

**PLANNING
COMMITTEE**

5th October 2011

PLANNING APPLICATION 2011/209/FUL

IMPROVEMENTS TO LEISURE FACILITIES AT EXISTING DRIVING RANGE. REPLACEMENT OF SINGLE STOREY RANGE BUILDING WITH TWO STOREY BUILDING TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF GOLFING BAYS TO 31. IMPROVEMENTS TO RANGE GREEN TO INCLUDE LAKE & LIGHTING SYSTEM, PROVISION OF ANCILLARY CAR PARKING, ACCESS, LANDSCAPING AND SECURITY MEASURES

ABBAY HOTEL GOLF AND COUNTRY CLUB, DAGNELL END ROAD, REDDITCH

**APPLICANT: RSM LEISURE LTD
EXPIRY DATE: 30TH OCTOBER 2011**

WARD: ABBEY

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(See additional papers for Site Plan)

Site Description

Existing large site containing hotel and leisure complex buildings to north western corner accessed from Hither Green Lane's western end, with a golf course wrapping around three sides (not the north) with a residential development of around 180 houses located in the middle of the golf course in a horse shoe shape. Within this shape are the first few holes of the golf course, and the remainder are on the outside of the horse shoe, to the south. Most residential properties are either not immediately adjacent to the golf course, or back onto it.

To the centre of the golf course is an existing driving range facility, with a covered area for golfers and a large grassed area to aim for, with markers etc. and to the south of the golf course is open space beyond which is Church Hill North and the Abbey Stadium site.

Proposal Description

This application proposes several elements which combine to form overall improvements to the existing driving range facility, as follows:

- To replace the existing driving range building with a larger, two storey building. The replacement building would be located 7m further forwards, in order to have a lower floor level and thus be set down within the landscape. It would be two storey, with bays at both levels. It would increase provision from 11 to 31 bays, with 15 at ground floor level and 16 at first floor level. There would be an entrance area with

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WC, stairs to first floor and ball dispensing facilities. The building would be of similar materials to those of the existing hotel complex (brick and tile). The building would be fitted with modern golfing technology to increase the accessibility and appeal of the development to all golfers.

- To alter the green of the driving range by adding a lake to improve the drainage of the whole golf course site, adding greens to practice aiming at and by installing a lighting system. A floating green would be included within the lake, along with a facility for retrieving golf balls that land in the water. The lake would aid the natural drainage of the range, which has had some water retention issues previously at the far end. A bund would be added at the end of the golf range to screen the facility from neighbouring occupiers and help to keep balls within the range limits. The lighting proposed consists of four lamp columns within the parking area, each 6m tall, some within the range building at first floor level shining downwards and 16 low level bollard lights with a very directed beam in the range. This is a modern design of lighting that is proposed in order to minimise any light spill both horizontally and vertically, whilst being effective for its purpose. It is also proposed that the lighting would be illuminated only when necessary, and only between 8am and 10pm.
- The facility would be accessed using the existing track off Hither Green Lane, which would be improved and the sandy surfacing retained for drainage purposes. A barrier entry system well back from the highway would be installed, and an area for parking provided in front of the driving range building, between the existing hotel complex and the range which faces away from the hotel building. This area would accommodate 31 parking spaces and one disabled space, as well as secure covered cycle parking provision.
- Associated landscape improvements are also proposed and no trees are to be lost as a result of this development.

The application is supported by a Design & Access Statement, a planning statement, an ecological appraisal, a photographic schedule, a FRA, a tree assessment report and full details of the proposed lighting scheme, as well as a noise impact assessment and an obtrusive lighting study.

An amended plan has been received re-locating the gate to avoid the root protection zone of the adjacent mature oak tree.

