. This should be limited to infilling and gradual level changes, we would not support land raising of the circular path as a whole or in areas of flow.
- 5.3 Local Lead Flood Authority – Following the submission of additional/amended information, the LLFA have no objection in principle to the proposed development. Conditions requested for detailed surface water drainage design and drainage during construction.
- 5.4 HDC Urban Design – No objection subject to further information/conditions requested.
- 5.5 HDC Environmental Health – No objection with regard to land contamination.
- 5.6 HDC Arboricultural Officer – No objection subject to conditions.

- 5.7 HDC Ecology Officer – No objection. Having reviewed the documents submitted for the above application, the proposed development will not cause significant adverse impact to the ecology of the site or surrounding land and can provide a minimum 10% net gain in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021).
- 5.8 HDC Landscape and Biodiversity Officer - The current planting plan does not adequately mitigate the localised harm caused by the proposal. This is chiefly due to the planting palette proposed which includes ornamental and non-native planting, and is out of character with the receiving landscape. Should officers be minded approving this application, landscaping conditions, including an alternative soft landscaping scheme should be secured.
- 5.9 Natural England – No objection.
- 5.10 Highway Authority (Cambridgeshire County Council) – No objection. It was noted that the proposal will result in additional parking spaces. However, the additional vehicle movements cannot be considered significant as Hinchbrook Park Road already serves two housing developments, the hospital, the police HQ and a school. Also, the additional journeys are likely to be at the weekends and not a peak times. Therefore, no significant adverse effect upon the Public Highway should result from this proposal should it gain benefit of Planning Permission.
- 5.11 Definitive Maps Team (Cambridgeshire County Council) – No objection.
- 5.12 Archaeology Team (Cambridgeshire County Council) – No objection subject to condition.
- 5.13 Cadent Gas – No objection

6. REPRESENTATIONS

- 6.1 2 objections received raising the following matters:
- Encroachment of car park extension onto existing green field used for play and recreation
 - Safety concerns for pedestrians
 - Increase in traffic and congestion leading to pollution and noise
 - Alternative car park location should be considered
 - There is already sufficient parking space
- 6.2 1 representation received in support of the proposals.

- 6.3 Representation received in support from Friends of Hinchbrooke Country Park (Volunteer Membership Group/Registered Charity):
- The existing car park is too small for current visitor numbers
 - At busy times visitors park on surrounding streets
 - The intrusion into the main grassland area and extra vehicle movements is not ideal but better than possible alternatives which could have involved loss of trees
 - Expansion of the countryside centre will enable a wider range of functions and larger café
 - Improvements to footpath network, enhanced toilet facilities and measures to increase biodiversity will also be welcome

7. ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The main issues to consider in the determination of this application are:
- Principle of Development
 - Design and Visual Amenity
 - Impact on Heritage Assets
 - Residential Amenity
 - Highway Safety and Parking
 - Flood Risk and Drainage
 - Biodiversity
 - Trees and Hedgerow

Principle of Development

- 7.2 Policy LP3 (Green Infrastructure) sets out that a proposal within the Ouse Valley Landscape Character Area will be supported where it contributes to the landscape, wildlife, cultural and historical value of the area. Policy LP3 goes on to state “A proposal to provide facilities associated with strategic green infrastructure in the countryside will be supported where a countryside location is justified, the use is compatible with the green infrastructure in question and adverse effects are avoided.”
- 7.3 Policy NE3 (Setting of Huntingdon) of the Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan states “development affecting Hinchbrooke Country Park will be supported where it makes a positive contribution to the character, appearance, setting, recreational purpose and biodiversity value of the park.”
- 7.4 The NPPF 2024 states that planning decisions should enable and support healthy lives through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure (paragraph 96 c.) and the provision of community facilities and meeting places should be supported to enhance the sustainability of communities.

- 7.5 Policy LP22 of the Local Plan seeks to support local facilities and services to provide for the needs of the local community. Policy LP22 states that the extension of an existing local service and community facility on land immediately adjoining the built-up area, will be supported where it:
- a. is of a scale to serve local needs;
 - b. comprises up to a maximum of 600m² net internal floorspace for a main town centre use; and
 - c. provides for a new service or facility or it retains or enhances an existing service or facility, including through the provision of premises suitable for mixed use or multiple community functions.
- 7.6 The proposal looks to retain and enhance the existing countryside centre. The proposed extension (approx. 318sqm increase in footprint) would provide new toilet facilities, café/dining area, function space, kitchen and bar/servery. The proposed extension to the existing building would create a multi-purpose community building which could be used for a variety of purposes including but not limited to corporate events, exhibitions, weddings, local groups and meetings. It is considered that this would enable the building to better serve the needs of the community and would facilitate a range of community functions which accords Policy LP22 a. and c. of the Local Plan. The proposed café/dining area is below the 600m² internal floorspace threshold for main town centre uses and therefore accords with Policy LP22 b.
- 7.7 Policy LP23 (Tourism and Recreation) is also considered to be relevant as it supports expanded tourism, sport or leisure use in the countryside will be supported where it can be demonstrated that:
- a. it is well-related to a defined settlement unless there are robust operational or sustainability reasons why it needs to be located elsewhere;
 - b. it does not cause harm to, and where appropriate, enhances the ecological, landscape and heritage significance of the proposed location;
 - c. the impact of the scale, character and location of the development on both its immediate surroundings and the wider landscape are minimised as far as possible;
 - d. adequate servicing can be provided, including water supply, electricity and for sewage and waste disposal; and
 - e. it will not have an adverse impact on any internationally or nationally designated wildlife site through increased visitor pressure.
- 7.8 The site is well-related to Huntingdon and the proposals enhance and improve the existing infrastructure and facilities at the Country Park. An assessment of the landscape and ecological impacts and impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area is carried out later within this report. It is not

considered the proposed development would conflict with the criteria of Policy LP23.

- 7.9 The proposed car park extension would result in the partial loss of open space, comprising grassland and an area with existing play equipment. Policy LP32 states a proposal that would lead to the whole or partial loss of an area of open space of public value will only be supported where there would be no significant adverse impact on the character of the surrounding area and:
- a. the loss is minimised where possible and compensatory measures are put in place that provide a net benefit to the community that is served by the space, which will be judged in terms of availability, accessibility, quality and quantity.
- 7.10 As set out in the submitted Planning Statement, the existing car park is frequently insufficient for the number of visitors to the park. The proposed car park extension and additional cycle parking would improve accessibility to the park which is a strategic green space. The partial loss of open space to create the car park extension is not considered significant having regard to the wider Country Park which is circa 150 acres. Furthermore, it is noted that the existing play equipment to be removed has reached the end of its life, however the existing double slide would be retained in situ and the zip line would be relocated elsewhere in the country park.
- 7.11 In terms of impacts on the character of the surrounding area, there would inevitably be harm to the immediate landscape due to the reduction of green space and its replacement with a car parking area. However, suitable mitigation is proposed including wildflower bunds, tree and shrub planting which would screen views of the car park from the south. A detailed soft landscaping scheme has been submitted with the application however HDC's Landscape and Biodiversity Officer has raised concerns that with the use of ornamental and non-native species proposed. A native planted edge would better reflect the landscape character of the country park. A condition is recommended to secure a revised soft landscaping scheme which incorporates the recommendations put forward by HDC's Landscape and Biodiversity Officer. Subject to this condition, it is not considered the proposed car park extension would result in detrimental harm to the character of the park or the surrounding landscape.
- 7.12 Together with the extended countryside centre, it is considered the proposed improvements to the existing footpaths and the provision of additional car and cycle parking would improve accessibility to the Country Park, therefore enhancing its public and recreational value. It is noted that Huntingdon Town Council has recommend approval of the application based on Policy NE3 from the Neighbourhood Plan due to its positive contribution to the recreational use of the park. Furthermore, the proposed biodiversity enhancements including native hedgerow and tree

