



Planning Committee

Abbey Ward

3 March 2009

**2008/386/FUL ERECTION OF 25 LODGE-STYLE ACCOMMODATION UNITS
ANCILLARY TO THE MAIN HOTEL WITH ASSOCIATED
LANDSCAPING AND INFRASTRUCTURE
ABBAY HOTEL, GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB, DAGNELL END ROAD,
REDDITCH
APPLICANT: RSM LEISURE LTD
EXPIRY DATE: 17 MARCH 2009**

Site Description

(See additional papers for Site Plan)

The site is formed from an existing area of the golf course operated by the Abbey Hotel, and includes a large pond. The site is bounded to the north by Dagnell End Road, to the east by the western end of Hither Green Lane, and to the south by the remainder of the golf course. Adjacent to Hither Green Lane are also two car parking areas, one formally surfaced and marked out for hotel users and the other more informal and rough surfaced for golf course users. To the west of the site is an open field, beyond which is the Meadow Farm public house.

The existing Abbey hotel comprises a 100 bed hotel, conference and leisure facilities, and on site parking provision in excess of the current standards.

Proposal description

The proposal is for the creation of a small area of chalet/lodge style single storey timber buildings around the lake on the opposite side of Hither Green Lane from the existing hotel complex.

There would be 13 lodges for up to 4 people, and 12 smaller lodges for up to 2 occupants. Two lodges nearest the existing hotel would include full disabled access and facilities. The intention is that they form en-suite bedroom accommodation, with living areas, and are ancillary to the hotel in that the occupants can use the hotel facilities, including catering, sport and golf facilities. However, there would be basic facilities within each lodge for preparing drinks and snacks etc. The proposal includes the use of sustainable materials.

The lodges would be of timber construction, and made up of octagonal pods, some attached in pairs, with decking areas for sitting out. The lodges for two people are a single octagonal unit without decking. Each has a pitched roof of a similar shape to those atop the turrets of the main hotel complex, finished with cedar shingles to a maximum height at the point of the pitch of 4m. For all the lodges the external walls would be made of pine lapped boarding, and the window frames would also have a natural pine finish, with double glazed units inserted.

Copper rainwater goods are proposed, as these weather well and become an integral part of the building and do not become visually intrusive. The lodges are designed and constructed so that at the end of their useful life they can be easily removed and recycled, and the site is left to return in its former natural condition. A security and control building adjacent to the barrier entrance is proposed, comprising 3 linked octagonal pods. Angling decks around the lake shore are proposed, and those lodges around the lake shore also have their decking fronting the lake.

The proposal shows an area to the north east of the site for car and cycle parking. There would be a road around the north and west of the site to provide access to the lodges, each of which would have its own parking bay attached, and a pedestrian spine footpath/cycleway linking to the side of Hither Green Lane opposite the hotel entrance. A comprehensive landscaping scheme is also proposed to provide planting, shelter and an attractive environment. The lodges would generally look out over the lake or over the golf course, with a significant tree belt to be retained and improved between the site and the residential properties on Hither Green Lane.

The proposal also shows the introduction of a new members' practice green to the south east of the site, adjacent Hither Green Lane.

The application is supported by the following documents:
Design & Access statement, Planning statement, Transport statement, Travel Plan, TPO statement, Community consultation statement, Secure by design statement, Landscape & visual amenity assessment, Landscape masterplan, Ecological appraisal and Great Crested Newt survey.

Relevant key policies

National planning policy

PPS 1 Delivering sustainable development
PPS6 Planning for town centres
PPG13 Transport
Good practice guide on planning for tourism

Regional Spatial Strategy

PA10 Tourism and culture
T2 Reducing the need to travel

Worcestershire Country Structure Plan

RST14 Tourism development
RST17 Holiday chalets
T3 Managing car use

Borough of Redditch Local Plan No. 3

CS1 Prudent use of natural resources
CS2 Care for the environment

CS4 Minimising the need to travel
CS7 The sustainable location of development
CS8 Landscape character
S1 Designing out crime
BBE13 Qualities of good design
BBE19 Green architecture
BNE1a Trees, woodland and hedgerows
CT1 Access to and within development
CT4 Travel plans
CT5 Walking routes
CT6 Cycle routes
CT10 Traffic management
CT12 Parking standards
R1 Primarily open space

SPD: Designing for Community Safety

The site is wholly within an area designated as Primarily Open Space and within the Arrow Valley Park on the Local Plan proposals map, and the land to the north of Dagnell End Road lies within Bromsgrove Council area and within designated Green Belt.