Relevant Key Policies:

All planning applications must be considered in terms of the planning policy framework and all other relevant material considerations (as set out in the

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legislative framework). The planning policies noted below can be found on the following websites:

www.communities.gov.uk

www.worcestershire.gov.uk

www.redditchbc.gov.uk

National Planning Policy

PPS1 (& accompanying documents) Delivering sustainable development

PPG17 Planning for open space, sport and recreation

PPG24 Planning and noise

PPS25 Development and flood risk

Worcestershire County Structure Plan

SD1 Prudent use of natural resources

SD2 Care for the environment

SD4 Minimising the need to travel

CTC6 Green open spaces and corridors

T1 Location of development

T3 Managing car use

T4 Car parking

T10 Cycling and walking

RST1 Criteria for the development of recreation and sports facilities

Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3

CS1 Prudent use of natural resources

CS2 Care for the environment

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

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. The site is identified as open space in use for sports provision within the typology of open space in the Local Plan.

Emerging Policies

The government has recently published its draft National Planning Policy Framework document (NPPF). Whilst it is a consultation document and, therefore, subject to potential amendment, nevertheless it gives a clear indication of the Government's 'direction of travel' in planning policy.

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Therefore, the draft National Planning Policy Framework is capable of being a material consideration, although the weight to be given to it will be a matter for the decision maker's planning judgment in each particular case. The current Planning Policy Statements, Guidance notes and Circulars remain in place until cancelled.

It is not considered in this case that this policy direction is significantly different from that in the other Development Plan documents that are relevant to this decision, and therefore is not referenced further due to it having only little weight at this stage.

The Core Strategy is the document that will eventually replace the local plan, and is currently working through the process towards adoption. It has been published and consulted upon, and therefore counts as emerging policy to which some weight can be given in the decision making process. The current version is the 'revised preferred draft core strategy' (January 2011).

The Core Strategy contains objectives for the overall approach to development in the Borough up until 2026, as well as strategic policies. These include support for the enhancement of existing leisure facilities to the benefit of the community and the local economy.

Relevant site planning history

Appn. no	Proposal	Decision	Date
1987/580	Covered all weather practice and tuition facilities	Granted	15/8/1988
2010/237/ADV	Signage	Granted	10/11/2010
2010/288/FUL	Improvement of driving range etc	Refused	10/11/2010

Other applications have been made in relation to the site as a whole, but these are the only ones relating to this specific parcel of land and its use.

Public Consultation Responses

Responses against

Eight comments received raising the following points:

- Light pollution
- Noise pollution
- Over development
- Increased hours of operation
- There was no lighting before so why allow it now?
- Inappropriate in densely populated residential area such as this
- Should provide a sound/visual barrier

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Consultee responses

County Highway Network Control

No objection subject to conditions regarding access and surfacing

WRS: Environmental Health

No objection subject to conditions regarding construction times and informatives regarding light and odour.

Landscape and Countryside Manager

No objection following receipt of amended plans, subject to condition regarding implementation of tree protection measures proposed

Drainage Engineer

No comments received

Procedural matters

This application is reported to Planning Committee for determination because it falls within the major category and is recommended for approval and because there are more than two objections.

Assessment of Proposal

The key issues for consideration in this case are as follows:

Principle

The improvement of existing sport and recreation facilities on the edge of settlements is supported in the local plan and the structure plan policies, providing that there are no other harmful effects to outweigh the support of a proposal. Therefore, the principle of the proposed development is considered to be acceptable in this case, and the details are considered below.

Design and layout

The design of the proposed building is considered to be sympathetic to the existing built form on the site, and not substantially different from the existing driving range building. Whilst the building would be taller than the existing, its location on lower ground would mitigate some of the additional impact that this could cause and it is not considered that the additional height would result in a significant increase in impact on the visual amenities of any of the surrounding residents. The nearest residents are those whose rear gardens would face the side of the proposed building and are at a distance of more than 100m from it. Those who would face the open bay side of the building are at a distance of at least 270m from the proposed range building. It is therefore considered that the visual impact of the open space would be minimal as a result of this proposal.