planting and wildflower bunds/banks are intended to minimise the pressure to the retained habitats and provide compensation, thereby contributing to the wildlife and biodiversity value of the Country Park and wider Great Ouse Valley Green Infrastructure Priority Area in accordance with Policy LP3 of the Local Plan.

- 7.13 The proposed development would enhance the existing green infrastructure in the park and it would be consistent with the objectives of the Cambridgeshire Strategic Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011). The main objectives are to reverse the decline in biodiversity; to mitigate and adapt to climate change; to promote sustainable growth and economic development and to support healthy living and well-being. The enhancements to the park would make it more accessible and attractive as a facility to visit and use, and would support healthy living and well-being.
- 7.14 The aim of the proposed development is to improve the accessibility and quality of the existing green infrastructure and expand the existing Countryside Centre to facilitate a wider range of community uses. For the reasons set out above, the principle of development is supported by Policies LP3, LP22, LP23 and LP32 of the Local Plan and Policies NE2 and NE3 of the Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan, subject to all other material considerations below.

Design and Visual Amenity

- 7.15 Policies LP11 and LP12 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 state that developments should respond positively to their context, draw inspiration from the key characteristics of its surroundings and contribute positively to the area's character and identity. Policy BE1 of the adopted Neighbourhood Plan states proposals will be supported where they provide landscaping and green public open space to help it integrate into the built form and the surrounding landscape as appropriate to the scale and form of development proposed.

Existing Northern Car Park & Access Road

- 7.16 The proposal includes the resurfacing and widening of the existing internal access road to enable two-way traffic flows as well as the resurfacing and widening of an existing path to the west of the existing car park to create a 2.5 to 4-metre-wide shared cycleway and footpath. The existing car park area is to be retained with existing gravel parking area and asphalt access roads. It is proposed to better define existing parking bays with wooden sleepers to the rear of parking spaces, with reflective circular disks to define parking bays at 2.5 metres, indicating the width of each parking bay (2.5m x 5m). The existing end bays would be reduced to 2.5m wide and existing hard standing removed to accommodate additional soft landscaping. HDC's Landscape and Biodiversity Officer has raised concern with the use of non-native planting currently proposed and as set out

earlier in this report, a condition is recommended to secure a revised soft landscaping scheme. The proposed introduction of post and rail fencing in and around the car park area would prevent cut throughs, ground compaction and trampling of the new planting. Details of the proposed post and rail fencing should be secured by way of condition. Overall, it is considered the proposed improvements to the existing car park area and access road would ensure the development integrates successfully into the existing landscape setting.

New Car Park

- 7.17 The proposed car park would comprise 116 vehicle parking spaces in total, including 19 EV charging spaces and 24 disabled spaces. The layout of the proposed car park has been designed to respect the existing woodland edge to the north. The proposed car park is divided into 4 distinct areas of parking, each containing a bin, ticket machine and signage. The car parks are separated by footpath links to the existing woodland and northern parkland footpath. A new footpath would be created along the southern boundary of the car park. The eastern part of the proposed car park comprises 51 parking spaces and 24 disabled spaces which would be block paved and the western end of the car park, containing 41 parking spaces would form an overflow car park with reinforced grass spaces and would be separated from the main car park by gates/barrier.
- 7.18 As set out in the Principle of Development section above, due to the size and location of the proposed car park area there would be harm to the immediate landscape compared to the existing grassland and play area. However, the proposal includes three wildflower bunds to the south of the proposed car park as well as native hedge and tree planting to the boundaries and within the car park which would soften and screen views, particularly when viewed from the open grassland to the south. The layout and form of the car park is supported in design terms and forms an undulating edge to the grassland meadows. Furthermore, the reinforced grass overflow car park forms a more sympathetic relationship with the setting of the Country Park.

Countryside Centre

- 7.19 The proposals include extensions to the front (west), side (south) and rear (east) elevations to create the new café, increase the size of the function space and provide improved WC facilities to the rear of the building. Large window openings and doors are proposed on the front and side elevations from the Café, lobby and function room providing access to a covered terrace and external café seating area.
- 7.20 The supporting Design & Access Statement indicates the proposed materials are timber cladding to reflect the existing

building and would incorporate recycled rubber roof tiles, a sedum green roof for the rear extension and solar panels on the front elevation. The canopies would comprise a single ply membrane finish made from recycled materials and incorporate roof lights. The proposed materials, whilst indicative at this stage are acceptable in design terms and reflect those used on the existing building. It is recommended that full details of materials should be secured by way of condition, including colours of window openings and the treatment and colour of the canopy soffits and fascias. Furthermore, the details of any external plant equipment (e.g. AC/air handling units) and the location and colour of flues/vents/kitchen and WC extracts should also be secured by condition.

Footpath Improvements

- 7.21 The new footpaths around the proposed car park extension, the proposed shared cycleway and footpath to the west of the existing car park and the resurfacing of the existing footpaths in various locations around the Country Park would be done with asphalt hard surfacing. It is considered that the proposed footpath improvements would be in keeping with the overall appearance of the park.

Summary

- 7.22 The proposed enhancements to the park are considered to have a positive impact upon its appearance and the proposed landscaping would sufficiently mitigate any adverse impacts to the immediate landscape setting. The proposed development therefore complies with Policies LP11 and LP12 of the Local Plan, Policies BE1 and BE2 of the Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan, the Huntingdonshire Design Guide (2017) and the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).

Impact on Heritage Assets

- 7.23 Policy LP34 of the Local Plan states that great weight and importance should be given to the conservation of heritage assets which reflects the statutory protections afforded to heritage assets and their management through the NPPF 2024.
- 7.24 The site falls outside of the Huntingdon Conservation Area which is the east of the site and further to the east is Hinchbrooke House (Grade I) and its curtilage. Given the nature of the proposal and distance to these heritage assets, it is not considered that there would be any harm to their settings.
- 7.25 The Historic Environment Team at Cambridgeshire County Council have been consulted and they have indicated the proposed development area has archaeological potential. It is

considered that some of the more impactful elements of the application particularly the extended car park area, should be subject to a programme of archaeological investigation secured through the inclusion of a suitably worded pre-commencement archaeological condition. Subject to this, the proposal would comply with Policy LP34 of the Local Plan in this regard.

