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Design and Access Statement

Proposed Creation of a Private Lake at Boundary Farm, Berryfield Lane, Melksham, Wiltshire, SN12 6EF

This should be viewed in conjunction with the associated plans submitted, AH2025/58 Sheets 1-2.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Planning, Design, and Access Statement accompanies an application seeking permission for the creation of a private lake on agricultural land at Boundary Farm, Berryfield Lane, Melksham, Wiltshire. The proposed application site will occupy approximately 1.35 acres and the new lake which will be approximately 0.45 acres will be solely for the private recreational use of the applicant. The development will include appropriate landscaping, including tree planting around the perimeter of the lake.

2. Site Context and Location

- 2.1 Boundary Farm is located within a predominantly agricultural setting. The application site is currently used as agricultural land (currently grassland used for cattle grazing) and is well-screened from wider views by existing hedgerows and trees. The site is not within a designated conservation area or subject to any specific environmental or landscape designations.

3. Description of the Proposed Development

- 3.1 The proposed lake will cover approximately 0.45 acres of land currently used for agricultural purposes. It will be formed by excavation and minor regrading of the existing land. Excavated soil will be used to create gentle landscaping contours and create bunds around the North & West sides of the lake.
- 3.2 The bunds will have additional hedgerow planting on top and be sown to grass.
- 3.3 The lake will be fed by captured surface water from the nearby adjoining farm buildings as well as a bore hole.

3.4 An overflow pipe will be connected to the lake, which will discharge to an existing ditch (where the surface water from the barns used to discharge to). Water from adjacent farmland will continue to follow this established route, ensuring minimal alteration to existing drainage patterns.

3.5 The lake will be naturally filled and managed sustainably, requiring no ongoing significant infrastructure or buildings.

3.6 The 300mm over flow pipe with a trash screen will be positioned at surface water level to allow the lake water level to be 0.4m below surrounding ground level, this will create a freeboard of 0.4m at the surrounding subsoil level, enhancing visual interest and biodiversity.

3.7 Tree planting will surround the lake to ensure integration with the rural landscape, provide habitat enhancement, and reinforce visual screening from neighbouring properties and public vantage points.

4. Planning Policy Context

4.1 The proposal is assessed against the Wiltshire Core Strategy and relevant policies, notably:

- Core Policy 51: Landscape – ensuring development does not adversely affect landscape character.
- Core Policy 50: Biodiversity and Geodiversity – promoting ecological enhancement.
- Core Policy 57: Ensuring high-quality design and compatibility with the local context.

The proposed lake and associated landscaping will enhance landscape and ecological value, aligning with these policy objectives.

5. Landscape and Visual Impact

5.1 The lake's design is sensitive to the surrounding landscape. The proposed tree planting and bunds will mitigate visual impact, further blending the development with the existing rural environment.

5.2 The lake's shape and contours will be naturalistic, avoiding any engineered or intrusive appearance. Similar landscaping and visual impact mitigation have been successfully employed at other approved lake projects within Wiltshire, supporting the suitability and appropriateness of this scheme.

6. Biodiversity and Ecology

6.1 A preliminary ecology assessment has been undertaken for the site by ABR Ecology and is submitted along with this application in support.

6.2 The ecological report addresses the fact the existing modified grassland present on-site is of low ecological value, providing limited ecological benefits due to a lack of available niches and pollinating species.

6.3 The report reveals there is currently no notable habitats on-site that may provide niches for specialised or protected invertebrates.

6.4 At present the species recorded include perennial ryegrass, annual meadow-grass, cock's foot, wall barley, dandelion species, small-leaved dock, mayweed species, field thistle, spear thistle, common nettle, herb Robert, bristly ox-tongue, and creeping buttercup.

6.5 The creation of the lake and associated tree planting will significantly enhance local biodiversity, providing new habitats for aquatic wildlife, birds, and insects. Native species of trees and shrubs will be chosen to maximise ecological value and integrate seamlessly into the existing ecological framework of the area. As evidenced by similar projects, private lakes contribute positively to ecological enrichment, supporting various native wildlife species.

6.6 The proposal will deliver a significant biodiversity net gain. The BNG assessment undertaken for the site demonstrates a net increase of over 300% in area habitat units compared to the baseline, along with the creation of new hedgerow habitat units. The transformation from low-value modified grassland to a diverse mosaic of aquatic, marginal, and tree-planted habitats will provide a rich and sustainable ecosystem. This aligns with both national and local policy aspirations to deliver measurable ecological benefits through development.

6.7 The proposal represents an immense positive netgain in biodiversity, creating 4.4 BNG credits which can be used to mitigate other developments offsite. There is an overriding presumable in favour of national and local planning policies which seek to support applications where an ecological benefit can be demonstrated, which is clearly the case for this application, as such officers should seek to determine this application in a timely manner.

7. Flood Risk and Drainage

7.1 The lake will manage surface water naturally and sustainably. The lake will not increase flood risk either on-site or in the surrounding area, but rather improve local drainage by providing additional water storage capacity. The scheme aligns with other similar private lake developments approved within Wiltshire, demonstrating minimal flood risk and significant water management benefits.

7.2 As touched upon previously the lake will be fed from attenuated surface water onsite and will be carefully managed and discharged into established sustainable drainage systems within the applicants ownership, along existing drainage routes into surrounding farmland.

8. Construction Environmental Management

8.1 The proposed construction process will adhere strictly to environmentally sensitive methods, minimising disturbance to local wildlife and habitat. Measures will include:

- Pre-construction ecological surveys, including checks for nesting birds and protected species.
- Temporary trackways to minimise ground disturbance and protect surrounding vegetation.
- Restoration of any disturbed areas upon completion, including topsoil reinstatement and reseedling with appropriate seed mixes.

These practices have proven effective at other approved lake developments within Wiltshire, such as those at Havering House and Watergate Farm.

9. Access and Parking

9.1 No formal parking or new access arrangements are proposed, as the lake is for private use by the applicant only and as such no vehicle parking or access is required, minimising visual disturbance to the setting.

10. Conclusion

10.1 The proposed lake at Boundary Farm represents sustainable rural development, enhancing local biodiversity, landscape character, and the applicant's private enjoyment of their land. It accords fully with relevant planning policies and guidance and reflects best practices from similar successful developments elsewhere in Wiltshire. The applicant respectfully requests that planning permission is granted for this carefully considered proposal.