

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – 31 JANUARY 2018

Application Number	3/17/2502/FUL
Proposal	Change of use from golf course to golf course with 26 leisure lodges (part retrospective)
Location	Great Hadham Golf and Country Club Great Hadham Road Much Hadham SG10 6JE
Applicant	Arcadia Estates Limited
Parish	Much Hadham
Ward	Much Hadham

Date of Registration of Application	24 October 2017
Target Determination Date	23 February 2018
Reason for Committee Report	Major Application
Case Officer	Fiona Dunning

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be **REFUSED** for the reason(s) set out at the end of this report.

1.0 Summary of Proposal and Main Issues

- 1.1 The proposal is to expand the golf course use to include lodges and the plans submitted with the application show 26 mobile homes located to the west of the existing club house and to the north of the 10th tee.
- 1.2 At the time of the site visit, 3 mobile homes had been placed on a brick plinth with stairs and a small balcony with a paved area surrounding the building. There were approximately a further 5 mobile homes that were on site but had not been fixed to a brick plinth.

- 1.3 The lodges are mobile homes and the level of detail submitted with the application only includes a site plan. Due to the application being part retrospective the site visit revealed further details of how the mobile homes would be finished.
- 1.4 The main issues are the number of mobile homes on the site and the level of detail submitted with the application with regard to how the use will operate and be managed.

2.0 Site Description

- 2.1 The northern part of the site is located within Green Belt and the remainder within the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt on the western side of Great Hadham Road. This road, the B1004, links Bishop's Stortford to the east and Much Hadham to the southwest. Some of the site is designated as Greenbelt.
- 2.2 There are several buildings on the site that were formerly in agricultural use and are now the golf clubhouse and other leisure and community uses. To the south of these buildings is the carpark.
- 2.3 There are dwellings adjoining the site at Exnalls Farm to the north and dwellings adjacent to the southwest corner of the site.

3.0 Planning History

The following planning history is of relevance to this proposal:-

Application Number	Proposal	Decision	Date
3/09/0882/FP	Erection of single storey extension to reception area. Extension to existing maintenance workshop & existing crèche facility. New	Allowed on Appeal	24.8.10

	indoor swimming pool. New basement for plant & changing facilities.		
3/03/1499/FP	Alteration and enhancement of golf course and replacement of driving ranges.	Grant subject to conditions	1.9.05

3.1 Planning permission was granted subject to a S106 Agreement in 1992 for the use of agricultural buildings and land to create golf club facilities, the conversion of the farmhouse to create a golf club and the provision of an 18 hole golf course.

4.0 Main Policy Issues

4.1 These relate to the relevant policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the pre-submission East Herts District Plan 2016 (DP) and the adopted East Herts Local Plan 2007 (LP). The site is within the Much Hadham Neighbourhood Plan Area Designation and there is no draft Neighbourhood Plan drafted that has been consulted on.

Main Issue	NPPF	LP policy	DP policy
Principle of Development	Para 17, Para 55	GBC2 GBC3	GBR2
Tourism and employment in rural areas	Section 3	LRC5 LRC6 LRC10 Para 6.9	ED2 ED5 CFLR1
Housing	Section 6 Para 14	SD1 ENV1 HSG1 HSG2	HOU1 HOU2 HOU3 HOU7

		HSG4 Para 3.16.1 TR1	Para 14.5.1 TRA1 INT1
Surface Water Drainage and Flooding		ENV18 ENV21	WAT1 WAT5
Design	Section 7	ENV1	DES3
Landscaping		ENV2 ENV23	DES1 DES2 EQ3
Archaeology		BH1	HA3

Other relevant issues are referred to in the 'Consideration of Relevant Issues' section below.

Summary of Consultee Responses

- 4.2 Lead Local Flood Authority advises that the details provided are not adequate to determine how the risk of surface water flooding will be managed. A Flood Risk Assessment is vital if the Local Planning Authority is to make an informed planning decision. In the absence of a surface water drainage strategy it objects to the application and recommends refusal. The objection can be overcome by submitting a surface drainage assessment addressing flood risk, giving priority to the use of sustainable drainage methods.
- 4.3 Environment Agency advises that it does not have any objections but there are serious concerns regarding how the Klargester treatment system will be managed so that it operates to protect people and the environment. The Environment Agency has requested that if planning permission is granted that the applicant is advised that the current Environmental Permit will not be sufficient for the proposal.
- 4.4 HCC Historic Environment Unit comments that in 1991 an archaeological evaluation via trial trenches around the golf club located several archaeological sites, four of which dated to the

late Iron Age or Roman periods. The site of the proposed lodges did not have any trial trenches in 1991 and may retain archaeological potential. The proposal should be regarded as likely to have an impact on heritage assets of archaeological interest and therefore conditions are proposed.

4.5 HCC Development Services advise that based on the information provided, HCC will not be seeking financial contributions and have no further comments to make.