Residential Amenity

- 7.26 Policy LP14 of the Local Plan states that a proposal will be supported where a high standard of amenity is provided for all users and occupiers of the proposed development and maintained for users and occupiers of neighbouring land and buildings.
- 7.27 An objection has been received stating that the proposal would increase in traffic and congestion leading to pollution and noise impacts. HDC's Environmental Health Officer has been consulted and has not raised any concerns in relation to potential noise or pollution associated with the proposed development. It is not considered that the proposal would result in a significant impact on current noise or pollution levels to warrant further investigation or consideration.
- 7.28 The nearest residential properties are at Brecon Way and Dartmoor Drive to the east of the existing car park and Countryside Centre. The proposal includes the widening of the existing internal access in close proximity to the rear garden boundaries of nearby properties, notably 26 and 28 Beacon Way. The proposed car park extension and improved facilities within the Countryside Centre would increase vehicle movements along the internal access, however this is an existing arrangement and it is not considered the increased movements would not be significant to result in detrimental adverse effects on the occupants of these nearby properties.
- 7.29 Given the nature and siting of the other aspects of the proposal in relation to nearby dwellings, it is not considered the development would have a harmful impact upon the amenities of occupiers in any regard. The proposed development would therefore comply with Policy LP14 of the Local Plan.

Highway Safety and Parking

- 7.30 Policy LP16 of the Local Plan looks to ensure that developers fully consider how the opportunities and impacts of the range of travel and transport modes are addressed in their proposals. Policy LP17 of the Local Plan sets out that a proposal will be supported where it incorporates appropriate space for vehicle movements, facilitates accessibility for service and emergency vehicles and incorporates adequate parking for vehicles and cycles.

- 7.31 Policy TT1 (Sustainable Transport) of the Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan states that development proposals will be supported where they demonstrate how opportunities for the use of sustainable modes of transport are maximised. Furthermore, proposals will be supported, appropriate to the scale of development, where they maximise the potential for cycling and walking throughout the site.
- 7.32 The Highway Authority (Cambridgeshire County Council) have raised no objection to the proposed development. The additional vehicle movements associated with the proposed car park extension are not considered significant as Hinchbrook Park Road already serves two housing developments, the hospital, the police HQ and a school. Furthermore, the additional journeys are likely to be at the weekends and not at peak times. Therefore, it is not considered that there would be any significant adverse effect upon the public highway.
- 7.33 The access road leading to the existing car park, proposed car park extension and the Countryside Centre is proposed to be widened to approximately 6 metres along its length to enable two-way traffic flows. It is considered that this would improve space for vehicle movements within the site. Furthermore, the existing footpath close to the Christie Drive junction which leads into the site would be widened to create a shared footpath and cycleway which would ensure safe and suitable access to the site is achieved for all users in accordance with paragraph 115b) of the NPPF 2024.
- 7.34 In terms of cycle parking provision, the proposal includes junior and adult cycle storage including repair stand and pump in various locations across the country park, including the car park, adjacent to the Countryside Centre and adjacent to existing areas of play equipment. Together with the shared cycleway/footpath into the site and the resurfacing of existing footpaths, the provision of appropriate cycle parking facilities within the Country Park would encourage cycle journeys to and from the park, as well as within the park which is supported by Policies LP16 and LP17 of the Local Plan and Policy TT1 of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 7.35 With regard to vehicle parking, a 'Parking Justification Summary Sheet' has been submitted in support of the application. This states that the existing country park has 80 standard vehicle parking spaces and two disabled parking spaces. During peak periods the existing level of car parking is insufficient and results in cars parking on grass verges and adjacent residential roads impacting on amenity, increased congestion and also safety concerns. The proposed car park extension has been designed to accommodate typical day usage which is estimated to cover 95% of annual demand. The proposal looks to create 116 additional car parking spaces including 24 disabled spaces as

well as electric vehicle charging spaces. The western end of the proposed car park extension would contain 41 parking spaces for exceptional event overflow parking (e.g. special events, school holidays). The proposal has been based on evidence of seasonal and event-driven peaks in visitor numbers and balances, for example, during the summer peak (May-August 2024) footfall numbers exceed 4,000 visitors a day, particularly during school holidays and events. It is considered that clear justification has been provided for the level of car parking proposed and this is balanced against the proposed improvements to footpaths and the shared cycleway and footpath leading into the site and the provision of cycle parking.

- 7.36 Public Footpaths 24 and 47 Huntingdon run through the site. Footpath 24 will have gated access to the footpath and the park's cycleway to the southern end. The Rights of Way Officer has raised no objection, but requires that the gate is accessible for all applicable users (as shown on 'Proposed Dimensions: Lakeside Footpath South West & West Side' drawing no. NSCP-508/3-027 Rev H).
- 7.37 With the above, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of its impact on highway safety and accords with Policy LP17 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and Policy PT1 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Flood Risk and Drainage

- 7.38 Policy LP5 of the Local Plan sets out that a proposal will only be supported where all forms of flood risk have been addressed. Furthermore, Policies LP6 and LP15 set out the Council's approach to wastewater and surface water management. The application is supported by a Flood Risk Assessment dated March 2025 produced by Link Engineering.
- 7.39 The northern parts of the site including the existing car park, proposed car park and countryside centre extension are entirely within Flood Zone 1 and which means that these aspects of the proposal are at a low probability of fluvial flooding.
- 7.40 In accordance with paragraph 170 of the NPPF 2024, where development is necessary in areas at risk of flooding, the development should be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere. Southern parts of the site, notably the footpaths around the main lake, are within Flood Zones 3 on the Environment Agency's Flood Maps for Planning and Flood Zone 3b on Huntingdonshire's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024). The submitted hard landscaping plans detail that the majority of the footpath improvement works do not include any alternations or raising of ground levels apart from two sections (shown on 'Proposed Dimensions: Lakeside Footpath East & South Sides – drawing no. NCSP 508/3-024).

The Environment Agency has raised no objection to the proposed development providing that the footpath improvements are undertaken in accordance with the submitted drawings, and the land raising proposed for the two sections of footpath should be limited to infilling and gradual level changes as the land raising of the circular path as a whole or in areas of flow would not be supported. A condition is recommended to ensure compliance with the mitigation measures outlined in section 3 of the submitted FRA.

- 7.41 The submitted FRA sets out that a drainage strategy is not required for the majority of the site which is to remain in its existing condition and therefore it is proposed that the greenspace and footways are left to infiltrate naturally. A drainage strategy has been provided for the proposed car park and the Countryside Centre extension. It is proposed that surface water would be managed through the use of permeable paving and an attenuation tank, restricting surface water discharge to 1.3l/s. Following the submission of additional information, the Local Lead Flood Authority (LLFA) have raised no objection in principle to the proposed development. As requested by the LLFA, it is recommended that conditions be imposed requiring the submission of a detailed drainage design and measures for drainage during construction.
- 7.42 Subject to the conditions outlined above, the proposed development is considered to be acceptable in terms of flood risk and drainage meeting the objectives of Policies LP5, LP6 and LP15 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan and the NPPF 2024.

