

19 MARCH 2024 PLANNING COMMITTEE

6C PLAN/2023/0214

WARD: PY

LOCATION: Wisley Golf Club, Wisley Lane, Pyrford, Woking, Surrey, GU23 6QU

PROPOSAL: Proposed redevelopment of the outfield to the east of the existing approach road, including replacement driving range building and replacement range/performance building, engineering / landscaping works to facilitate the enlargement of the short game area and associated works including alterations to the internal access roads and addition of two bridges.

APPLICANT: Wisley Golf Club

OFFICER: Barry Curran

REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

The proposal is of a development type which falls outside the Management Arrangements and Scheme of Delegation.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The application seeks permission to replace the existing driving range building and performance building with buildings in a similar use along with engineering and landscape operations to increase the size and facilities for the short game area with rearrangements of access roads and bund along with the inclusion of pedestrian footbridges over the existing water body.

PLANNING STATUS

- Green Belt
- Floods Zone 2 and 3
- Medium, High and Very High Surface Water Flood Risk
- Great Crested Newt Zone
- Thames Basin Heaths SPA Zones A and B (within 400m and 400m -5km)

RECOMMENDATION

Grant planning permission subject to conditions.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site relates to The Wisley, a private golf course located towards the south-east of the Borough sited between Ripley and Wisley RHS in the defined Green Belt. The red lined site relates to a section of the short game area and driving range area which includes the teaching bay buildings with two arms stretching either side of the driving range including landscaping. A mix of Flood Zones 2 and 3 as well as Medium, High and Very High surface Water Flood Risk areas are within the defined application site with examples of water features evident throughout this section and the wider course.

19 MARCH 2024 PLANNING COMMITTEE

PLANNING HISTORY

PLAN/2022/1114 - Proposed realignment of the approach road to the east of the clubhouse building and engineering / landscaping works to create a new putting green – Permitted 09.03.2023

PLAN/2020/0337 - Engineering operations to The Garden Course to include replacement drainage and irrigation system, relocation of 5th and 8th tee boxes and re-profiling of section of the bank at the River Wey along with works to the bunkers to improve drainage and playability – Permitted 08.12.2021

PLAN/2017/1026 - Window opening enlargement to rear elevation and infill glazing to side elevation (Spike Bar) - Permitted 22.11.2017

PLAN/2015/1377 - Erection of replacement bridge and temporary access track (part retrospective) – Permitted 14.04.2016

PLAN/2013/0882 - Reprofiling of riverbank sections on the River Wey at the Wisley Golf Club (Retrospective) – Permitted 12.11.2013

PLAN/2012/0637 - Erection of golf performance building to the east of the existing driving range at The Wisley – Permitted 14.11.2012

PLAN/2011/0017 - Retrospective application for the retention of a track through Locks Copse – Permitted 21.06.2011

PLAN/2000/0652 - Erection of an 8-bay detached golf driving range for use by members on the present golf club practice range to the east of the golf clubhouse – Permitted 15.11.2000

PLAN/1989/0765 - Details pursuant to outline application 87/1030 - Construction of a 27-hole golf course, club building and car park with a new access from Mill Lane, new vehicle and pedestrian bridges over the River Wey – Permitted 03.07.1989

PLAN/1987/1058 - Construction of a 27-hole golf course, club, buildings, with a new access from Mill Lane and a new bridge over the River Wey and renovation and extension to Church Farm Cottages and conversion of existing – No Objection 07.10.1988

PLAN/1987/1030 - Construction of a 27-hole golf course, club building with a new access from Mill Lane and a new bridge over the River Wey and renovation and extension to Church Farm Cottages and conversion of existing – (Outline) Permitted 07.10.1988

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Proposal for various engineering/landscaping works to the short game area including minor alterations to the internal road network within the site to facilitate the alterations to this area and to accommodate the new location of the driving range building. It is also proposed to include the addition of two new bridges over the stream as part of the alterations to the internal access roads.

The proposal includes the demolition of both the existing driving range building, currently located in the central part of the site, and the practice building located on the eastern side of the site with the addition of two new buildings. A new driving

19 MARCH 2024 PLANNING COMMITTEE

range building is proposed in the central part of the site, closer to the western boundary compared to the existing driving range building. A new performance centre building will be located in a similar location to the existing practice building.

