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Dear Sir/Madam

RE: PLANNING APPLICATION FOR THE ERECTION OF TREETOP GLIDER WITH THE ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE, LONGLEAT CENTER PARCS, WARMINSTER, BA12 7PU

PLANNING PORTAL REFERENCE: PP-14769116

Introduction

I write on behalf of the applicant, Center Parcs, who are seeking full planning permission for the erection of a tree top glider, with associated infrastructure at Longleat Center Parcs, Warminster, BA12 7PU.

This letter outlines the context within which the application is made and provides a brief assessment of the main planning considerations, together with a reasoned justification of the merits of the scheme when assessed against relevant local and national planning policy.

This letter concludes the proposal would represent an opportunity for both social and economic benefits to the Parc and the Center Parcs ethos. The proposal would accord with the provision of the Development Plan, so far as they are relevant.

The application comprises of the following:

- Application Form
- Location Plan and Block Plan
- Proposed Elevations
- Covering Letter
- Preliminary Ecological Assessment
- Biodiversity Net Gain Metric
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment



Longleat Center Parcs

Center Parcs is committed to continually enhancing the quality and diversity of its guest experience, with innovation and excellence at the heart of its operations. This dedication extends to its activities, ensuring high-quality and a diverse range of activities are available to all of their guests. In order to support this, Center Parcs are proposing to deliver a Treetop Glider at the Longleat Parc.

Center Parcs Longleat Forest is one of the earliest UK Center Parcs villages, opening in 1994. It is located in woodland in Wiltshire, near Longleat House and Longleat Safari Park. Since the village was constructed 250,000 indigenous trees have been planted to create a woodland environment rich in species diversity. Alongside the many original mature trees retained on the site, one of the standout natural features is the presence of magnificent Giant Redwoods, which provides a dramatic focal point within the forest.

The woodland that has been established now provides a haven for a wide range of wildlife, in particular birds. The village has reached the threshold to become a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for woodland birds, reflecting its ecological value and biodiversity.

All the lakes and streams within the village were purpose-built during construction. Through careful environmental management, these water features have developed into a thriving ecosystem that attracts a diverse collection of wildlife.

The Site & Proposal

The proposed tree top glider attraction will be positioned adjacent to the existing adventure golf course, within the north-western section of the site.

The site is located within the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and falls within the Greensand Hills Landscape Character Area, specifically the F5 Longleat Green Sands classification. The site is in Flood Zone 1, so is at the lowest risk of flooding and is not susceptible to surface water.

The proposed development introduces a suspended gravity-powered aerial ride designed to integrate within the existing woodland setting, along with the associated infrastructure. This involves the installation of the glider's structure and zip line, with the stairwell in wooden cladding.

The spiral tower structure will be situated on the open grassland area to the north of the adventure golf. From this central tower, a series of ZipZag masts will extend and form a continuous circuit around the site, creating a dynamic aerial route. The development has been designed to work sensitively with the existing environment, with no tree removal proposed as part of the scheme.

Overview of the Proposed Ride

The treetop glider is designed as a continuous overhead track system rather than a traditional zip wire, allowing riders to glide through the woodland canopy along a defined alignment. The Treetop Glider is already operational and highly successful at Elveden Forest Center Parcs. The scheme comprises a ZipZag glider system with the following parameter:

- Ride Length: 160m
- Total track length: 195m



- Take-off platform and landing platform
- Elevated track support by masts and backstays
- Spiral access tower
- Concrete foundations and spiral/platypus anchor systems

Benefits of the Scheme

The proposed development introduces a new adventure activity designed to enhance the existing recreational offer at Center Parcs Longleat Forest. The attraction provides an exhilarating treetop experience, beginning from a purpose-built tower located within the woodland canopy. Participants will launch from the elevated platform and travel along a suspended 195m track, twisting and gliding at speed through the treetops before passing over the lake. The experience allows guests to enjoy expansive views of the surrounding forest whilst engaging in a unique and memorable activity.

The proposal represents a mid-scale adventure attraction that will complement the village's existing leisure offer. It will utilise vertical space within the woodland canopy, allowing the activity to be delivered with minimal impact on the forest floor. By elevating the track system, the development maintains ground-level permeability, ensuring that existing paths and woodland routes remain accessible. In addition, the design approach seeks to limit ecological disturbance, with any vegetation management focused on targeted pruning, rather than widespread tree clearance.