Biodiversity

- 7.43 Policy LP30 of the Local Plan requires proposals to demonstrate that all potential adverse impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity have been investigated and ensure no net loss in biodiversity and provide a net gain where possible. Paragraph 187 of the NPPF (2024) states planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.
- 7.44 The application is supported by an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) produced by Greenwillows Associates Ltd dated April 2025. It is considered that the EclA provides suitable mitigation and compensation recommendations to prevent significant adverse impact to the ecology of the site and surrounding land. A Construction Environmental Management Plan, further details of ecological enhancements in addition to BNG, and protection for nesting birds should be secured by condition.
- 7.45 The EclA states "Works will be undertaken under a great crested newt District Level Licence (DLL) which is in the process of being obtained from Natural England (NE) following a modification to

the original red line boundary.” A condition is recommended requiring submission of an Impact Assessment Conservation Payment Certificate issued and countersigned by Natural England prior to commencement of the development.

- 7.46 A Ground Level Tree Assessment was carried out on eighteen trees which found three requiring an Aerial Tree Assessment. This confirmed one Ash (W001 – Ash 4, MKA Aerial Tree Assessment) to contain a bat roost. The proposed works include the Ash’s felling so a European Protected species licence must be obtained prior to commencement via condition.
- 7.47 The Aerial Tree Assessment recommends further surveys to classify the roost type in Ash 4 and obtain information from the maternity season to inform the EPSL mitigation strategy, and 24-48 hours prior to any proposed works on the other two trees inspected during the Aerial Tree Assessment (W001 – Ash 5 and W001 – Elm 3) to ensure an absence of roosting bats. In accordance with BSI Standards Publication, Biodiversity — Code of Practice for Planning and Development, BS 42020:2013, Clause 9.2.4. c) and d), the additional surveys can be secured by condition as they fall within the criteria for exceptional circumstances.
- 7.48 In terms of biodiversity net gain, HDC’s Ecology Officer has raised no objection as the development can provide a minimum 10% net gain so complies with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021). The Ecology Officer has advised that further detail in relation to onsite post-intervention habitat maps will be required and further assessment of the baseline habitat conditions which will need to be provided when the Biodiversity Net Gain plan is submitted post-determination.
- 7.49 Subject to conditions identified above, as well as a condition requiring details of soft landscaping, it is considered the proposal would protect and enhance ecological features and therefore accords with Policy LP30 of the Local Plan.

Trees and Hedgerow

- 7.50 Policy LP31 of the Local Plan states a proposal will be required to demonstrate that the potential for adverse impacts on trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows has been investigated and where development has any adverse impacts in these regards, that they be minimised as far as possible.
- 7.51 The application is supported by an ‘Tree Survey, Arboricultural Impact Assessment Arboricultural Method Statement & Tree Protection Plan In Accordance with BS 5837:2012 Rev B’ produced by Hayden’s Arboricultural Consultants.

- 7.52 To facilitate the proposed development, it is proposed to fell one individual tree, three trees from one group, eleven trees from one woodland and one tree from a further woodland. The removal of trees is regrettable however most of these are low value or threatened with Pests/Disease such as Elm or Ash Dieback, as such HDC's Arboricultural Officer has not raised an objection to the proposed removal of trees. It is also noted that the proposal incorporates significant tree planting around the proposed car park extension.
- 7.53 The alignment of new or replacement hard surfaces would encroach within the Root Protection Areas of several retained trees and woodland areas, however "no dig" construction techniques are proposed which HDC's Arboricultural Officer has raised no objection to.
- 7.54 The widening of the internal access road would encroach within the Root Protection Areas of trees that are to be retained. Section 4.4.1 of the submitted Tree Survey, AIA, AMS and Tree Protection Plan sets out that further investigation and engineering details/specification must be provided to allow further Arboricultural appraisal in relation to tree impact and/or required felling. A condition is recommended to secure further details of the arboricultural impacts of the widening of the internal access road and any required mitigation measures.
- 7.55 The proposed alignment of a new underground services intrudes within the Root Protection Areas of three individual trees and two groups of trees to be retained. HDC's Arboricultural Officer has raised concern with the proposed methods of hand digging straight through RPAs and recommends that investigations should be carried out with an airspade and if necessary, the route diverted to ensure significant roots are unaffected. It is therefore recommended that a condition be imposed to any planning permission granted to secure a programme of tree root investigation works in accordance with a Written Scheme of Tree Root Investigation prior to the commencement of development.
- 7.56 The new footpaths around the proposed car park and the resurfacing of existing footpaths proposed would encourage use of the footpaths and take footfall away from woodland and RPAs of retained trees. Subject to the recommended conditions, it is not considered the proposal would conflict with Policy LP31 of the Local Plan as potential adverse impacts on trees have been investigated, tree loss has been minimised where possible and the proposal involves replacement tree and hedgerow planting.

Conclusion and Planning Balance

- 7.57 The proposed development is considered to be compliant with the relevant national and local policy as it:

- *Would improve the accessibility and quality of the existing green infrastructure
- *Would enhance an existing community facility
- *Would make a positive contribution to the character, appearance, setting, recreational purpose and biodiversity value of the Country Park;
- *Would support healthy living and well-being;
- *Would be acceptable in terms of flood risk and drainage;
- *Would not have a significantly detrimental impact upon the amenity of neighbours;
- *Would not have an unacceptable impact on highways matters;
- *Would provide a minimum 10% net gain in biodiversity;
- *Would not have a significant adverse impact on existing trees.

7.58 Having regard to all relevant material considerations, it is concluded that the proposal would accord with local and national planning policy. Therefore, it is recommended that planning permission be granted subject to conditions.

8. RECOMMENDATION – APPROVAL subject to conditions to include the following:

- Time limit
- Approved plans
- Materials
- Architectural Details
- Revised soft landscaping scheme
- Details of paving to external terrace
- Landscape Implementation
- Boundary treatment
- Details of PV panels
- Archaeology
- External lighting scheme
- EV charging details
- Cycle parking details
- Compliance with FRA
- Compliance with Tree Survey, Arboricultural Impact Assessment Arboricultural Method Statement & Tree Protection Plan
- Submission of additional Tree Survey, Arboricultural Impact Assessment Arboricultural Method Statement & Tree Protection Plan in relation to the widening of the internal access road
- Written Scheme of Tree Root Investigation
- Biodiversity Net Gain plan
- Submission of Biodiversity Method Statement for enhancements not covered under BNG
- Construction Environmental Management Plan
- No removal of hedgerow during bird breeding season
- European Protected Species Licence
- Submission of further surveys as recommended in the Aerial Tree Assessment

- Surface water drainage design
- Details of drainage during construction

If you would like a translation of this document, a large text version or an audio version, please contact us on 01480 388388 and we will try to accommodate your needs.