4.6 EHDC Environmental Health Advisor does not wish to restrict the grant of permission.

(Note: EHDC, East Herts District Council; HCC, Hertfordshire County Council)

5.0 Town/Parish Council Representations

5.1 The Chair of Much Hadham Parish Council Planning Committee endorses Councillor Devonshire's comments.

6.0 Summary of Other Representations

6.1 1 response has been received supporting the proposals on the following grounds:

- The lodges will not be visible from outside the site
- Club needs an injection of support
- If owners' ideas/plans are successful it will result in employment opportunities
- Increased usage of the golf course which is needed

6.2 Councillor Devonshire considers that the mobile homes are being sold with a 99 year lease and are permanent dwellings and requested a condition requiring the lodges to be vacant for part of the year. It is likely that if the lodges are approved they will be used as permanent dwellings. There is a lot of local opposition to the proposal.

6.3 CPRE Hertfordshire has concerns that the proposal is inappropriate development in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt as the development is residential in nature and is contrary to policy GBC3 in current Local Plan and GBR2 in draft District Plan. The details submitted are inadequate as there are no individual plot plans to show the amenity space and there are no details of the lodges such as internal arrangement or elevations. The lodges are closer to permanent residences than caravans. The applicant has stated the reason for the proposal is economic but has not demonstrated that the lodges would support the financial viability of the golf club. If the golf club closes down what happens to the lodges if they have been sold individually?

7.0 Consideration of Issues

Principle of Development

- 7.1 Policy GBC3 identifies appropriate development in the rural area beyond the green belt. It states that permission will not be given for the construction of new buildings or for changes of use for purposes other than (b) essential small scale facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation. Policy GBC3 (h) recognises small scale facilities, services or uses which meet a local need are appropriate and assist rural diversification.
- 7.2 The application is for a change of use of the land for leisure lodges. This is not considered to be consistent with Policy GBC3 (b) as the leisure lodges are not essential for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation. The application has no evidence that the lodges meet a local need or rural diversification. The applicant has stated that the lodges are necessary to financially support the golf club, which is not identified in Policy GBC3.
- 7.3 Policy GBR2 of the draft District Plan has a slightly different wording with regard to facilities for outdoor sport and recreation and refers to "appropriate" facilities rather than the Local Plan which refers to "essential" facilities. The number of lodges and the

lack of information on how they will operate is not considered to be appropriate and therefore the proposal does not comply with GBR2.

Tourism and employment in rural areas

- 7.4 Policy LRC5 states that suitably located facilities and opportunities of improving access to the countryside will be permitted where there is no adverse impact on the natural environment or local amenity.
- 7.5 As stated above, the application for 26 lodges is lacking in detail with regard to how the facilities will be used for recreational purposes.
- 7.6 Policy LRC6 refers to Golf Courses in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt and only buildings that are necessary for the operation of the golf course are acceptable. The proposed lodges are not necessary for the operation of the golf course and therefore do not meet this policy.
- 7.7 It is noted that the applicant has stated that the lodges are necessary to financially support the golf course, but the information submitted with the application provides very little viability information to substantiate this statement. The business went into administration and was bought in 2016, when it was known that the club had suffered financial losses. The statement submitted with the application confirms that the lodges are for sale. The lodges however do not appear to be attached to golf membership of the club so they appear to be a separate entity and merely to assist financially from sales rather than being an integral part of the golf course.

Housing

- 7.8 Both the Local Plan and the Draft District Plan refer to mobile homes as being considered as though they were for a normal

residential occupation and therefore the policies relating to residential development apply.

- 7.9 The proposal is considered to have a poor layout with regard to internal amenity of future occupants and the proposal offers no affordable houses.
- 7.10 The Council cannot demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply so paragraph 55 and 14 of the NPPF needs to be considered in this context.
- 7.11 It is considered that the proposal for 26 mobile homes / lodges on the site will have an adverse impact on the landscape and is not a sustainable form of development. This is due to the density of the houses and the overall appearance and the significant change in character of the countryside. While the site is not highly visible from adjoining and nearby sites, this does not justify the provision of housing on the site.
- 7.12 Whilst the provision of 26 mobile homes would contribute to the shortfall of housing land, the adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefit when assessed against all of the NPPF. All occupants of the 26 mobile homes would very largely rely on the private car to access everyday goods and employment and the development would have a detrimental and permanent impact on the openness of the countryside.
- 7.13 No provision has been made for affordable housing as part of the proposal. In accordance with policy HSG3, 40% affordable housing is required. This would equate to 10 dwellings.

Surface Water Drainage and Flooding

- 7.14 In response to the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) request for a surface water drainage assessment strategy and how the volume of water is to be managed, the applicant advised that they did not consider this necessary as the roadways will be porous block paving and any run off drains into the open soil. Therefore

existing drainage rates will not be affected. Soakaways for each lodge are also proposed as well as the lodges sitting on a 1 metre high brick base.