CONSULTATIONS

WBC Arboricultural Officer: Arboricultural information provided is considered acceptable and complied with in full. A pre commencement meeting is required prior to any works on site this includes the Project Manager, Project Arboriculturalist and the LA tree officer (26.07.2023)

Environmental Agency: Remove previous objections raised in relation to this application. The proposed development fulfils the requirements by addressing flood risk and appears to effectively reduce the risk of flooding. A number of conditions are recommended in order to meet the National Planning Policy Framework's requirements in relation to flood risk and biodiversity/ nature conservation (11.01.2024)

Surrey Wildlife Trust: Recommend that a Landscape Ecological Management Plan is secured through a planning condition (19.05.2023)

Lead Local Flood Authority: No objection subject to conditions (19.04.2023)

Pyrford Neighbourhood Forum: No comments raised

REPRESENTATIONS

None received

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

National Planning Policy Framework 2023

Section 12 - Achieving well-designed and beautiful places

Section 13 - Protecting Green Belt land

Section 14 - Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

Section 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Core Strategy Publication Document 2012

CS6 – Green Belt

CS7 - Biodiversity and nature conservation

CS8 - Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Areas

CS9 - Flooding and Water Management

CS21 - Design

CS24 - Woking's landscape and townscape

CS25 - Presumption in favor of sustainable development

Development Management Policies DPD 2016

DM2 – Trees and landscaping

DM3 - Facilities for Outdoor Sport and Outdoor Recreation

DM13 - Buildings in and Adjacent to the Green Belt

Supplementary Planning Documents

Supplementary Planning Document 'Outlook, Amenity, Privacy and Daylight' 2022

PLANNING ISSUES

1. The main issues to consider in determining this application are; the principle of development and impact on the Green Belt, design considerations and the impact of the proposal on the character of the area, the impact on residential amenities, the impact on trees and ecology and the impact on flood risk.

Impact on the Green Belt

2. The application site is located within the extent of the Green Belt. Paragraph 152 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (NPPF) states that *“Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances”*. Section 13 of the NPPF goes on to note that certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt. Paragraph 155 outlines that *“these are:*
 - A) *Mineral extraction;*
 - B) *Engineering operations; (emphasis added)***
 - C) *Local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;*
 - D) *The re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction*
 - E) *Material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds; and*
 - F) *Development brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.”*
3. These certain other forms of development, including engineering works, are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in Green Belt. The remodelling of the short games area of a golf course is an engineering operation and, in this instance, could be considered acceptable if its impact on the openness of the Green Belt is limited.
4. The NPPF, at Paragraph 154, also sets out guidance on proposals affecting the Green Belt. It sets out that *“a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:*
 - a) *buildings for agriculture and forestry;*
 - b) *the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it (emphasis added);***
 - c) *the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;*
 - d) *the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces (emphasis added);***
 - e) *limited infilling in villages;*

19 MARCH 2024 PLANNING COMMITTEE

f) limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and

g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:

– not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or

– not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.”

5. Additionally, Policy DM3 (Outdoor Recreation and Sport Facilities) of the Development Management Policies DPD states that *“proposals for the provision of outdoor sport and recreational facilities or extensions to, or intensification of use of, existing facilities will be permitted subject to other Development Plan policies and provided that they meet the following criteria:*

- the development is of an appropriate design, scale and layout relative to its intended use and surrounding area;*
- the development will not have an adverse visual impact;*
- the development, if involving agricultural land, is located on the lowest practicable grade and seeks to avoid the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land (Grades 1, 2 and 3a) unless there are overriding planning benefits for the development;*
- the development will not cause harm to a site of nature conservation, landscape or historic value that cannot be satisfactorily mitigated;*
- the re-use of any existing buildings is prioritised and, in the case of a new facility, is satisfactorily integrated with existing buildings where present;*
- the development will not generate unacceptable activity or give rise to loss of amenity by virtue of noise, smell, light pollution, overlooking, traffic or other general disturbance; and*
- opportunities are taken to connect to the surrounding Green Infrastructure Network”.*

6. Whilst a driving range provides for practice of a sport within a covered space, the nature of driving ranges is that they are open on one or both sides and allow for practice of a sport which is primarily an outdoor sport. It is, therefore, considered that the erection of a replacement driving range building in connection with the existing golf course use of the wider site is satisfactorily ‘outdoor’ and complies with point B of paragraph 154 of the NPPF in this regard.

7. The existing driving range building stands at 4.6 metres in height with a length and depth of 30.7 and 5.8 metres respectively. This amounts to a volume of approximately 966 m³. The proposed replacement building includes a chamfer with the lounge area/bra in one section and the driving range bay in the other. At approximately 51 metres in width, 9.4 metres in depth and 4.8 metres in height, the replacement driving range building is larger than the existing. The volume amounts to approximately 2,700 m³ or a 180% increase in size.