Relevant site planning history

<i>Application reference</i>	<i>Proposal</i>	<i>Decision</i>	<i>Decision date</i>
08/200	33 lodges ancillary to main hotel	Refused by Members Appeal pending	14/8/8
07/494 and 07/495	Additional leisure facilities at the hotel	Approved	5/2/8
07/486	Relief of condition to allow permanent use of 19 th hole	Approved	24/1/8
07/250	33 lodge style units of accommodation	Withdrawn	31/8/7
06/420	creation of additional golf hole for use when others being repaired/maintained	Approved	23/11/6
00/029	disabled access provision	Approved	18/5/00
99/296	Extension to provide leisure facilities and conference facilities	Approved	18/5/99

The original hotel use of the site was granted permission in the late 1980s following approval of various applications.

Consultation responses

Public

Objections have been received from seventy two households raising the following concerns:

- No proven need for additional accommodation
- Site should remain as protected open space
- Disproportionate increase in size of hotel
- Incorrect location for type of development proposed – should be nearer town centre
- Loss of golf facility
- Visually intrusive
- Lodge buildings out of character with surrounding area
- Lodge buildings too densely sited
- Visual harm to countryside
- Over development of site
- Proximity to existing dwellings
- Increase in traffic generation likely
- Pedestrian crossing would be required on Hither Green Lane
- Inadequate highway capacity
- Insufficient parking for lodges
- Safety and security – crime risk from additional people in area
- Drainage
- Possible harm to environment
- Likely impact on wildlife unacceptable
- 24/7 use
- Increased noise disturbance to Hither Green Lane residents
- Potential future uses if fails in current economic climate
- Previous reasons for refusal still apply
- Impact on existing golfing facilities
- Potential danger of golfers hitting guests with golf balls accidentally

Other non-material planning considerations have also been raised, but are not reported here as they cannot be given any weight when determining this application.

(There appears to be a general lack of awareness amongst residents that the application for the permanent retention of the additional golf hole has been granted planning permission – 07/486. There also appears to be a general feeling that additional hotel users would be a nuisance. There are also various comments regarding land ownership which is not a material consideration.)

It is noted that there would be an over provision of car parking within the hotel complex as a whole as a result of this proposal. However, given the concerns raised by residents of on street parking, the likelihood that most users would arrive in private cars, and the current lack of travel mode options for arriving at the site, it is recommended that rather than refusing, the provision of coach parking facilities within the existing hotel site (blue land) is required.

Therefore, no objection is raised subject to the provision of coach parking facilities within the existing hotel site (blue land), the confirmation of the existence of a taxi drop off/pick up point at the site and the provision of a link to the local footpath network if possible. These are considered necessary because whilst it is accepted that most users would travel to and from the site by a private car, in the interests of encouraging sustainability and linking the site with other tourist attractions in the vicinity these measures would assist and be appropriate and related to the proposal.

Development Teams

No objection subject to justification of loss of open space in terms of policy criteria

Crime Risk Manager

No objection subject to conditions regarding boundary treatment, car parking, CCTV and barrier details.

Drainage officer

No response received

Biodiversity officer

The following comments have been made:

- No mitigation or replacement open space proposed to off set loss on this site
- Site is adjacent to Green Belt to north
- 5m buffer strip around pond should be provided
- Lodges should not be too close to pond
- No predatory fish should be introduced into pond
- Should not allow fishing
- Pond should be protected by fencing during construction
- Encourages the proposed green corridor, retention and proposals for more planting

Environmental Health Officer

No objection subject to conditions regarding burning and hours of construction (the burning requirements would be best dealt with by the imposition of an informative).

Historic Conservation adviser

No objection

Bromsgrove District Council

Raised concerns regarding impact on their Green Belt to north of site, and the incorrect interpretation of their local planning policy framework by the applicant in their supporting statement.

Crime Risk Manager

Objects due to lack of proposed security measures for the car parking provision. However, additional information has been requested to address these concerns and if it is not forthcoming it could be required through the imposition of a condition. Further details will be provided on the Update paper if necessary.

