



Adventure Forest Ltd. T/A Go Ape,
Proposed High Ropes Course at Alexandra Park

Proposal and Explanation

1. Background to Go Ape

- 1.1 Go Ape is the multi-award winning provider of high ropes adventure courses which enable people of all ages to experience an adventure up in the tree canopy. Go Ape's traditional 'Tree Top Adventure' (TTA) courses, designed for anyone over 10 years old, have been built and successfully managed at over 29 sites across the UK for over ten years, including within National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Go Ape have recently developed children's courses called Tree Top Junior (TTJ) to open up the activity to a younger audience. The design for Alexandra Park sees the development of a new hybrid course which effectively combines the adult and children courses together for a more compact urban setting.

2. Location of the Proposed Development

- 2.1 The proposed location of the high ropes course is in the north western corner of Alexandra Park, close to the café and existing play ground, as can be seen on the attached Location Plan.

3. Who Will Use the Course?

- 3.1 The ropes course has been designed to be accessible to the vast majority of people, including both adults and children. Anyone over 1 metre tall will be able to access the course, and there is no age limit. In fact the oldest Go Ape participant was a 96 year old blind lady, so the course will be very inclusive.
- 3.2 The course is made up of different loops of crossings. Some of which have been specifically designed to be more suitable to children and some which are much more demanding and only accessible to older participants. Whilst some children will not be allowed to access the higher routes, adults will be able to access the children's route so are able to share in the experience with their children if they so wish.

4. How Does the Course Work?

- 4.1 The course is made up of a number of elements including a large central platform, platforms on trees, platforms on poles, timber and wire crossings and zip wires.

- 4.2 The course will focus around a large central platform from which five circuits of crossings start and finish. These crossings will be at three different heights. In addition, there are five zip lines, four starting at the central platform and one zipping back towards the area of the platform. Secured around the whole of the course is a continuous metal safety cable, the 'continuous belay', which participants are attached to at all times.
- 4.3 Participants will be greeted and issued Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). The PPE includes a harness with an attached pulley. The start of the course is the central platform which has a set of access stairs built within that allow participants to reach the two levels from which they can access the various circuits of crossings.
- 4.4 Participants will then make their way around the course, traversing the various crossings at height before descending the zip lines back to the ground. They will then return onto the course via the main platform.

5. What Are the Operational Hours?

- 5.1 The Go Ape course will be managed by a dedicated site based team. The operating season for the course will initially be from the February half term school holidays to the first few weeks of December with the course closed for the rest of December and January. However once established if there is demand the course may eventually be run year round.
- 5.2 The longest opening hours will be between 8am till 9pm or dusk, whichever is earlier.

6. Sessions

- 6.1 There will be a range of sessions available from one to three hours. These sessions will be staggered every fifteen minutes so that participants are accessing the course in a constant flow rather than creating bottle-necks on the course and in the park generally. Please see the attached 'Impact of a Go Ape Course at Alexandra Park on Traffic and Parking, for more detail on the impact on the wider park.

7. What Will the Course Look Like?

- 7.1 The ropes course will look very similar to existing Go Ape facilities that are around the UK although as this is a new type of course there are some elements that have not previously been seen. In the main natural materials such as timber will be used which will help the course blend in with its natural surroundings.
- 7.2 The majority of the course is high up in the trees or on poles at three levels. Only the access staircase and zip landing sites will be in contact with the ground. The attached course plan illustrates the layout of the course which will consist of the following structures:
- (i) A central platform and staircase.
 - (ii) Tree top platforms braced to the trunks of the course trees.
 - (iii) Poles effectively acting as trees in locations where none are present.
 - (iv) Timber, wire and rope crossings arranged in five circuits.
 - (v) 5 zip wires and landing sites.

Images of examples of existing course structures at some of our other sites in the UK are attached.

7.3 Tree Top Platforms and Wooden Braces

- 7.3.1 The course is made up of wooden platforms from which the crossings are strung between. These platforms sit upon a wooden brace that uses two long bolts positioned either side of the trunk to clamp the wood to the tree. A nail is used to help keep the wood in place whilst the bolts are put in position. During an annual independent tree inspection tree growth is noted. If a tree has grown significantly then the braces and platforms can be altered to give the tree more room.

7.4 Central platform and Access Stairs

- 7.4.1 The course is accessed via a set of stairs situated below the large central platform.