19 MARCH 2024 PLANNING COMMITTEE

8. The existing performance centre building sits to the east of the short game area and driving range and currently serves as an additional practice facility in association with the golf club. Standing at a height of 4.4 metres with a width of 12.6 and 8.4 metres in depth, the current building has a total volume of approximately 465 m³. Adopting a kidney shaped layout, the proposed replacement building would measure 21 metres at its widest point and 32 metres in total depth. At approximately 4.78 metres in height, the replacement performance centre building is larger than the existing. The volume amounts to approximately 2,400 m³ or a 400% increase in size.
9. The proposal for the replacement driving range building includes a relatively large reception area including a lounge area and bar for the limited number of driving bays (8no), considering that its main use would be to serve as a practice facility for members which providing amenities typical of such a structure that would prevent the need to retreat to the club house for use of such facilities positioned some 150 metres away. It is understood that the replacement driving range building is required to be large enough to allow golfers to collect the balls alongside sufficient circulation space during peak times and events. It is further considered that the increase in size of the building is necessary to allow for the continuing use of a covered area for coaches and club members.
10. Similarly, the proposed replacement performance centre building would include a wide range of facilities including;
 - Three custom teaching rooms;
 - A putting lab;
 - A meeting / fitness room;
 - An office;
 - Toilets; and
 - Two store rooms.
11. Justification in terms of the increase in size of both building as well as the level of facilities proposed within have been presented as part of the Planning Statement. It is noted that these are required to support the existing golf club with the current facilities inadequate to support growing the sport with the amount of technology now required. Improved facilities within replacement building would negate the need to add additional building in association with the use of the site as a golf club thereby preventing sprawl and the increased visual impact associated with additional structures.
12. It is noted that the proposed uses to be accommodated within the replacement performance centre could be located elsewhere, for example in a suitable building in the town centre, the exception in the Framework is for appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land, or a change of use) for outdoor sport. The performance centre would be used for training purposes for both existing and new players, in addition to the fitting of golf clubs. It is considered that this has an indisputable practical and functional link to the use of the land as a golf course.
13. Both buildings would be visible to those using the golf course and screened from any public vantage points given their proposed location close to the centre of the course and significant distances from any public domain. The location of the replacement buildings close to the centre of the site means

19 MARCH 2024 PLANNING COMMITTEE

that the surrounding landscape is gently rolling and provides natural concealment to this part of the wider golf course. It is considered that the combination of the reception area and area annotated 'café' could lead to the building being utilised as an entertainment venue in the future, separate from the main golf club, with the focus of users not on outdoor sport or recreation as required by the NPPF. It is considered, therefore, that a condition limiting the sale of food and drinks in this building would satisfactorily restrict the facilities to those appropriate for the playing of golf, ensuring that the facilities remain appropriate in the context of Paragraph 154.

14. When considering the effect on openness, there is both a spatial and visual component. Paragraph 155 (B) of the NPPF requires that the proposed facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. The concept of 'openness' in the GB has spatial and visual aspects and the impact of the proposal on the openness of the surrounding GB will be assessed below. In purely spatial terms, the proposed development would reduce the openness of the Green Belt by introducing larger replacement building. However, these have to be taken in the context of the proposal being replacement buildings close to the existing clubhouse. The current clubhouse building is a two-storey rectangular building and the fact that the replacement buildings are to be sited atop the footprint of the existing buildings retains the perspective that these buildings can be read as a collective albeit with a generous gap between all three.
15. Whilst the replacement driving range shelter would be experienced as a solid mass for a considerable length, it would be limited to a single storey in height and be sited in close proximity to the existing car park and club house development. In addition, the proposed replacement performance centre building and driving range shelter makes use of the topography of the site, setting the longer north-western element of the range down from the footpath reducing its bulk when viewed from the north and the west and when viewed by members of the public using the footpath. The southern section of the building would be largely open due to the nature of driving ranges and whilst this view would be obtainable from this perspective, much of them would be shallow given the angle of the approach road to the west. Further to this, the existing mature landscaping as well as the proposed planting along the eastern edge of this approach road would limit views of the building from that direction.
16. Similar typography has been proposed around the northern and eastern elevations of the performance centre building which results in earth mounts providing a sort of natural concealment to this building from these sides. This building, whilst considerably larger than the existing building, is too considered to be for the provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor recreational use and although larger, attempts have been made to soften its visual impact on the openness of the Green Belt. The height at 4.8 metres is only marginally higher than the existing building and given its positioning within the cluster of the short game area and driving range can be read suitably as part of the cluster of facilities in this location.
17. Notwithstanding the fact that both replacement buildings will be larger than the existing and in the case of the performance centre building, significantly larger, it is only necessary for the proposal to meet one of the relevant exemptions in Paragraph 154 of the Framework and consequently it is

19 MARCH 2024 PLANNING COMMITTEE

considered that, overall, the proposal would have a neutral effect on the openness of the Green.

