

3/09/0882/FP - Erection of single storey extension to reception area. Extension to existing maintenance workshop and existing crèche facility. New indoor swimming pool. New basement for plant and changing facilities at Great Hadham Golf and Country Club, Great Hadham Road, Much Hadham, SG10 9JE for Great Hadham Golf and Country Club

Date of Receipt: 10.06.09

Type: Full

Parish: MUCH HADHAM

Ward: MUCH HADHAM

Reason for report: Major application

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be **REFUSED** for the following reasons:-

1. The application site lies within the Rural Area as defined in the East Herts Local Plan where development will only be allowed for certain specific purposes. There is insufficient justification for the proposed development and it would result in an inappropriate and unsustainable form of development in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt. It would therefore be contrary to policies GBC3, SD1 and SD2 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007.

_____ (088209FP.FH)

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The application site is shown on the attached OS extract.
- 1.2 The Golf and Country Club is located on the west side of Great Hadham Road between Bishop's Stortford and Much Hadham. The application site comprises a large club house building, a small barn and a surface car park accommodating approximately 180 vehicles. The existing buildings comprise approximately 1810 square metres of floor space. To the north east of the site are three residential properties. The rest of the application site is surrounded by an 18 hole golf course and driving range.
- 1.3 The clubhouse itself consists of a pair of large agricultural sheds in green profiled metal cladding with a rendered base. These are linked by a series of single storey rendered buildings with tiled roofs providing hospitality and reception areas plus back of house and maintenance areas.

3/09/0882/FP

- 1.4 The application seeks permission to extend the existing clubhouse as follows:
- (a) The erection of a single storey extension on the southern elevation of the clubhouse to create a new reception area;
 - (b) The enlargement of the existing workshop on the east side of the clubhouse and the conversion of the adjacent detached barn to create a new crèche and male golf changing area;
 - (c) The creation of a basement to house a plant room for the new swimming pool and new changing facilities;
 - (d) The extension of the second storey to create an enlarged gym, additional offices and a club boardroom.
- 1.5 The proposals will create an additional 997 square metres of floorspace, which equates to a 51% increase in floor area. Much of this new floorspace will be formed within the envelope of the existing building and by creating a new basement. The two extensions proposed total a new floor area of 104 square metres. The extensions and alterations to the building will enable the provision of a new reception area, swimming pool, associated changing rooms and plantroom, a golf function/ meeting room, an enlarged gym, an enlarged crèche facility and garden, an enlarged golf professional shop, an indoor golf tuition room, increased facilities in the adult spa, an enlarged aerobic studio, additional offices and a club boardroom over and above the existing facilities currently found at the club.
- 1.6 No alterations are proposed to the existing parking and access arrangements.
- 1.7 The layout and design of the current application remains largely unchanged from a previous application which was withdrawn in 2008 (see 2.0 below). The main difference relates to the labeling of some of the rooms. The personal training room and two aerobic studios are now labeled as golf professional shop, indoor golf tuition and club board room. In addition, several offices are now proposed including a club secretary room with its own shower instead of beauty treatment rooms.
- 1.8 Officers have sought clarification and further justification regarding why these amendments have been made. In response the applicant has advised that *'As a result of re-consideration of priorities, the owners of the club feel that they require more administrative space and specialised golf facilities such as the indoor tuition space and professional shop. The reason the club secretary's room has its own facilities is so that he can take a quick shower after either golf or a work- out.'*

3/09/0882/FP

- 1.9 The application is supported by a Traffic Statement and a Travel Plan Framework

2.0 Site History

- 2.1 Planning permission was first granted in 1992 for the use of existing agricultural buildings to create golf club facilities, the conversion of the farmhouse to create a golf club and the provision of an 18 hole golf course. The accompanying s.106 Agreement included a clause which requires all the buildings to be used for purposes exclusively in conjunction with the golf course. Subsequent to this, several applications have been approved allowing extensions to the original clubhouse building.
- 2.2 Planning permission was granted in 2005 (LPA Ref: 3/03/1499/FP) for the alteration and enhancement of the golf course and the replacement of the driving ranges. This is under construction.
- 2.3 Most recently a planning permission was submitted (LPA Ref: 3/08/1431/FP) for the erection of single storey extension to reception area, an extension to existing maintenance workshop and existing crèche facility, a new indoor swimming pool and a new basement for plant and changing facilities. This was withdrawn by the applicant.