Natural England

No response received

Environment Agency

No response received

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust

No response received

Procedural Matters

The period for responding to consultations has lapsed (on 30 January 2009), and therefore under the statutory framework, where no responses have been received, no objection can be assumed.

Any further responses received after publication of the report and prior to the meeting will be reported on the Update paper in order that they can be taken into consideration, even though received late.

Any existing concerns or difficulties are not material considerations when considering this application – this cannot be considered an opportunity to control previous consented development, nor can it be used to control matters outside the defined area of the application site. If there are perceived concerns, these should be dealt with, where expedient, through the proper enforcement channels if any breach of permission has occurred. However, in this case, there are no concerns or breaches of consent on the Abbey Hotel site that Officers are aware of.

The proposal is of a sufficient size to warrant screening under the EIA regulations. This is a process where the LPA considers the size and possible impacts of the proposal against criteria in the legislation, and then determines whether an EIA should accompany the application or not. In this case, given the criteria in the regulations, the nature of the proposed scheme and the submitted supporting information, an EIA is not required.

A formal determination to this effect has been placed on the statutory register and the planning file, in accordance with the statutory requirements.

Matters relating to land ownership and restrictive covenants are not material considerations within the planning process, and should be dealt with separately under the appropriate processes.

Members should note that the granting of this application would only result in permission for what is shown in this application, and should alternative uses be proposed in the future, a further application seeking consent for such uses would be required, and thus control over the use of the site would be retained by the Local Planning Authority.

Assessment of proposal

Principle

The site lies within designated Primarily Open Space within the Local Plan, and as such its protection would normally be sought. Proposals for development on such sites must be considered against the criteria within Policy R1. In this case, the open space has no public access as it is in private. The applicant has confirmed that the Abbey Ward, in which the site lies, would retain an above average provision of open space per 1000 population even if the proposal were allowed, and this remains well above the average provision across the Borough, with no additional requirements caused by the proposed development. The policy also states that proposals that '*contribute to the nature and purpose of the open space may be deemed acceptable by the Council*'. The impact of the proposal on the economic and tourism sectors of the Borough is argued by the applicant to outweigh the loss of the open space.

National planning guidance on town centres includes leisure and tourism uses as appropriate for locating within town centres, and suggests that it is preferable to do so. However, where the proposed development is an extension to an existing use on a site outside a town or district centre, or would not be appropriate within a town centre location then this is accepted providing that the proposal would not have a negative impact on existing town centre provision. Due to the nature of the hotel, its location, and that of others within the Borough, it is not considered that this proposal would have such an effect. Given the nature of the proposal, it would clearly be inappropriate to site such development within a highly urban area such as a town centre. It is further considered that the benefits of additional employment and economic activity are such that the principle of the proposed development is acceptable.

National planning guidance on tourism seeks to locate developments in such a way that they are of an appropriate design which is sustainable, and have a positive impact on the environment. The detailed elements of this are considered below, however the guidance also supports the extension and improvement of existing tourism facilities, and therefore the principle of

this proposal is considered acceptable in this regard. The guidance also discusses issues which may require control through the imposition of conditions. In this case, it is therefore recommended that due to the location of the site, a condition is attached to ensure that the lodges remain in use for holiday purposes and not as permanent accommodation or main residences. This is because the creation of new dwellings on this site would not normally be considered acceptable.

The loss of one hole from the golf course is not considered to result in a detrimental impact on the provision of this sports facility as there are currently 19 holes, and therefore the loss of one would still result in a playable 18 hole golf course. The applicant has provided plans demonstrating the current and proposed layout of the course, and it is considered that minimal disruption to it would occur if the development were allowed to go ahead.

Thus, it is considered on balance that the proposal is not considered to be contrary to policy in terms of the protection of existing sports and leisure facilities, and that the principle of development in this location is acceptable and in compliance with policy and planning guidance, but that the detail should also be acceptable in order to reach a favourable conclusion.

Design and Amenity

The design of the proposed lodges and associated landscaping areas is considered to be acceptable in that it relates well to the existing topography and character of the landscape and the lake, and would maintain the countryside character of the site. The lodges are not overly large, and as such would be in sympathy with their surroundings, as well as giving a natural appearance and feel to the area by reason of the proposed materials and design. Their design is considered to be acceptable in that they would be low rise and amongst taller vegetation, and their roofshape is considered to reflect and thus relate to the shape of some of the detailed roof structures on the main hotel building. It is therefore considered that the proposed development would be unlikely to have any harmful effects on the wider landscape views or character, or be visually intrusive.