18. In terms of landscaping and the remodelling of the short game area of the golf course, this consists of expansion and rearrangement of the academy green, new short game green and a series of chipping areas surrounding these greens. The rearrangement of the pedestrian footpath and inclusion of pedestrian foot bridges over existing water bodies is also proposed towards the eastern limitation of this area. Works to the drainage system are subterranean with little or no impact on the openness of the Green Belt. Works to the greens and contouring as well as additional landscaping and pedestrian foot bridges amount to engineering operations which, as outlined in Paragraph 155 of the NPPF, would amount to development that is not inappropriate in the Green Belt, provided it preserves its openness. The locations of the proposed works are towards the centre of the golf course which by their nature are enclosed by vegetated including bands of trees along the vehicular route.
19. Undulating grounds and practice areas are a characteristic feature of golf courses. The re-arrangement to the layout in connection with the repositioning of the driving range shelter is not considered to be of detriment to the landscape nor is it considered that they would infringe on the openness of the Green Belt considering the characteristics on the existing short game area. It is considered that the undulating topography of the existing course will allow the additional bunkers as well as the alterations to the bunkers and re-profiling to remain in character to the existing course and help respect the established character and appearance of the Green Belt. This would, in turn, maintain the landscape and visual amenity of the area.
20. Overall, it is found that the proposed works would be acceptable in principle within the Green Belt tying in appropriately with the surrounding landscape features and context. The proposal, therefore, complies with Policy CS6 of the Woking Core Strategy 2012, Policy DM3 of the Development Management Policies DPD 2016 and Section 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023.

Design Considerations and the Impact of the Proposal on the Character and Appearance of the Surrounding Area

21. Policy CS21 requires new development to pay due regard to the scale, height, proportions, layout and other characteristics of adjoining buildings and land; to achieve a satisfactory relationship to adjoining properties. One of the underlying principles of the National Planning Policy Framework is to seek to secure high quality design. In this instance, there is no distinct underlying local character aside from the rural parkland setting consisting of manicured fairways and examples of vegetation spread through the course. The club house is sited 150 metres to the north-west and forms an impressive two storey building which forms the focal point of the course.
22. The proposed works would result to a number of changes to the short game area including landscaping and remodelling, this consists of expansion and re-arrangement of the academy green, new short game green and a series of chipping areas surrounding these greens. The rearrangement of the pedestrian footpath and inclusion of pedestrian foot bridges over existing water bodies is also proposed towards the eastern limitation of this area. The

19 MARCH 2024 PLANNING COMMITTEE

works to be carried out will not materially alter the appearance of the golf course other than during re-construction. However, this will be temporary and as the drainage systems will be underground they have no visual impact at all once the re seeding and planting has taken place. Similarly, there will be little perceived change from relocating the tees and the re-lining and bunker works. These resultant works would amount to typical features one would expect to see in practice areas associated with a golf course with a simple realignment of the pedestrian route through the area.

23. Set at single storey in height as well as adopting a simple and typical design of a driving range shelter, the proposed replacement driving range building would be faced predominantly clad in sandstone cladding and sections of copper cladding, which is considered to provide a suitable, rural appearance. Further to this, the length of the building would be visually broken up by a change in ground levels and mounds which would be sited towards the rear and would allow the building to blend into the landscape. The building would be visible from the public footpath and access road but would be partially sunken, further limiting any impact on the surrounding area. Further to this, the additional landscaping to the west would serve to soften the building when viewed from the new flanking pathway area and submission of details of the proposed planting have been secured by condition to ensure that suitable species are utilised.
24. The proposed replacement performance centre building would be sited atop the existing footprint towards the eastern extent of the application site. This building, too, would be set at single storey with a green roof incorporating solar PV panels. Adopting a kidney shaped form, the building would be clad in copper cladding with the entrance including a sandstone cladding panel. The windows would be dark grey aluminium. Whilst both building include different materials, it has to be noted that there is no strong underlying character in terms of building design in the area. With a copper cladding and sandstone cladding forming the prominent materials of the replacement buildings, it is accepted that these will be viewed in the context of the golf course and will adopt the appearance of ancillary teaching facilities associated with the golf club. Overall, it is considered that the impact on the surrounding area would be limited and that subject to a condition regarding submission of details of materials and landscaping, the proposal would comply with the above detailed policies.
25. For the reasons set out above, the proposed development is considered to demonstrate an appropriate layout and would result in an acceptable impact upon the character, appearance and visual amenities of the surrounding area in accordance with Policy CS21 of the Woking Core Strategy, Supplementary Planning Document 'Design' 2015' and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Impact on Neighbour Amenities

26. Policy CS21 of the Woking Core Strategy 2012 advises that proposals for new developments should achieve a satisfactory relationship to adjoining properties, avoiding significant harmful impact in terms of loss of privacy, loss of daylight or sunlight, or an overbearing effect due to bulk, proximity or loss of outlook. Detailed guidance on assessing neighbouring amenity impacts is provided within Supplementary Planning Document 'Outlook, Amenity, Privacy and Daylight' 2022.