3.0 Consultation Responses

- 3.1 County Highways comments that, unlike the previous proposal, this application is accompanied by a Transport Assessment (TA) and Travel Plan Framework (TPF). From the information submitted in the TA it is considered that the proposal will not have a significant impact in terms of additional traffic movements, particularly in the peak hours.
- 3.2 In terms of the Travel Plan there are a considerable number of points that need clarification and explanation before it could be deemed acceptable. In particular it appears to only consider staff and not visitors or members of the club and further information in respect of the proposed mini bus service is required. These, however, are issues that could be satisfactorily addressed through conditions. The existing means of access onto the public highway is of an adequate standard and does not require modification. Sufficient car parking and on-site vehicle manoeuvring space is retained.
- 3.3 The County Development Unit advises that the County Council seeks to promote the sustainable management of waste in the county and encourages Districts to have regard to the potential for minimising waste generated by development. Consideration should be had to the

3/09/0882/FP

Hertfordshire County Council Waste Local Plan 1999 and specifically policies 3, 7, 8 and 11.

3.4 Hertfordshire County Council Planning Obligations Unit does not wish to comment on the application.

4.0 Parish Council Representations

4.1 Much Hadham Parish Council objects to the scheme for the following reasons:

- The proposal will result in a significant increase in useable space relating to leisure facilities not the golf course;
- There will be an increase in traffic accessing the site on already dangerous junction by increased number of members, staff and service personnel;
- Inadequate cycle parking facilities;
- There will be an increase of membership use outside daylight hours when the site cannot be used to play golf;
- The enlarged crèche is inappropriate;
- Increase in social events resulting from larger function rooms will increase disturbance;
- The proposed extension to the second storey is ugly.

5.0 Other Representations

5.1 The applications have been advertised by way of press notice, site notice and neighbour notification. 18 letters of representation have been received supporting the proposal (mostly from existing members of the club) for the following reasons:

- There is a minimal change to the buildings existing footprint;
- The impact on traffic flow is minimal;
- It will provide additional jobs;
- It will relieve the pressure on other town centre amenities;
- The new swimming pool will enhance the current great social environment;
- The site is not in the Green Belt;
- The existing gym facilities are small and classes oversubscribed;
- The improved facilities will offer opportunity for active recreation in line with National Policy;
- There is a need for additional leisure facilities, including swimming, in Bishop's Stortford;
- It will ease congestion in Bishop's Stortford;

- The additional facilities will encourage members to stay longer, not generate significant extra traffic;
- The impact on the landscape and Green Belt is negligible, because there is little change to the existing buildings;
- There will be no additional external lighting;
- Refusal of this application could jeopardise the long term future of the club;
- The amount of traffic produced is insignificant in comparison to the amount of traffic which currently uses the B1004.

6.0 Policy

6.1 The East Herts Local Plan Second Review (April 2007) policies relevant to the consideration of this application are:

| | |
|------|---|
| SD1 | Making Development More Sustainable |
| SD2 | Settlement Hierarchy |
| GBC2 | The Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt |
| GBC3 | Appropriate Development in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt |
| TR2 | Access to New Developments |
| TR3 | Transport Assessments |
| TR4 | Travel Plans |
| TR7 | Car Parking- Standards |
| TR13 | Cycling- Facilities provision (Non- Residential) |
| TR20 | Development Generating Traffic on Rural Roads |
| ENV1 | Design and Environmental Quality |
| ENV2 | Landscaping |
| LRC6 | Golf Courses |
| IMP1 | Planning Conditions and Obligations |

7.0 Considerations

7.1 The site lies within the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt, although part of the golf course is within the Green Belt, and the site directly bounds the Green Belt to the north and east.

7.2 The main determining issues in this case therefore relate to whether the proposal is appropriate within the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt, where the aims and objectives of policy are placed firmly on growth restraint; the issue of sustainability; and whether the development would be acceptable in respect of traffic generation and highway safety. Consideration also needs to be given to parking and the design and appearance of the proposed extensions, and any impact the proposal may have on neighbouring properties.