7.5 Crossings

- 7.5.1 Various crossings of different lengths span the gaps between the tree top platforms and allow participants to make their way around the course. These crossings are constructed of

timber, wire cable and/or rope, all materials that blend in with the natural surroundings of the course. Crossings are replaced and refreshed throughout the life of the course.

7.6 Sacrificial Battens

7.6.1 Throughout the length of the course runs the safety cable which makes up the continuous belay system. This cable has to be appropriately secured to each of the trees on the course. Various crossings also require cables and/or brace attachments to the trees. None of the cabling or braces come into contact with the trees but is held away from the bark by sacrificial wooden 'full round' battens. The battens are kept in place with nails in order to ensure the correct position during construction however no loading is placed on the nails and penetration is kept to a minimum. As the tree grows it pushes these battens out into the metal cables and braces which eventually dig into and crush the battens instead of the tree. During annual tree inspections these battens are inspected and can be replaced if necessary.

8. How Big is the Ropes Course?

8.1 The ropes course will be located within an area of approximately 0.68 hectares; however the course does not physically occupy the whole of this space. The crossings are up in the trees; only the access stairs, the zip landing zones and the cabin will take up physical space on the ground. The course therefore does not require the exclusive use of this part of the park; visitors will be able to walk underneath the crossings and use the area as they do presently.

9. Is the Course Safe?

9.1 Go Ape have over 10 years' experience of managing high ropes courses with over 4 million people having successfully completed a Go Ape course without serious injury. Alongside our construction partners Altus we are at the forefront of innovation and improvement in both operational safety and construction methods. We have both contributed significantly to the European Ropes Course Standard.

9.2 The Primary Authority Environmental Health Officer for Go Ape has certified that Go Ape complies with all relevant UK Health & Safety laws, regulations and guidance¹.

¹ Linda Green, Cheshire West & Chester Council.

- 9.3 The use of the continuous belay system means we can offer this activity to anyone over 1 meter tall as there is no responsibility on their part to make sure they stay attached. The safety cable runs continuously around the course. Before ascending the access stairs a participant's belay device (pulley) is 'threaded' onto the safety line with the help of one of our instructors. Participants are then attached to the safety line until after they have completed the course and have descended the access stairs and are firmly back on the ground.
- 9.4 Additionally, all Go Ape staff are First Aid trained and the company carries full public liability insurance.

10. Will the Course Adversely Affect Other Visitors?

- 10.1 Go Ape does not require exclusive access to this area of the park; the area in which the course will be built will still be able to be used by other members of the public.
- 10.2 The course has been designed to not interfere with any events held on the large field, and the zip lines run down the edge of the tree line.
- 10.3 The course will not interfere with any pre existing users of Alexandra Park in any way.

11. Will it be Noisy?

- 11.1 No machinery is required to operate the course, the only noise associated with its operation is that made by participants as they experience the trees from the height of the canopy. The proposed development is next to the existing play ground and all weather sports pitches where the sounds of people enjoying themselves is already a common occurrence.
- 11.2 Go Ape have commissioned a Noise Consultant (Duncan Newhall of DKN Acoustics) to comment on the impact of noise of a Go Ape course on, most specifically, the neighbouring properties. Whilst this needs a site specific assessment to confirm his conclusions, you will see in the attached report that the Go Ape course is likely to have no impact on the nearest properties.

12. What will be the Visual Impact?

- 12.1 It is appreciated that the visual impact on and from the Palace is very sensitive, and the design has this in mind. The area of the proposed course is set down the hill and the other side of the lower car park that hosts overflow parking and occasional facilities such as the fairground.
- 12.2 The attached plan shows where the course will be visible from. You will see that the impact on views is minimal and doesn't impinge on the Palace itself. An illustration of the actual view of the course from an existing location in the Park (close to the Deer Enclosure) is also attached, along with the photo of the existing location.

13. The Cabin

- 13.1 The course will require the use of a cabin that is used as a reception, office and equipment store. The proposed location of a cabin is indicated on the plans. There already exists an old storage shed on this site, and while we would love to use this in its current state, it is not secure enough for our purposes. Instead, we propose to build a new cabin on the site of the old shed (potentially keeping half of the old shed for the park team). The style of this cabin is shown in the attached images.

14. How Many People will be Employed?

- 14.1 A number of full and part time seasonal (March – November inclusive) jobs will be created. As many as 20 positions will be created.
- 14.2 Go Ape is an equal opportunities employer and all new jobs will be advertised within the local area.