19 MARCH 2024 PLANNING COMMITTEE

27. The site is a considerable distance from the nearest neighbouring residential property given its positioning close to the centre of the golf course. As a result, it is considered that there would be no impact on neighbouring residential amenity and is considered that the application accords with policies and guidance set out above.

Highway and Parking Implications

28. The changes to the internal access roads and addition of two bridges are minor changes to the site. The new access road would replace existing access roads within the site and the new bridges are small scale additions to the site. These works would not significantly alter the character of the site or views within and into the site and would therefore preserve the openness of the Green Belt.

Flood Risk

29. Paragraph 173 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that Local Planning Authorities should ensure flood risk is not increased elsewhere and that safe access and egress routes are included within the site where appropriate, as part of an agreed emergency plan. Development should only be allowed in areas at risk of flooding where, in the light of the flood risk assessment it can be demonstrated that:
- a) within the site, the most vulnerable development is located in areas of lowest flood risk, unless there are overriding reasons to prefer a different location;
 - b) the development is appropriately flood resistant and resilient;
 - c) it incorporates sustainable drainage systems, unless there is clear evidence that this would be inappropriate;
 - d) any residual risk can be safely managed; and
 - e) safe access and escape routes are included where appropriate, as part of an agreed emergency plan
30. Paragraph 175 of the NPPF goes onto to say that major developments should incorporate sustainable drainage systems unless there is clear evidence that this would be inappropriate. The systems used should:
- a) take account of advice from the lead local flood authority;
 - b) have appropriate proposed minimum operational standards;
 - c) have maintenance arrangements in place to ensure an acceptable standard of operation for the lifetime of the development; and
 - d) where possible, provide multifunctional benefits.
31. Policy CS9 of the Woking Core Strategy 2012 states that *“Development proposals in Flood Zones 3a or 3b will be required to be accompanied by a comprehensive Flood Risk assessment to demonstrate that the development will not increase flood risk elsewhere or exacerbate the existing situation...
...A Flood Risk Assessment will be required for development proposals within or adjacent to areas at risk of surface water flooding as identified in the SFRA”*.
32. A Sustainable Drainage Strategy (SuDS) has been prepared to demonstrate that surface water can be managed safely on the site for the design event to adhere to local policy. This Report (carried out by Water Environment Ref: 21150-FRA-RP-02 | C01) demonstrates that there is no increase of flooding

19 MARCH 2024 PLANNING COMMITTEE

depth outside of the development area for the fluvial design event. Instead, there are multiple areas where the depth of flooding decreases after the proposed developments. It goes on to note that the flood depth does increase within The Wisley site itself. The increase in flood depths is no more than 100 mm and this is located at the driving range area. Existing and proposed site runoff have been calculated for the whole site with the proposed new academy range bays and teaching facilities incorporating green roofs which is sufficient to control surface water to current rates. The outfall of the green roof will discharge into a purposely designed landscaped grass areas/rain gardens away from the building.

33. The Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) have been consulted on this application. They note that the proposed drainage scheme meets the requirements set out in the FRA & SuDS Strategy and are content with the development proposed, subject to advice. The LLFA note that the preliminary hydraulic calculations appear to use the incorrect climate change allowance. In May 2022 the climate change allowances were updated based on a catchment approach. This development is located within the 'Wey and tributaries Management Catchment' which shows the upper end allowance (recommended by SCC) as 35% for the 3.3% annual exceedance rainfall event and 45% for the 1% annual exceedance rainfall event. As such, it is advised that suitably worded conditions are applied to ensure that the SuDS Scheme is properly implemented and maintained throughout the lifetime of the development.
34. The Environmental Agency (EA) has been consulted on the application in conjunction with the Lead Local Flood Authority and find that the FRA and SuDS Strategy is acceptable and demonstrates that the development would not cause an increase in flood risk to the surrounding areas. The EA accept that the proposed development fulfils the requirements of the NPPF and Core Strategy considering the use of the application site as a golf course. A number of conditions are recommended to ensure the proposal meets the National Planning Policy Framework's requirements in relation to flood risk conservation.