The structural design has been carefully considered to minimise the physical footprint of the development. The elevated track system and slender mast supports reduce the extent of ground-level intervention when compared to traditional ground-based attractions, helping to preserve the character and function of the woodland environment.

Overall, the proposed Treetop development represents a proportionate and carefully considered enhancement to the leisure and adventure offer at Center Parcs Longleat Forest. The attraction will broaden the range of activities available to guests and contribute positively to the visitor experience, while remaining sensitive to the woodland setting, landscape character, and ecological value of the site.

Planning Policy

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications for planning permission to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In addition, government policy, principally the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024).

The Statutory Development Plan against which this application is to be determined includes the Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015) and the Sustainability Appraisal (Incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment) Adoption Statement (2015).

Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015)

CP1 – Settlement Strategy

The Settlement Strategy identifies the settlements where sustainable development will take place to improve the lives of all those who live and work in Wiltshire.



CP2 – Delivery Strategy

The Delivery Strategy recognises that, in some settlements, new jobs have not necessarily been delivered alongside new homes. It therefore seeks to strengthen communities, by allowing appropriate growth to provide for the most sustainable pattern of development within Wiltshire. Within the limits of development, there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development at the Principal Settlements, Market Towns, Local Service Centres and Large Villages.

CP39 – Tourist Development

Tourism development will be supported where it is directly related to a countryside attraction, where no suitable alternative sites are available, and where the scale and design respects the surrounding landscape. Development must also provide adequate access and infrastructure and offer reasonable access to local services and employment. Extensions to existing tourism facilities should be proportionate in scale and help support their long-term viability.

CP41 – Sustainable Construction and Low-Carbon Energy

This policy identifies how sustainable construction and low-carbon energy will be integral to all new development in Wiltshire. In doing so, this policy sets the framework for meeting a number of national and local priorities that seek to achieve sustainable development and conserve natural resources. This policy will help to reduce Wiltshire's contribution to climate change through improved design and construction methods.

CP50 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Development proposals must demonstrate how they protect features of nature conservation and geological value as part of the design rationale. All development should seek opportunities to enhance biodiversity. Sustainable development will avoid direct and indirect impacts upon local sites through sensitive site location and layout, and by maintaining sufficient buffers and ecological connectivity with the wider environment.

CP51 – Landscape

Development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance landscape character and must not have a harmful impact upon landscape character, while any negative impacts must be mitigated as far as possible through sensitive design and landscape measures.

CP57 – Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping

A high standard of design is required in all new developments, including extensions, alterations, and changes of use of existing buildings. Development is expected to create a strong sense of place through drawing on the local context and being complementary to the locality.

CP60 – Sustainable Transport

The council will use its planning and transport powers to help reduce the need to travel particularly by private car, and support and encourage the sustainable, safe and efficient movement of people and goods within and through Wiltshire.



CP61 – Transport and New Development

New development should be located and designed to reduce the need to travel particularly by private car, and to encourage the use of sustainable transport alternatives.

CP64 – Demand Management

Demand management measures will be promoted where appropriate to reduce reliance on the car and to encourage the use of sustainable transport alternatives.

CP67 – Flood Risk

Development proposed in Flood Zones 2 and 3 as identified within the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment will need to refer to the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment when providing evidence to the local planning authority in order to apply the sequential test in line with the requirements of national policy and establish best practice.

All new development will include measures to reduce the rate of rainwater run-off and improve rainwater infiltration to soil and ground (sustainable urban drainage) unless site or environmental conditions make these measures unsuitable.

National Planning Policy Framework

National policy is defined by the relevant paragraphs of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) and National Planning Practice Guidance ('NPPG').

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides overarching guidelines for the planning system, and the purpose of planning is to help achieve sustainable development.

Paragraph 39 states that local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.

Chapter 6 of the NPPF sets out ways which the government wishes to build a strong and competitive economy. Paragraph 88, relation to a prosperous rural economy, sets out how planning policies and decisions should enable:

- a) The sustainable growth and expansion of all businesses in rural areas.
- b) The development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based businesses.
- c) Sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside
- d) The retention and development of accessible local services and local community facilities

Chapter 8 of the NPPF sets out ways in which planning policies should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which: promote social interaction are safe and accessible, enable and support healthy lives.