The lodges nearest to existing residential dwellings on Hither Green Lane are at a minimum distance of 46m to the curtilage and 65m to the house and would have a significant tree belt between, and it is therefore considered that there would not be any significant detrimental impacts on residential amenity caused by the proposed development.

Highway safety and parking

The layout of roads, parking areas and accesses within the site is considered to be appropriate to the overall appearance of the proposed development. Hither Green Lane has no parking restrictions along it, and therefore any slight overspill could be accommodated. However, as the hotel has more spaces than would normally be required under the current adopted policies, there would also be space within the hotel site to

accommodate any occasional and unforeseen traffic peaks. Further, as this overprovision of parking spaces is contrary to Local Plan policy, it is recommended that some coach parking provision be created within the existing hotel car park, which could particularly lower car parking requirements in relation to the conference facilities.

Due to the location on the edge of the settlement, the type of development proposed, and the likely high use of private cars to access the site, there are concerns regarding the sustainability and accessibility of the site. However, it is in close proximity to the Forge Mill Museum, from which there are footpath and cycle links all through the Arrow Valley Park and into the centre of Redditch. The applicant has therefore been approached regarding the provision of a link from the golf course site to this network. Coach and taxi parking provision can be controlled through the imposition of conditions.

Therefore, with these measures to improve the accessibility and therefore sustainability of the site and thus encourage a wider range of modes of transport to be used to access and leave the site, the proposal is considered to be in compliance with the central aim of the planning system to ensure that all development is sustainable. Therefore conditions are recommended to ensure that these measures are provided, maintained and retained.

Landscape and ecology

The report and survey work provided in support of the application are considered to have been carried out using a recognised and robust methodology, and demonstrate that there are no protected species within the site or its environs. It is therefore not considered that the proposal would result in a detrimental impact on the wildlife and habitats present on the site in the longer term, as the landscape and planting proposed is similar to that currently in existence on the site, and as much as possible would be retained during construction, with new planting to occur prior to occupation to ensure the ecological benefits of the site. The expert officer welcomes the proposals to retain existing corridors and enhance them and the planting of the site, which is in compliance with the relevant planning policies.

It is noted that the biodiversity officer has commented on policy requirements, specifically in relation to the provision of alternative open space. However, the requirements of Policy R1 have been addressed above.

The applicant has submitted additional information to address the points raised by the biodiversity officer, which include a note that the fish he seeks to prevent introducing to the pond are currently resident there anyway, and thus that some of the other points raised are also irrelevant in the consideration of this proposal. Particularly, the prevention of fishing by not stocking the pond, and the positioning of the lodges so that the pond cannot be accessed by anglers seem not worthy of pursuit.

However, there are also some points raised which seek to enhance biodiversity, in compliance with local plan policy, and these are recommended for inclusion within the imposition of conditions, should permission be granted. The protection during construction of the pond and its inhabitants is also considered to be sensible and to further the aims of planning policy.

The impacts of the proposal on views from within the designated Green Belt to the north of the site are noted by residents and Bromsgrove Council. However, it is not considered that the proposed development would be visually prominent or harmful to the landscape character and wider views of the site and its surroundings, and is therefore considered to be acceptable in this regard.

Sustainability

Two issues should be considered here – the sustainability of the materials and methods of construction of the proposed built form, and the accessibility of the site and range of modes of travel possible to arrive at it or depart from it. These latter are considered above under the highway safety and parking heading.

The proposal has been designed with sustainability at its heart as much as possible, particularly in relation to the construction and maintenance of the lodge accommodation. All the information submitted in support of this is considered to be acceptable, and the proposal is considered to be compliant with planning policy aims at all levels.

Secured by design

It is considered appropriate to ensure the safety of car park users and their vehicles, and to prevent unauthorised access to the site by vehicles, and therefore it is recommended that a condition be imposed to ensure the safety and security of the site in line with policy requirements.