Impact on Trees, Ecology and Biodiversity

35. The National Planning Policy Framework 2023 states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible. Paragraph 185 states that *"To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should: b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity."*
36. Circular 06/05 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation also requires the impact of a development on protected species to be established before planning permission is granted and in relation to habitat types of principal importance to assess the impact of development upon these as part of the planning application process. This approach is reflected within Policy CS7 of the Core Strategy 2012 where Policy CS8 also relates to the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area.

19 MARCH 2024 PLANNING COMMITTEE

37. The application is supported by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) prepared by Simlaw Ecology as well as a Habitat Condition Walkover Assessment, Bat Survey Report, and Environmental DNA survey prepared by AEWG Ltd. The PEA was undertaken in December 2021, at the project inception stage, and therefore covers a number of individual sites. After the PEA was undertaken, there were severe storms in the winter of 2021-2022 therefore a subsequent habitat condition walkover assessment was carried out in June 2022 for the application site to identify any changes to the condition of the habitats present since the storms. The updated walkover assessment also addressed the fact that the PEA was undertaken before the site area was fixed and the walkover assessment therefore covers the full site area.
38. The PEA identified the following habitats within the area covered by the application: amenity grassland, planted introduced shrub, scattered trees, buildings, hard standing, poor semi-improved grassland and a pond. The walkover assessment found the habitats were largely the same as previously mapped and no new habitats were recorded. The area of planted introduced shrub with scattered trees on the western boundary of the site was recorded to have matured to a young mixed wooded area with scrub understory, however, the recommendations within the 2021 PEA are still considered relevant to this habitat.
39. The PEA identified the two buildings on site as having moderate suitability to support roosting bats. As a result, two emergence surveys were undertaken on 28th July 2022 and 15th August 2022 by licenced bat ecologists to confirm presence or increase confidence in a conclusion of likely absence of bats from the buildings. No evidence of bats was identified anywhere within or around the buildings. As such, there are no known constraints regarding these species and the proposed development. Should a bat be found on site, the procedure detailed in the Bat Survey Report that accompanies the application will be adhered to.
40. Given the area comprises habitats suitable for a range of protected species, including reptiles, amphibians, nesting birds and mammals, clearance of any areas of shrub, rough grassland or hedgerow within the site must be carried out in accordance with the mitigation measures set out within the PEA.
41. Areas of poor semi-improved grassland within the site have potential to support common retail species. However, these are small in size and limited to the edges of the site where they are directly connected to further areas of suitable habitat within the wider golf course site.
42. Parts of the riverbank provide suitable habitat for kingfisher and kingfishers were identified along the river. Several holes in the riverbank were identified over a 4-metre length of however these had all collapsed.
43. eDNA surveys were carried out in 2020 and 2022 to identify if Great Crested Newts (GCN) were present at ponds and other waterbodies within the wider site area (including the application site). The results confirmed the samples were negative for the presence of GCN during both years of sampling. Based on the results it is considered unlikely that the site is used by GCN and no further surveys are required. Nevertheless, the recommended mitigation measures set out in the PEA should be adhered to.

19 MARCH 2024 PLANNING COMMITTEE

44. Surrey Wildlife Trust have been consulted on this application and note that the ecological submissions are suitable to support this planning application. The biodiversity net gain assessment details that the project has the feasibility to provide a net gain in biodiversity units, which is below 10%. This net gain is in line with current planning policy; therefore, it is not advised that this is a limitation to the application. They further advise that a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan is secured through a planning condition. This Landscape and Ecological Management Plan would include the Woodland Management Plan recommended by AWEC Ltd. It is also advised that the Landscape and Ecological Management Plan also includes a Construction Environmental Management Plan that is in line with Section 4 of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Simlaw Ecology, May 2022).
45. Initial consultation response from the EA had noted that the development may effect the Salmo Trutta Brown Trout and insufficient information has been provided to assess the risks posed by this activity. Brown Trout is a priority species listed under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. It was further noted that both the existing and proposed site plan indicates that there is a lake present with a watercourse running from the lake to the River Wey and it is unclear if the proposed activities would have a detrimental effect on the species/population and its habitat as no assessment of the risks have been provided. The PEA did not mention the lake or associated watercourse. The EA called for an ecological assessment to assess how the proposal will affect the lake and watercourse and any species present.
46. Following submission of additional ecological information (Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (V4), AEWC Ltd., dated September 2023, Metric 4.0 Calculation Tool and Biodiversity Metric 4.0 - Technical Annex 1 - Condition Assessment Sheets), the EA are satisfied that the concerns raised relating to the trout has been addressed. They recommend that these concerns could only met if a number of planning conditions are included as part of any approval.
47. Policy DM2 of the Development Management Policies DPD 2016 reflects Policy CS21 of the Core Strategy 2012 and requires trees and vegetation to be considered holistically as part of any proposal, requires tree removal to be justified to the satisfaction of the Council and requires appropriate replacement planting to enhance the quality of any development. The application site is not within Tree Preservation Order areas but there some mature and semi-mature trees shown to be removed as part of this application. The vast majority of trees to be removed as part of the proposal are low quality trees (Cat C or Cat U trees). One Cat B tree is proposed to be removed to facilitate the landscape works to create the new short game area. However, the proposed replacement planting is considered to be appropriate and will enhance the overall quality of the development. An Arboricultural Assessment carried out by Gifford Tree Service submitted to the LPA on 26 July 2023 along with a Tree Survey. The Council's Arboricultural Officer has been consulted on this information and raises no objection subject to compliance with the information and pre commencement meeting with the project manager, project arboriculturalist and the LA tree officer.