Chapter 12 states the importance of achieving well-designed places. This ensures the creation of high-quality, beautiful and sustainable places. Design policies should be developed with local communities,



so they reflect local aspirations and each areas defining characteristics. This includes landscaping details and trees which make an important contribution to character.

Chapter 15 of the NPPF sets out ways in which planning policies should aim to conserve and enhance the natural environment, recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and minimise impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity.

Planning Assessment

This section assesses the proposed erection of a treetop glider, with associated infrastructure at Longleat Forest Center Parcs against the relevant local and national planning policy framework.

Principle of Development

The application site lies within Longleat Forest Center Parcs, an established leisure and tourism destination of regional and national importance. It is considered the proposed Treetop Glider is directly associated with the existing countryside leisure destination and represents an extension contained within the established outdoor activities already present within the Parc. There are no existing structures within the immediate area that could reasonably accommodate this form of elevated adventure attraction, and the scale, alignment and design of the ride infrastructure are appropriate to its woodland setting.

The proposal can be served by the village's established access arrangements and supporting infrastructure, and the Center Parcs operation already demonstrates strong connectivity to the local employment base. The scheme is, therefore, considered to accord with the requirements of Policy CP39.

Design

The site lies within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB, as well as the Greensand Hills Landscape Character Area. The proposed development has been designed with careful consideration of this sensitive landscape context, ensuring that the character and qualities of the site are preserved while accommodating the introduction of the new glider.

The scale and the form of development are acceptable, as shown in the visuals, they are not overbearing on the trees. They have been designed to respect the character of the surrounding areas. The visual impact of the proposal will be largely contained within the Center Parcs complex, with limited views of the site from the Mid Wilts PROW that follows the public road to the northwest of the site. Considering the maturity of the trees which surround the site any views will be limited to glimpses.

Consequently, the main urban design considerations are the relationship between the treetop glider structure, the woodland setting and the rest of the complex. The materials have been carefully selected so that they blend into the natural landscape.

Impact on Amenity

The proposal would not have an adverse impact upon neighbouring amenity due to the location of the proposed building away from other nearby holiday chalets. The proposal is, therefore, considered to comply with the relevant criteria of CP57.



Biodiversity, Trees and Green Infrastructure

The accompanying PEA and BNG Assessment prepared by Morph confirms that the impact of the Treetop Glider would be minimal given that the mitigation measures are following. Mitigation includes commuting and foraging amphibians, badgers and bats, as well as nesting birds. Bat and bird boxes should be implemented as part of the scheme. Woodland enhancement is to occur on site to achieve BNG.

In terms of trees, all are to be retained as a result of the works, some require pruning and ongoing management to facilitate the Treetop Glider as identified in the accompanying Tree Report. Appropriate mitigation and management during construction of the works is set out in the Report.

Chapter 15 of the NPPF seek to protect and enhance biodiversity and green infrastructure. The proposals have been carefully designed to minimise impacts on the surrounding woodland, with the development working around the natural characteristics of the environment.

No trees are to be removed as part of the proposal, instead there will be targeted pruning of trees. The proposals are consistent with Policy CP41, CP50 and CP51 of the Wiltshire Local Plan and will not result in unacceptable harm to biodiversity or green infrastructure.

Sustainable Development

The NPPF establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development, paragraph 39 of the NPPF encourages a positive and proactive approach to decision-making, seeking developments that improve economic, social and environmental conditions. CP41 of the local plan also emphasises the importance of how sustainable construction will be integral to all new development in Wiltshire.

The proposals align with these policies, delivering clear sustainable benefits through supporting a key tourism and employment destination and enhancing the guest's activity experience. Environmental impacts have been carefully considered and mitigated, and the development remains modest, well-designed and appropriate to its setting.

Conclusion

The proposal demonstrates that the erection of a Treetop Glider and associated infrastructure is compliant with national and local planning policy.

The proposed development represents an appropriate and sustainable development to the parc. The development is designed to integrate within the existing woodland setting, working sensitively with the surrounding environment. No trees are proposed to be removed, as demonstrated by the submitted plans and supporting documentation.

For the reasons set out, the overall planning balance weighs in favour of the application and should be supported by the local planning authority and, therefore, we request that planning permission is granted without delay.

Yours faithfully



Jessica Hird MRTPI