15. What is the Effect on Traffic Levels and Parking?

- 15.1 The advantage of Alexandra Park's central London location is the ready access to an extremely good and well used public transport network, which includes the London Underground, London buses, taxis and Barclays bicycles.

- 15.2 You will see in the attached document that at peak capacity, the course will create the need for 41 extra car parking spaces (including 20 staff cars) and generate 17 car arrivals an hour.
- 15.2 Go Ape has invested significantly in a booking and visitor management IT system which is now used by all of our facilities. Whilst we do allow on-the-day/walk-up bookings, we strongly encourage pre-booking and now 85-90% of our customers pre-book. This allows us to monitor and manage peak-flows and ensure that our clients have the best possible experience that doesn't involve queues, etc. In addition we ask at the booking stage what method of transportation the visitor (and any others in their party) is planning to use. This enables us to monitor and manage usage levels of private vehicles by our clients: our booking system can then 'flag up' where this is expected to be high such that we can issue a request to our pre-booked visitors to use public transport instead. Where necessary to prevent conflict with other events we can even notify our users in advance that there will be no parking available onsite and to use public transport; we can also offer a discount to encourage visitors to use public transport for periods where this is felt desirable.

16. What Impact will the Course Have on the Trees and the Woodland?

- 16.1 As discussed earlier, the construction of the course is designed to minimise the impact on trees. Go Ape conducts annual independent inspections of all trees as well as conducting long term studies into the impact on tree health. With the exception of some localised oxidation of the small nails used, there is no long term damage to the trees. We work closely with an independent arboriculturalist, John Harraway, who monitors the impact of the courses on our trees, both on a general level as well as monitoring the individual trees.
- 16.2 Some of the loops will use the large Plane trees, with some branch removal likely. Before any planning application is submitted, this will be discussed in detail with the Tree Officer from Haringey Council and alternatives found if necessary.
- 16.3 Most of the course is hidden in a largely self seeded and undermanaged woodland behind the café. In here, some trees will be used and supplemented with poles. As part of any

build, Go Ape will undertake to work with the Trust to improve the quality of the woodland by thinning and management of the area.

- 16.4 Our courses are also friendly to the wildlife. The wood peel (which is an otherwise waste product from timber processing) creates habitats for small creatures and the undersides of our platforms have provided the perfect shelter for nesting birds! In addition, we recycle as much material as possible.
- 16.5 During the design and build of every course, an independent ecological impact assessment is undertaken. Thus far, and in areas including SSSI's and AONB's, Go Ape courses have consistently been shown to have no detrimental impact on the environment. Indeed, Go Ape work at sites to enhance the local ecology where-ever they can.
- 16.6 We use local goods and services for the production and maintenance of our courses; and for our Groups & Events packages we use local conference facilities and local caterers who source and use local produce.

17. Expected Visitor Numbers

- 17.1 Our broad estimate of visitor numbers is between 35,000 - 40,000 a year. This is based on data from existing sites which already have an adult and junior course in operation for over a year. The range of estimated visitor numbers takes as its base a good (but not the highest performing) site.

18. What participant's say about our ropes courses



Kathleen Chandley, Moors Valley

Absolutely loved it - we had a brilliant day and never felt as though we were rushed as the entrance was timed. The staff were very friendly and helpful. The course was very well set-out and none of it was boring. The youngest was 8 and the eldest was 46 - we all had a great time.



Sam Hardy, Thetford

Awesome day out with my children..... They were blown away with the junior course having watched me a few times before. They have the feeling of danger where there is none - perfect. 10/10.



Simone Jalabert, Thetford

Adventure Forest Ltd. T/A Go Ape, Proposed

Excellent welcome and very clear safety instructions. When children were a bit nervous the instructors were very patient helping them across one of the obstacles and they went on loving the rest of the course. Great family adventure.



Michael Snaith, Moors Valley

Being able to share this experience with my two daughters was enormously enjoyable if not challenging on one or two occasions for the older member of the team. The professionalism of the staff was very impressive and they made us very welcome.



Johannah Hollands, Thetford

Excellent opportunity for younger children to have a Go Ape Experience. We absolutely loved every minute of it and will return some time soon. All staff professional and helpful too.

Images from existing UK Go Ape facilities

Example of a Typical Platform





Example of Typical Crossings



Example Zip Line 1



Example Zip Line 2



Example of a Zip-line Landing Site



Example of Brace and Platform Construction