CONTACT OFFICER: Lucy Pateman (Senior Development Management Officer) – lucy.pateman@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Huntingdon Town Council Planning Comments – 15th April 2025

25/00305/HHFUL - Erection of a single storey extension to the front of the house 40 American Lane Huntingdon PE29 1TY

No comment

25/00577/FUL - Enhancement works to Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, to include an extension to the existing countryside centre, new car parking (to include new electric vehicle charging), improved access, biodiversity enhancements and other associated improvements and works Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Hinchingsbrooke Park Road Huntingdon

Recommend APPROVE. Huntingdon Town Council supports this application on the basis of policy NE3 from the Neighbourhood Plan due to it's positive contribution to the recreational use of the park.

25/00458/FUL - Installation of 13 lighting bollards. Cambridgeshire Constabulary Hinchingsbrooke Park Hinchingsbrooke Park Road Huntingdon PE29 6NP

No comment

25/00507/FUL - Installation of 3 no. new full height sections of shopfront complete with automatic bi-parting entrance doors 3 Stukeley Road Retail Park Huntingdon PE29 6DA

Recommend APPROVE. Huntingdon Town Council supports the application on the basis that it supports policy E1 from the Neighbourhood Plan that supports economic development and doesn't conflict with the surrounding businesses and area.

25/00506/FUL - Creation of plant compound (of Flow Forge material) and installation of plant thereto together with the creation of 1 no. bin store (of Flow Forge material) and forming of 2 no. openings in external wall for pipework and 2 no. openings for vent grilles 3 Stukeley Road Retail Park Huntingdon PE29 6DA

Recommend APPROVE. Huntingdon Town Council supports the application on the basis that it supports policy E1 from the Neighbourhood Plan that supports economic development and doesn't conflict with the surrounding businesses and area.

25/00257/TREE - T17 - (London Plane) Remove 3m - There is visible decay at the base of the tree. There is large dead wood over hanging the car park which needs to be removed before it falls on a car. T18 - (Chestnut) There are large cavities in the main stems and the trunk as a large hole in it. Re-pollard this tree by 10m to take the weight off it. The large stems head towards the building and the car park behind the wall.