19 MARCH 2024 PLANNING COMMITTEE

Conclusion

48. To conclude, it is considered that the proposed works would serve as appropriate works for outdoor sport or recreation in line with the golf club use and the running of the course amounting to engineering operations within the Green Belt. Further assessments have been considered with regard to impact of the engineering operation on the character of the area, impact on adjacent lands with regards to flood risk as well as impact on trees and ecology where it was found that it would have acceptable impacts on all the above.
49. The proposal is consequently considered to be an acceptable form of development that complies with Policies CS6, CS7, CS8, CS9, CS21, CS24 and CS25 of the Woking Core Strategy 2012, Sections 12, 13, 14 and 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework as well as Policies DM2, DM3 and DM13 of the Development Management Policies DPD 2016. Approval is accordingly recommended subject to the recommended conditions.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Site visit photographs
2. Response from WBC Arboricultural Officer
3. Response from Lead Local Flood Authority
4. Response from Environmental Agency
5. Response from Surrey Wildlife Trust

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that planning permission be Granted subject to the following Conditions:

1. The development for which permission is hereby granted must be commenced not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason: To accord with the provisions of Section 91(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans listed in this notice:

- Site Location Plan Drawing No. 18
- Proposed Site Plan Drawing No. 20 Rev C
- Earthworks Plan Drawing No. 21 Rev C
- Proposed Elevations Drawing No. PL_1024_302
- Proposed Elevations Drawing No. PL_1024_304
- Proposed Ground Floor & Roof Plans Drawing No. PL_1024_303
- Proposed Ground Floor & Roof Plans Drawing No. PL_1024_301
- Typical Section Through Roof Sedum and PV Drawing No. PL_1024_501
- Sections and Cut/FIL Drawing No. 22 Rev C
- Small Bridged – 3D Model Renders Drawing No. 02-R

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

19 MARCH 2024 PLANNING COMMITTEE

3. ++ Prior to the commencement of the development, hereby approved, a detailed schedule of materials and finishes to be used in the external elevations shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details must accord with the type and quality of materials indicated within the application. The development must thereafter be carried out and permanently maintained in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interests of the visual amenities of the area.

4. Protective measures must be carried out in strict accordance with the Arboricultural Impact Assessment provided by Gifford Tree Services received on 26 July 2023 including the convening of a pre-commencement meeting and arboricultural supervision as indicated. No works or demolition shall take place until the tree protection measures have been implemented. Any deviation from the works prescribed or methods agreed in the report will require prior written approval from the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure reasonable measures are taken to safeguard trees in the interest of local amenity and the enhancement of the development itself.

5. No above ground development associated with the development hereby permitted shall commence until a detailed landscaping scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority which specifies species, planting sizes, spaces and numbers of trees/ shrubs and hedges to be planted. All landscaping shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme in the first planting season (November-March) following the occupation of the buildings or the completion of the development (in that phase) whichever is the sooner and maintained thereafter. Any retained or newly planted trees, shrubs or hedges which die, become seriously damaged or diseased or are removed or destroyed within a period of 5 years from the date of planting shall be replaced during the next planting season with specimens of the same size and species unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of amenity and biodiversity and to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the locality.