The layout has been designed to minimise any negative impacts and contain the use and activity as much as possible, and as such is considered to represent a good design solution which is compliant with policy requirements.

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Impact on residential amenity

Due to the significant distance between gardens/dwellings and the proposed built form, it is not considered likely that the proposal would cause any harm to visual amenity or privacy. It is also considered that this distance would not result in any undue or significant increase in noise disturbance to surrounding residents and no objections have been raised by expert officers in regard to the supporting documentation.

The proposed bund to the southern end of the driving range is considered to result in a visual barrier that would screen the driving range and activities from residential properties as well as possibly providing some sound attenuation to a small degree. The proposed bund is no taller than small trees would be, and thus would not be sufficient to be visually intrusive. It would also help to form a barrier that prevents balls from being sent too far down the range and into areas where they would not be welcomed. As such, the bund is considered to be an appropriate and positive feature of the proposal. The noise impact assessment has also been agreed as reasonable by Officers, and as such there is no reason to suspect that the proposed development would cause any significant noise disturbance to surrounding residents.

Landscaping and trees

There are no plans to remove any mature planting that currently exists on site, but simply to add to the existing landscaping proposals and as such it is considered that these proposals would be welcomed as they would add to the biodiversity of the open space.

Highways and access

The adopted maximum parking standards for a driving range of this size would result in a requirement for 62 car spaces, 3 disabled spaces, 6 cycle parking spaces and 3 motorcycle parking spaces. If only the additional 20 bays are taken into account, these figures reduce to 40 car parking spaces, 2 disabled spaces, 4 cycle spaces and 2 motorcycle spaces. The application proposes 31 new parking spaces and one disabled space adjacent to the range building. It is hoped that some visitors would use the driving range as well as other leisure facilities on the site, and therefore be likely to use the existing parking provision. For example, someone staying at the hotel and using the driving range doesn't require one parking space for each use – that would be double counting. It is therefore considered that a reduction in the maximum standards is acceptable in this case as parking provision already exists for the existing hotel and associated facilities, including the existing smaller driving range.

Other issues

The lighting scheme proposed is designed to cause minimal pollution and light spill. The bollards within the golf course area would not result in the spill of light either horizontally beyond the driving range, or vertically. Thus there should be no residual glow of light upwards or around the facility because the light would be specifically directed in certain areas and ways. It is therefore

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considered that this would not cause any detrimental impacts either on the wider area or on the surrounding residential amenities, particularly given the proposed times of use. The assessment submitted supports this view and is accepted by expert officers who have been consulted. It is, however, recommended that if consent is granted, a condition be imposed to ensure that the lighting is only on between 8am and 10pm and only when the ambient lighting conditions are sufficiently low to warrant their usage. Thus the lighting should never be on at noon, for example, when it would not ever be required.

Whilst the previous proposal was refused on the basis of potential harm to residential amenities from light and noise pollution, the additional information now submitted is considered to demonstrate that these concerns are not supported by evidence, which expert officers from WRS are in agreement with, and therefore these reasons for refusal cannot reasonably remain.

Sustainability

The supporting information suggests that sustainability has been taken into account when designing the scheme, such as using locally sourced materials, encouraging travel by bicycle and the low-power low-spill lighting scheme. It is therefore considered that the sustainable objectives of the planning system have been included within the proposed development. The proposed permeable surfacing is also welcomed and does much to aid sustainability and drainage.

Conclusion

It is considered that the proposed development is compliant with policy requirements and unlikely to cause significant harm to interests of amenity or safety and as such is considered to be acceptable.

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. Commence within three years
2. Hours of use of lighting restricted to hours of darkness between 0800 and 2200 only
3. Lighting to be installed as per details provided with application
4. Highways conditions
5. Permeable surfacing to be retained for the lifetime of the development
6. Approved plans (and details) specified

Informatives

1. Reason for approval
2. Light
3. Odour
4. Highways informatives