- 7.3 Within the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt, under the provisions of Local Plan Policy GBC3, permission will not normally be given for the construction of new buildings or changes of use, other than for those purposes listed under the policy as appropriate development. I do not consider that the proposal constitutes an essential “small scale” facility for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation, nor does it fall within any of the other exception categories. The proposal therefore constitutes “inappropriate” development and consequently it needs to be considered whether there is sufficient justification in this case to warrant a departure from normal Rural Area policy.
- 7.4 In the accompanying planning and design statements the applicant argues that the proposals require only a minimal expansion of the building footprint and that much of the new accommodation will be within the roofspace of the existing building. It is also stated that the current facilities need updating as they no longer support the needs of the membership and *‘that it is proposed to offer the update in line with other successful combined golf and leisure facilities in the area... whilst minimising the impact of the works on the external massing and footprint of the building and re-developing existing space wherever possible.’*
- 7.5 I do not consider the arguments put forward constitute special circumstances to justify departing from Policy GBC3. Whilst I acknowledge that the external alterations to the building are minimal in comparison to the floorspace created, I am of the view that the extended facilities resulting, including those specifically relating to the golfing function of the site, could no longer be considered to be essential to the primary use of the site as a golf course.
- 7.6 As outlined in para 2.1 above, the original planning permission for the golf club in 1992 was accompanied by a s.106 Agreement which included a clause requiring all the buildings to be used for purposes exclusively in conjunction with the golf course. I do not consider that the leisure facilities resulting from the proposals (which would accommodate approximately 55% of the overall new building) could be considered as ancillary to the primary use of the site as a golf course. Indeed, the clubs own website outlines separate health and golf memberships and the hair salon and beauty treatment rooms are open to the general public, indicating that the existing functions in the building are currently not being used exclusively in conjunction with the golf course, in breach of the s.106 agreement. The proposal would also therefore constitute an inappropriate change of use.
- 7.7 Turning now to the issue of sustainability and accessibility, PPS1 states that sustainable development is the core principle underpinning planning, and that planning should facilitate and promote sustainable and inclusive

patterns of development. It goes on to state that planning authorities should provide improved access for all leisure and community facilities, open space, sport and recreation, by ensuring that new development is located where everyone can access services or facilities on foot, bicycle or public transport rather than having to rely on access by car. Policy SD1 of the Local Plan states that applications for proposed developments should explain how development will encourage sustainable movement patterns, and Policy SD2 of the Local Plan seeks to create sustainable patterns of development.

- 7.8 The application site is located approximately 3 miles to the west of Bishop's Stortford and 1.5 miles east of Much Hadham. The site is not accessible by public transport. Dedicated provision for cycle or foot access is poor and whilst the application included the provision of 8 cycle spaces and states that discussions with the County Rights of Way department are underway regarding the provision of 3000 cubic metres of materials to enhance off highway cycle routes to the site, no specific measures are proposed in this application to encourage cycling. Indeed, doing so would be difficult, given the location of the site. Access to the site is therefore predominantly reliant on the car. This clearly raises sustainability considerations.
- 7.9 PPG13 states that a key planning objective is to ensure that jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services are accessible by public transport, walking and cycling, and PPG17 states that when identifying where to locate new areas of sports and recreational facilities, local authorities should promote accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport. Both PPG13 and PPG17 therefore conclude that from a sustainability point of view, sports and recreational facilities should be located as close as possible to the communities that they are designed to serve. Clearly in this case access to the site by public transport is not possible and walking and cycling would in most cases not be practical or desirable.
- 7.10 Whilst there are existing leisure facilities at the site associated with the golf club these could be described as limited in comparison to those proposed. The resultant leisure facilities of the scale proposed would therefore result in an unsustainable form of development contrary to the provisions of Policies SD1 and SD2 of the Local Plan.
- 7.11 With regards to traffic generation and highway safety, in line with County Highways advice, I am satisfied that the proposed development would not result in a significant increase in traffic movement particularly during peak hours and therefore it would not prejudice highway safety. Furthermore the existing access and parking arrangements are sufficient. The application includes the provision of 8 cycle parking spaces. I do not consider this limited number to be sufficient for a development of this type or scale. I do

3/09/0882/FP

however consider that there is sufficient space to provide additional facilities, which could be ensured by condition and therefore do not recommend refusal on these grounds.

- 7.12 Turning to the acceptability of the design and appearance of the physical alterations themselves and any impact these may have on the amenities of neighbouring residents. I consider that the extensions proposed have been designed to complement the existing buildings and are appropriate in both their design and appearance. In addition I am satisfied that, due to the location of the extensions, the fenestration proposed and the buildings relationship with the neighbouring property, the proposal would not result in any undue loss of privacy, light, outlook or similar.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 Having considered the above matters, it is my opinion that the proposed development is contrary to both National and Local Plan policy. The application site lies within the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt and no special circumstances exist to outweigh the presumption against development in this location. Furthermore, the proposal would result in an unsustainable form of development.
- 8.2 For these reasons I recommend that planning permission be refused for the reason set out at the commencement of this report.