Conditions are recommended regarding specific elements of the proposal to ensure that these are implemented, both to ensure compliance with local plan policy and to ensure safety and security on site. Details of lighting and CCTV cameras have been provided, and are considered to be acceptable by the Crime Risk Manager on further consultation. It is therefore considered that there would be no significant risk to the safety of users of the site or the surrounding residents caused by the proposed development, and it therefore accords with the local policy framework. The imposition of conditions to ensure that the security measures and provided, retained and operated on the site is recommended to ensure ongoing compliance.

Other issues

It is likely that some signage will need to be displayed across the site to aid visitors in their navigation, however no details have been provided for consideration as part of this application. Therefore, an informative note is recommended to be attached to the decision notice to alert the applicant/agent to the requirement for gaining advertisement consent in some circumstances prior to its display. It is considered possible that such signage could be designed to be sympathetic to the site and its surroundings in terms of its size, location, style and materials such that it would be visually acceptable and unlikely to cause danger to vehicle and pedestrian safety.

Whilst the golf course remains under the control of the owners, who are the applicants in this case, it lies within the blue land and not the application site, and therefore concerns raised by members of the public regarding the management, running and safety of the course are outside the control of this application. It is not perceived to be likely that golfers on the proposed new layout would significantly increase any risks to visitors of the proposed development and therefore is not considered to be a cause for concern.

Conclusion

Whilst weight has to be given to the consideration of the technical loss of Primarily Open Space, the improved facilities and use of the application site proposed, as well as the consideration of the details of the application as set out above are considered to outweigh this potential cause for concern. Further, following the assessment of the proposal it is not considered that it would result in significant harm to amenity or safety, and therefore, subject to conditions regarding some detailed elements of the proposal to ensure their continued compliance with the planning framework and to prevent any harm to amenity or safety, the proposal is considered to be acceptable and approval is recommended.

Site planning history

It is noted that the previously proposed scheme was refused on the following grounds, however in that instance Officers felt able to recommend, on balance, that the proposal be accepted, and again this is considered to be the case.

- 1) The local planning authority has taken into account the information submitted in support of the proposed development, but considers it is not sufficient to outweigh the visual harm caused by the physical expansion of the Abbey Hotel complex into an area of designated open space, contrary to Policy R1 of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3.

- 2) The proposed lodge style buildings would be out of character with the site and its surroundings and represent an inappropriate form of development which would unacceptably detract from the visual and landscape qualities of the area, contrary to Policies CS8 and B(BE)13 of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3.
- 3) The proposed development would unacceptably detract from the living conditions of nearby residents, and the use and enjoyment of the designated open space, by reason of undue noise and disturbance arising from the general activity and vehicular movements associated with the chalet complex. As such the proposal would conflict with Policy B(BE)13 of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3.

Whilst the previous refusal is a material consideration, it is considered, by Officers, to be outweighed by the points raised and addressed in this assessment section of the report, and thus the recommendation remains for approval.

Recommendation that

having regard to the development plan and to all other material considerations, planning permission be GRANTED subject to conditions and informatives as summarised below:

1. Time limit for commencement of development
2. Materials samples and finishes to be agreed including surfacing
3. Lodges to be used only for holidays and not as permanent accommodation or as main residences – max 6 week stay
4. Tree protection during construction
5. Meet NJUG guidelines when installing utilities to protect trees
6. Hard and soft landscaping and timing of implementation to be agreed in writing, including a maintenance programme
7. Implement condition 6 in agreed timeframes
8. Maintain planting so as not to obscure views from CCTV cameras
9. Refuse storage/collection to be agreed
10. Implement in accordance with the recommendations of the ecological report
11. Agree an ecological enhancement scheme, including timings
12. Security details to be implemented as per details submitted
13. Limit on hours of construction
14. CCTV camera locations to be agreed and implemented
15. EA suds condition
16. S278 works to be agreed prior to commencement and implemented prior to first use/occupation of development
17. Provide and maintain coach parking within main hotel complex
18. Taxi pick up/drop off point provision or retention and maintenance
19. Fencing to protect pond during construction

20. Car park boundary treatment details to be agreed and implemented prior to occupation
21. Implementation of pedestrian link from golf course to surrounding footpath network

Informatives

- a) Informative regarding the need for advertisement consent for any signage
- b) Informative regarding requirement for applicant to meet other statutory provisions
- c) Informative regarding lighting standards to prevent light pollution