- 7.15 It was helpful to receive this additional information in response to the LLFA's request for a surface drainage assessment as the application is lacking in any detail of the proposed lodges and the materials to be used surrounding the lodges. However, the applicant has not submitted a Surface Drainage Assessment Strategy and the LLFA has not withdrawn its objection.

Design

- 7.16 The lodges are to be located to the west of the clubhouse for a length of approximately 200 metres generally running parallel to the 10th hole on the golf course. Twelve of the lodges sit very close together with no opportunity to have any landscaping between them. No elevations have been provided and from viewing the Country Club's website, it appears that there are a range of lodge designs.
- 7.17 There may be merit in providing some lodges on site to be used for overnight stays by golfers but the number and the layout of the development is not considered to complement the countryside character.
- 7.18 The applicant has stated that the lodges will not be visible from adjoining areas, however having 26 lodges that are proposed to be occupied all year round will have an impact on the intensification of the existing use of this countryside property due to the potential number of people and the associated lighting impact on the natural environment.

Landscaping

- 7.19 No landscaping plan has been submitted with the application and there is little opportunity for landscaping between the lodges proposed apart from a stand of existing trees to the south of

some of the lodges. Policy ENV2 requires development proposals to retain and enhance existing landscape features and requires a landscape survey plan. There is other existing landscaping adjacent to the proposed lodges but this is not shown on any plans submitted.

Archaeology

- 7.20 The site has potential to have heritage assets of archaeological interest and some of this may have been lost due to works commencing without planning consent. Conditions could be proposed to address any potential archaeology on the site should planning permission be granted.

Other Matters

- 7.21 Financial matters are a material consideration as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. The Country Club is a local employer and the financial gain from the sale of 26 lodges would clearly assist in the making the club viable, if only in the short-term from sales. However, no detailed long-term plan of the management of the club or viability appraisal has been submitted with the application.

8.0 Planning Balance and Conclusion

- 8.1. In accordance with the definition of dwellings in the Local Plan and draft District Plan, the proposed 26 lodges are required to be considered as dwellings.

- 8.2 It is acknowledged that the Council cannot demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply at present, therefore the application must be assessed in accordance with para 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The site is not located close to a village or town and will largely rely on the use of private motor vehicles for employment and everyday needs, which is not a form of sustainable development. The adverse impacts of 26 additional dwellings would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the

benefits. The proposal also does not provide any affordable houses for a 26 dwelling scheme.

- 8.3 The siting and layout of the proposed lodges will not result in good design due to the distance between each lodge not offering any visual or aural privacy. No details of soft or hard landscaping between the proposed lodges has been provided. It is not considered that any landscaping would overcome the impacts on privacy of future occupants.
- 8.4 Notwithstanding the housing not being acceptable due to the site not being in a sustainable location, the applicant has submitted the proposal in order to make the golf course financially viable. However no detailed evidence was submitted with the application to support this viability argument.
- 8.5 The proposed development is not considered to be appropriate development in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt as the housing is not intrinsically linked to the Golf Course and it has not been demonstrated that the lodges are essential.
- 8.6 Taking all of the relevant matters into consideration, the benefits of additional housing in the district, that may or may not ensure the financial viability of the golf club, is not considered to outweigh the harm caused. For this reason the application cannot be supported.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be **REFUSED** for the reasons set out below:

Reasons for Refusal

1. The application site lies within the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt, as defined in the East Hertfordshire Local Plan, where development will only be allowed for certain specific purposes. There is insufficient justification for the proposed leisure lodges and the siting of them would be contrary to the aims and

objectives of policies GBC2 and GBC3 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007 and policy GBR2 of the pre submission East Herts District Plan.

2. The proposal, by reason of its scale and the predominant reliance of its occupiers on the private car to access employment, shopping facilities and services in towns and villages that do not adjoin the site, would result in residential development in an unsustainable location, contrary to policies ENV1, SD1 and TR1 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007, policies INT1 and TRA1 of the pre submission East Herts District Plan and Section 4 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
3. The application lacks sufficient information regarding surface water drainage to enable the local planning authority to properly consider the planning merits of the application. This is contrary to policies ENV18, ENV21 and SD1 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007, policies WAT1 and WAT5 of the pre submission East Herts District Plan and Section 10 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
4. The proposal, by reason of the lack of provision of any affordable housing, is contrary to policies HSG3, HSG4 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007, policies HOU1 and HOU3 of the pre-submission East Herts District Plan and Section 6 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
5. The proposal, by reason of the layout and density of the lodges, will result in poor amenity for future occupiers contrary to policies ENV1 and SD1 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007, policy DES3 of the pre submission East Herts District Plan and Section 6 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Informatives

1. In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, East Herts Council has considered, in a positive and proactive manner, whether the

planning objections to this proposal could be satisfactorily resolved within the statutory period for determining the application. However, for the reasons set out in this decision notice, the proposal is not considered to achieve an acceptable and sustainable development in accordance with the Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.