No comment

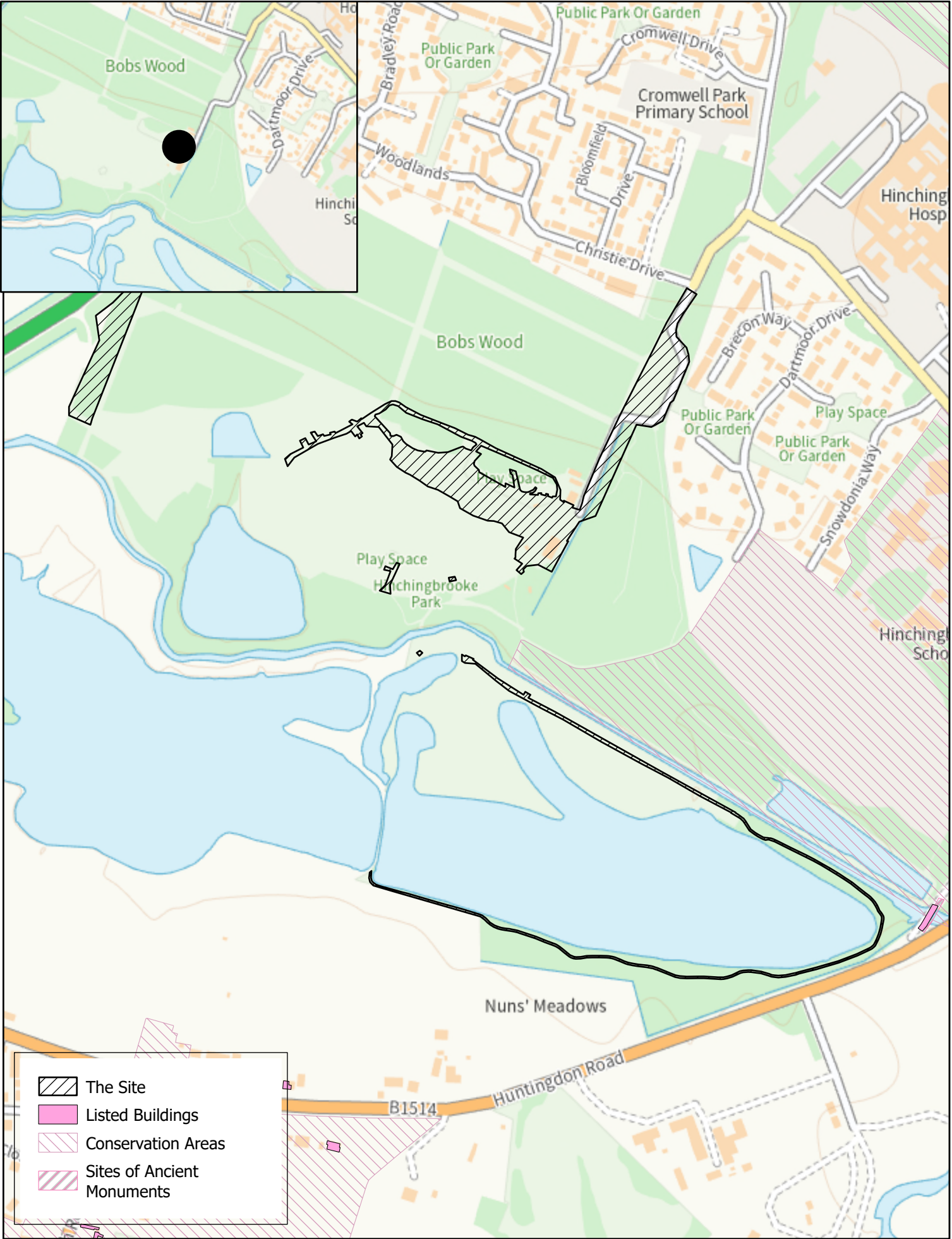
Development Management Committee

Application Ref: 25/00577/FUL



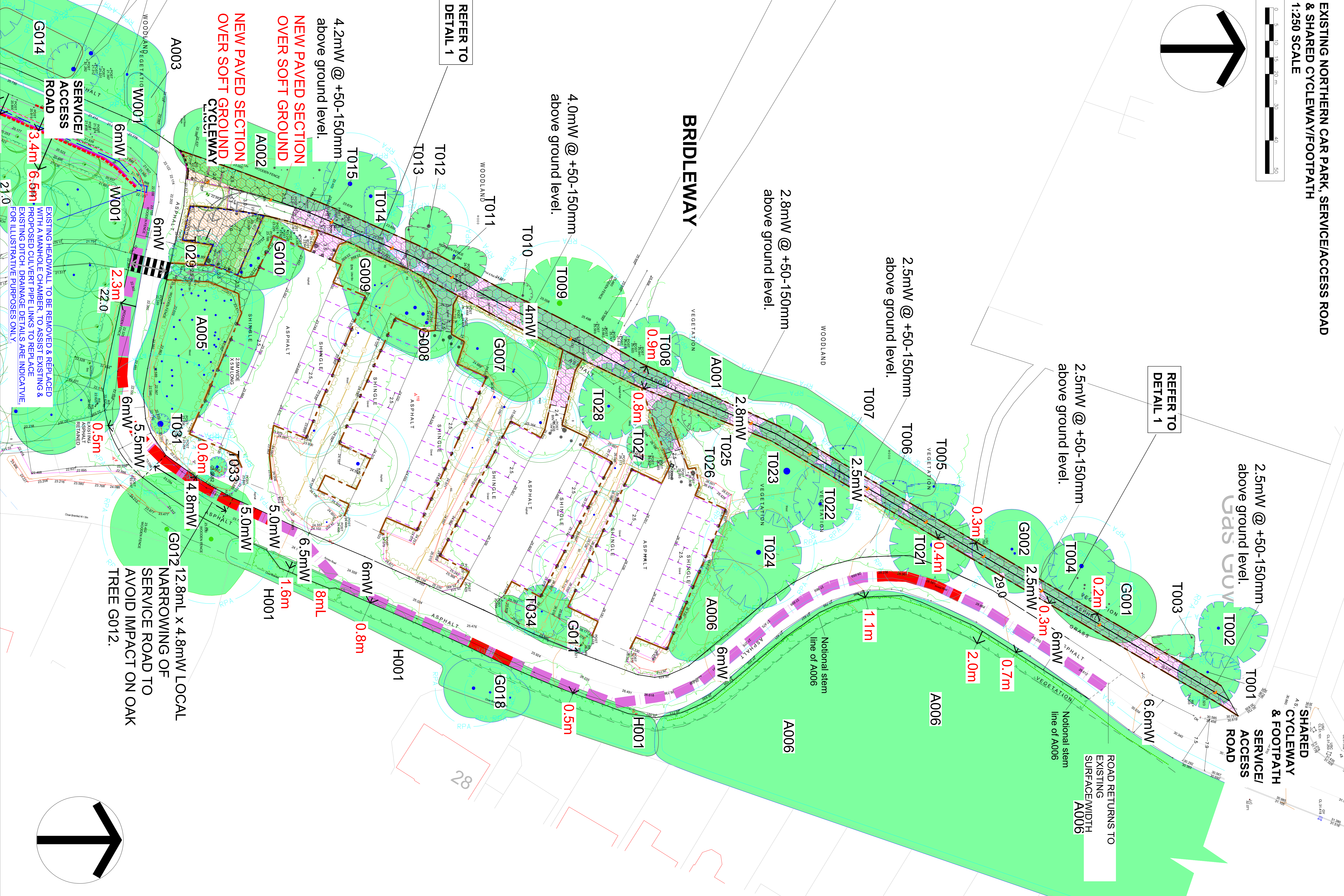
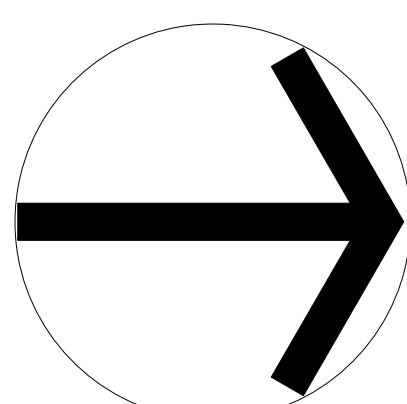
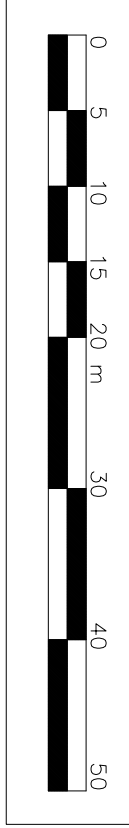
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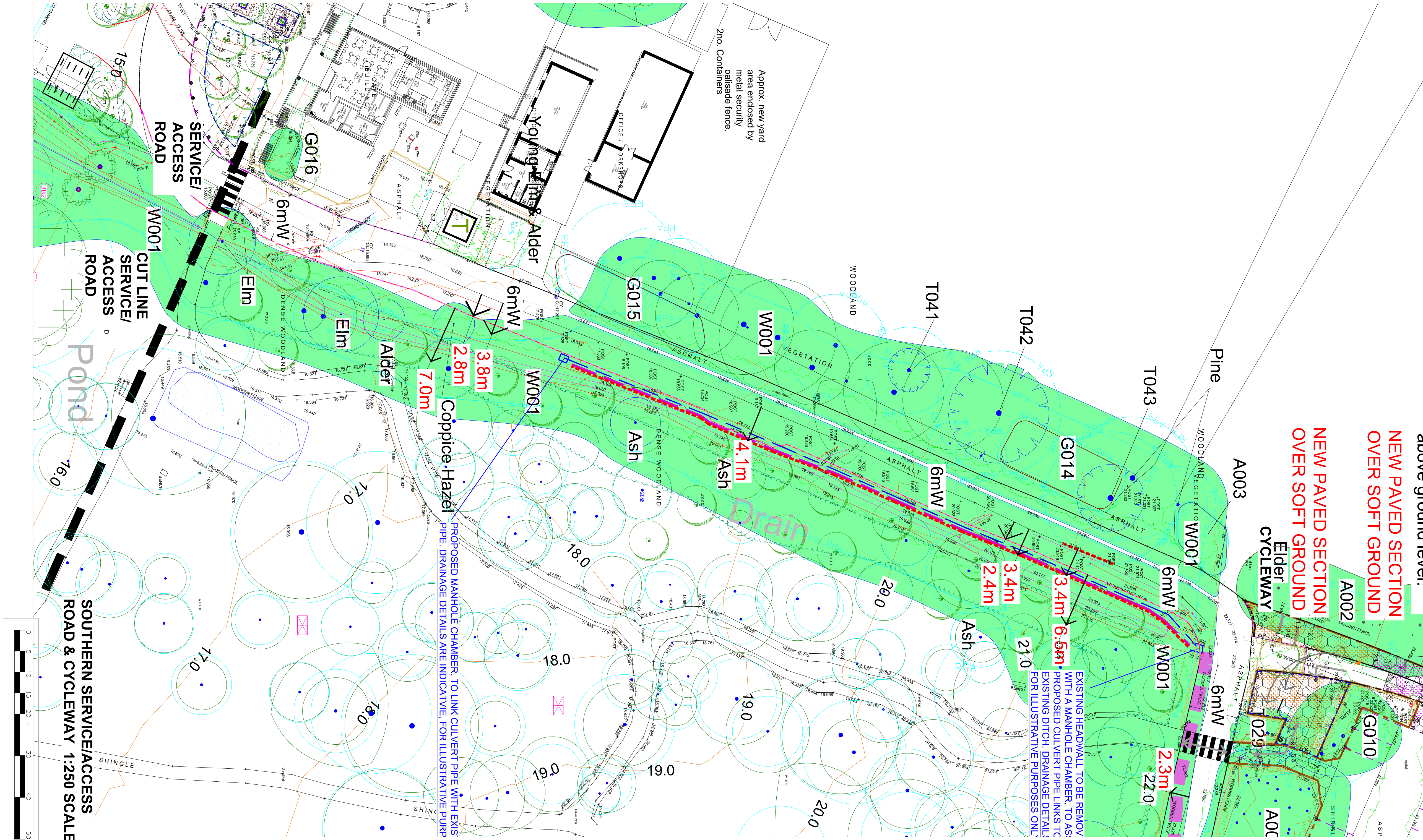
EXISTING NORTHERN CAR PARK, SERVICE/ACCESS ROAD & SHARED CYCLEWAY/FOOTPATH
1:250 SCALE



