

Walcot Estate  
Stamford  
PE9 3EU

Dear All,

You may be aware of our planning application to provide a children's adventure play area in our wood on the Sutton Heath Road. We felt it would be useful to provide a short document extracting some simple facts on the attraction, its benefits, justification, need and impacts. Please see the separate note from our planning consultants.

We understand that any change in a local area can sometimes be concerning but like you we live and work here and would not wish to do anything to detract from the area we live in. Farming is going through a time of transition and we must all evolve with rural diversification becoming a vital element to most farms and being actively encouraged by the government.

In assessing the local area, we found that good quality outdoor play for children is very poorly served in the region. At a time when research on the importance of outdoor play for children's physical, educational and mental wellbeing is becoming ever more overwhelming, we felt an opportunity which encourages families and children to partake in it was one to be supported. This is a diversification option with a low impact, yet one which will be of huge benefit to so many, both immediately locally and to those children and parents living in the surrounding towns and cities who would be incentivised to spend time playing in outdoor, rural environments. We have included some of the main points and articles on the importance of children and their families spending time playing outdoors.

We have teamed up with Timberplay, a play provider who are market leaders in creating outdoor play areas with the highest possible play value, using the natural landscape to enhance it. They focus on the use of timber to blend in with landscapes and are widely used by the National Trust, Duchy of Cornwall and other historic landscapes.

As a family and local farming estate we have always endeavoured to support the local area and residents wherever we can and would be grateful for any support at this time. If you are willing, please do go on the planning portal and submit a comment to show your support towards the application. If you have any questions or would like to discuss it further, please do get in touch via my email below.

Archie Dennis  
[archie@walcotest.co.uk](mailto:archie@walcotest.co.uk)

**Link to the application:**

<https://planpa.peterborough.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?keyVal=Q30MQQMLIPY00&activeTab=summary>

**Link to make comments:**

<https://planpa.peterborough.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=makeComment&keyVal=Q30MQQMLIPY00>

## Benefits of good quality outdoor play:

- The benefits of outdoor play are undeniable and numerous. Well thought out play equipment is a tool to encourage children (and parents) to want to partake in it again and again.
- Positive experiences in the early years are vital to everyone's lives, with 90% of our adult brains being developed before the age of 5. Outdoor play provides the perfect environment for children to form positive relationships with the environment and the people around them— this is the basis for the Duchess of Cambridge's latest survey. [Video](#)
- Well-designed play equipment allows children to learn to manage risk in a controlled environment.
- It encourages families to play together – the proposed equipment is designed to allow integration of all ages and includes special consideration for young people, small children, seniors and wheelchair users.
- Children who learn to enjoy the outdoors have a much higher likelihood of becoming adults who enjoy outdoor endeavours. This is critical as obesity becomes an ever-greater national concern. [Article](#)
- Playing outside reduces the spread of infectious diseases and strengthens immune systems. [Article](#)
- Research has revealed less children are engaging in outdoor play, spending more time on indoor screen time. Good outdoor play equipment can help to encourage children to reverse that by creating a desire to play outdoors which is also proven to reduce the risk of short-sightedness. It is estimated that 90% of children and young adults in china have the condition.
- Good play equipment provides a platform for children to create their own 'free play' and interact whilst doing so: [Article](#)
- It develops children's capabilities as well as their social and motor skills.
- Physically active people have higher levels of happiness and life satisfaction whilst also having lower levels of anxiety. Play is an informal way to ensure children get enough physical activity outside of the school environment.
- A recent study by the UK national Trust reported the area where children are allowed to roam unsupervised has shrunk by 90% in the last 50 years meaning children have less independence and, particularly in urban settings, less exposure to natural play.
- The World Health Organisation (WHO) concluded that to grow up healthy, children need to sit less and play more: [Article](#)

## PLANNING APPLICATION – WOODLAND ADVENTURE PLAY THE WALCOT ESTATE, LAND OFF SUTTON HEATH ROAD, SOUTHORPE

### WHAT IS PROPOSED?

The site has been identified as an appropriate location for the proposed use due to the natural assets on the site (woodland, maize crop etc) which are the focus of the natural environment based play offer. The main components of the proposed development comprise of:

- The **Woodland Adventure Play Areas** - these have been designed to utilise natural landforms and clearings, and will include rope bridges, walkways, den building, tunnels and slides to really make the most of enhancing the existing rugged landscape to create exciting and enriching play for varying ability and age levels.
- There will be a **Maize Maze** to again use the existing landscape features to provide a fun environment for families.
- A pathway through the maize will lead south away from this area to the western boundary of the site where a low level, way-marked **Nature Walk** will allow glimpses into wildlife habitat.
- The **Main Building** has been designed in an agricultural style to fit its rural setting. It has a footprint of approximately 288 sqm and includes an admission area, small subsidiary retail area and informal indoor play area. An adjoining safari tent structure (137 sq.m) will provide an indoor food and drink area.
- **Facilities** including WC and storage facilities are proposed to be provided by temporary buildings (e.g. timber clad portacabin type structures), that are removable, so as to have no permanent impact on the site.
- The site will be accessed via an existing field gate and lead directly to a 150 space landscaped **Car Park**.

### IMPACTS

#### Traffic

- The site access will be improved as per the access design approved by Highways Officers as part of the recent glamping application on adjacent land. This will provide improved visibility in line with requirements for the
-

road speeds in this location. The hedge removed will be replanted outside the visibility splays.

- The business model for the proposed development has been informed by understanding of the transport constraints in the area, including the junction capacity at the A47.
- The business model is based on there being 70 customers / 26 vehicles movements per peak hour.
- Based on research on the likely origin destinations of customers, we expect 25% (6.5 vehicles) will travel from the north through Barnack and Southorpe, and 75% (19.5 vehicles) from the south and the A47.
- Customer numbers can be strictly controlled by requiring pre-booking and limiting tickets
- Once operational, the website can direct visitors via the A47.

### **Visual Impact**

- The built development (building and car park etc) have been sited in the least visible parts of the site.
- Materials, including those for the play structures, will be natural, primarily timber, to give a soft aesthetic which sits within the rural landscape.
- Hedge planting will improve screening, including replanting of the hedge alongside Sutton Heath Road, moved back into the site to allow better visibility from the access.

### **Environmental Impact**

- The scale of the main woodland play is determined by the existing woodland copse and the opportunities to introduce play equipment and informal play areas within existing clearings within the copse.
- The woodland is relatively young in age, of low quality and mainly self-seeded, growing up within a previously quarried area, which gives the woodland its unique topography and features. As part of the proposed development there is the opportunity to invest in proper management of the woodland which will enhance its quality, longevity and species diversity through any additional planting.
- Existing hedgerows will be retained, improved and managed
- Additional badger surveys will be carried out in line with PCC requests, and mitigation measures agreed.

### **PUBLIC BENEFITS**

- Encourage health and well-being of families and children through physical activity and interaction with the countryside.
- Creation of over 13 FTE jobs in management, support and experience delivery staff.
- Approximate £200k spend per annum in the supply chain (e.g. food and goods purchased for sale on site, materials for maintenance etc).
- Additional visitors to the area to support the local economy with increased spend in local businesses e.g. restaurants, public houses, shops etc.