above ground level.

NEW PAVED SECTION
OVER SOFT GROUND

NEW PAVED SECTION
OVER SOFT GROUND



KEY

EXISTING SOFT WORKS

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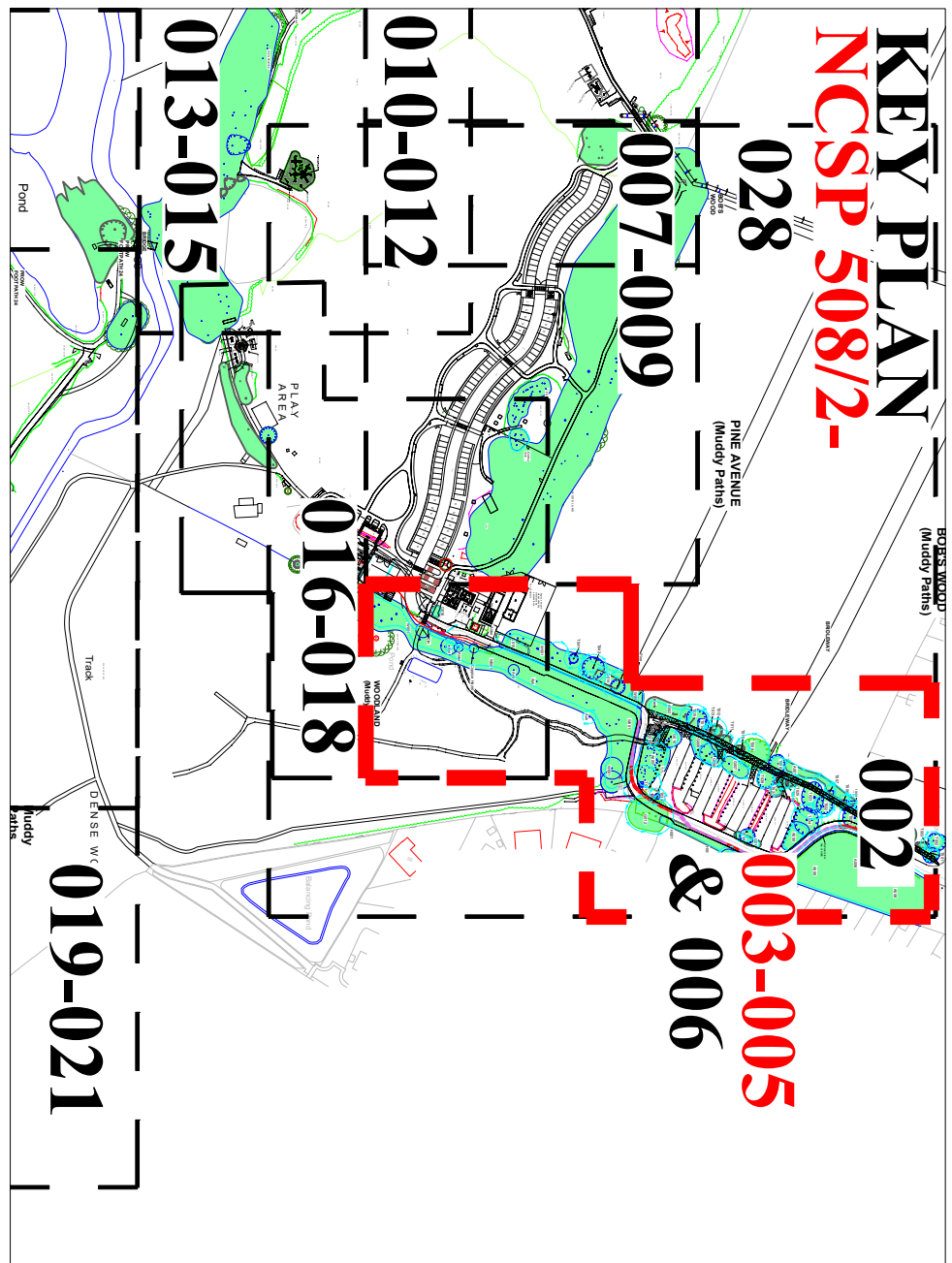
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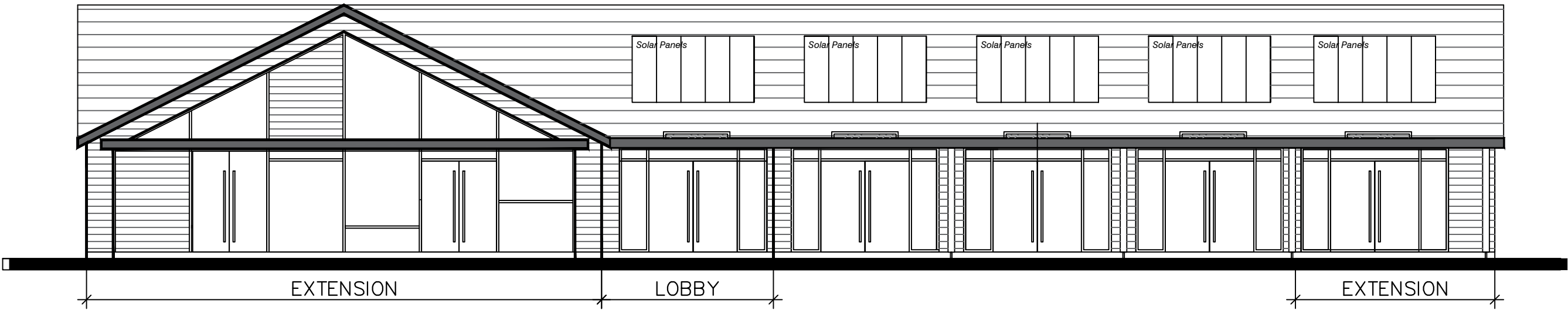
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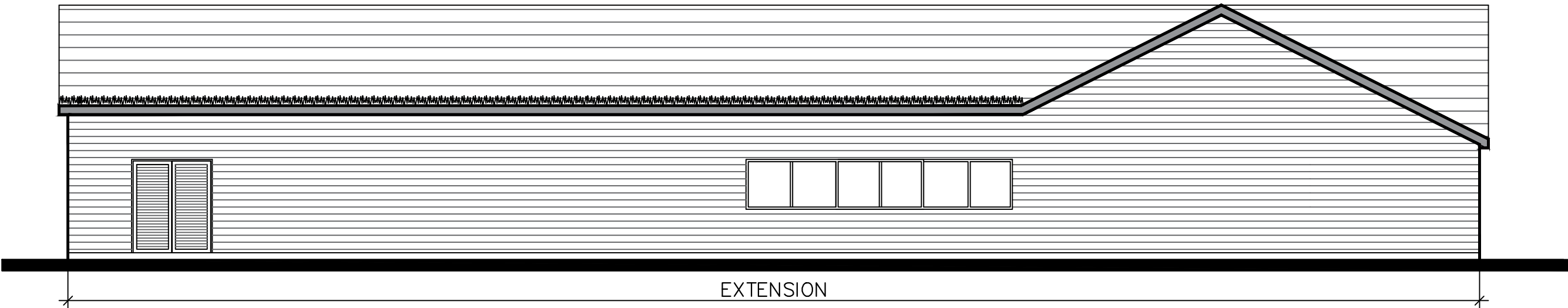
NORTHERN CAR PARK & SERVICE/ACCESS ROAD



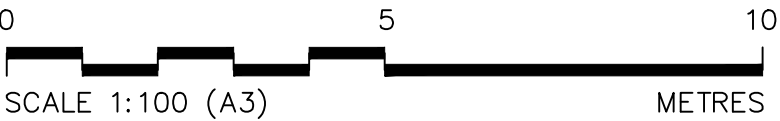
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WEST ELEVATION



EAST ELEVATION



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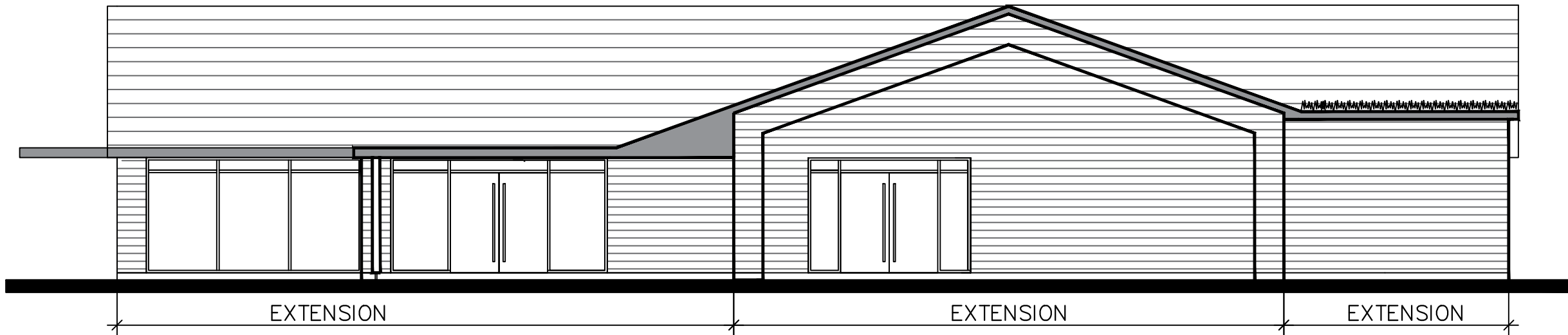
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The accuracy of the information on this drawing is not guaranteed and is to be used for guidance only.

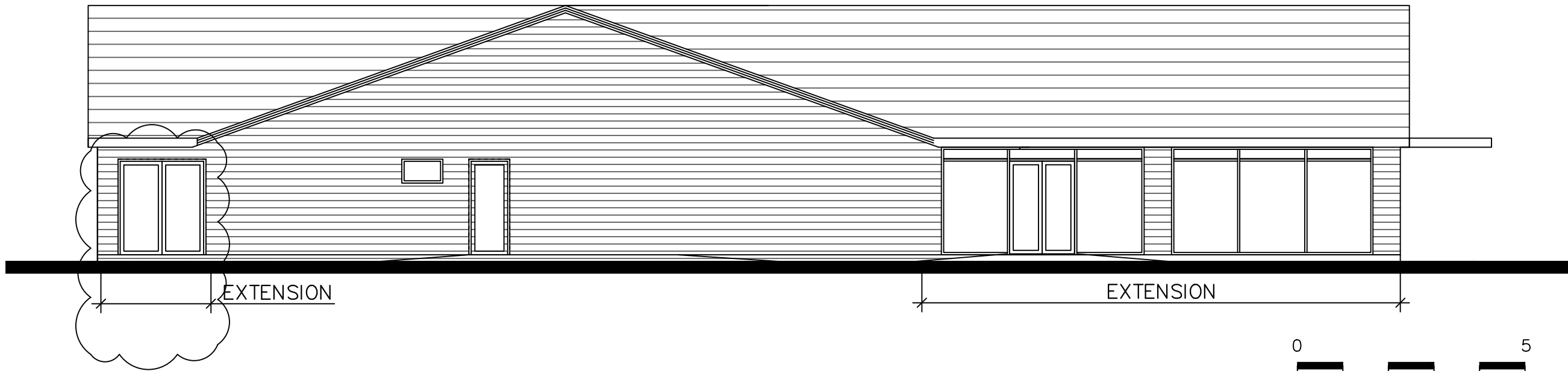
Rev	Date	Notes
A	02.08.22	Amended to GA
B	31.10.22	Amended to GA
D	09.11.22	Amended to GA
E	07.03.23	Amended for planning

Client Hinchinbrooke Country Park
Property Visitors Centre
Drawing title As Proposed Elevations 1

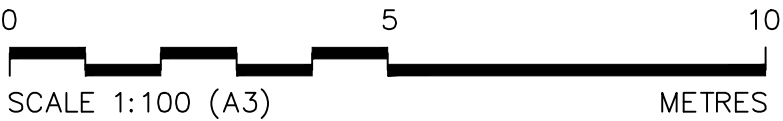
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Date July 2022	Checked NCS	



SOUTH ELEVATION



NORTH ELEVATION



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Rev	Date	Notes
A	02.08.22	Amended to GA
B	31.10.22	Amended to GA
D	09.11.22	Amended to GA
E	07.03.23	Amended for planning
F	13.03.23	sth elevation corrected
G	15.06.23	Naming amended
H	01.11.23	doors amended

Client
Hinchinbrooke Country Park

Property
Visitors Centre

Drawing title
As Proposed Elevations 2

Project No.
21.1738

Drawing No 14

Rev H

Drawing Status Preliminary

1:100 @A3

Drawn LC

Date July 2022

Checked NCS