6. ++ The development hereby permitted shall not commence until details of the design of a surface water drainage scheme have been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. The design must satisfy the SuDS Hierarchy and be compliant with the national Non- Statutory Technical Standards for SuDS, NPPF and Ministerial Statement on SuDS. The required drainage details shall include:

- a) Evidence that the proposed final solution will effectively manage the 1 in 30 (+35% allowance for climate change) & 1 in 100 (+45% allowance for climate change) storm events during all stages of the development. The final solution should follow the principles set out in the approved drainage strategy. Associated discharge rates and storage volumes shall be provided using a maximum discharge rate equivalent to the pre-development Greenfield run-off.
- b) Detailed drainage design drawings and calculations to include: a finalised drainage layout detailing the location of drainage

19 MARCH 2024 PLANNING COMMITTEE

elements, pipe diameters, levels, and long and cross sections of each element including details of any flow restrictions and maintenance/risk reducing features (silt traps, inspection chambers etc.).

- c) A plan showing exceedance flows (i.e. during rainfall greater than design events or during blockage) and how property on and off site will be protected from increased flood risk.
- d) Details of drainage management responsibilities and maintenance regimes for the drainage system.
- e) Details of how the drainage system will be protected during construction and how runoff (including any pollutants) from the development site will be managed before the drainage system is operational.

Reason: To ensure the design meets the national Non-Statutory Technical Standards for SuDS and the final drainage design does not increase flood risk on or off site.

- 7. Prior to the first occupation of the development, a verification report carried out by a qualified drainage engineer must be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. This must demonstrate that the surface water drainage system has been constructed as per the agreed scheme (or detail any minor variations), provide the details of any management company and state the national grid reference of any key drainage elements (surface water attenuation devices/areas, flow restriction devices and outfalls), and confirm any defects have been rectified.

Reason: To ensure the Drainage System is constructed to the National Non-Statutory Technical Standards for SuDS

- 8. ++ Prior of the commencement of development, hereby permitted, a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) should be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The LEMP should provide the LPA with evidence that the project will be in line with the NPPF and have regard for providing a biodiversity net gain. The LEMP should be based on the proposed impact avoidance, mitigation and enhancement measures specified in the above referenced report and should include, but not be limited to following:
 - a) Description and evaluation of features to be managed
 - b) Ecological trends and constraints on site that might influence management
 - c) Aims and objectives of management
 - d) Appropriate management options for achieving aims and objectives
 - e) Prescriptions for management actions, together with a plan of management compartments
 - f) Preparation of a work schedule (including an annual work plan capable of being rolled forward over a five-year period
 - g) Details of the body or organisation responsible for implementation of the plan
 - h) Ongoing monitoring and remedial measures

19 MARCH 2024 PLANNING COMMITTEE

i) Legal and funding mechanisms by which the long-term implementation of the plan will be secured by the applicant with the management body(ies) responsible for its delivery.

j) Monitoring strategy, including details of how contingencies and/or remedial action will be identified, agreed and implemented so that the development still delivers the fully functioning biodiversity objectives of the originally approved scheme.

k) Lighting Strategy

L) a Construction Environmental Management Plan that is in line with Section 4 of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Simlaw Ecology, May 2022).

Reason: To ensure the protection of wildlife and the habitat which supports it and secure opportunities for the enhancement of the nature conservation value of the site.

9. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the submitted flood risk assessment (ref: 21150-FRA-RP-02 | C01) and the following mitigation measures it details:

- Compensatory storage shall be provided as shown in the hydraulic model. This ensures that flood water is stored onsite.

These mitigation measures shall be fully implemented prior to first use and subsequently in accordance with the scheme's timing/ phasing arrangements. The measures detailed above shall be retained and maintained thereafter throughout the lifetime of the development.

Reason: To prevent flooding elsewhere by ensuring that compensatory storage of flood water is provided.

10. ++ No development shall commence until a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved HMMP. Any subsequent variations to the HMMP shall be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, in which case the development shall be carried out in accordance with the amended HMMP. The HMMP shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Details of the proposed biodiversity net gains, including specific provisions for the management of the portion of Ditch 2 on site as outlined in AEWC Ltd's Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (V4) dated September 2023.
- Clear and concise management objectives for each habitat feature being created or enhanced to achieve the biodiversity net gain, including specific objectives for the portion of Ditch 2 on site aligned with the Watercourse Management Plan.
- Detailed management prescriptions for each habitat feature, specifying the actions required to achieve the management objectives, including:
 - Timing and frequency of actions
 - Specific methods and techniques to be used
 - Any necessary specialist equipment or expertise
- A monitoring plan outlining how the success of the habitat management and biodiversity net gain will be assessed, including:
 - Monitoring methods and indicators

19 MARCH 2024 PLANNING COMMITTEE

- Frequency of monitoring
- Data recording and reporting procedures
- A schedule of implementation for the management and monitoring activities, specifically highlighting the implementation schedule for the Watercourse Management Plan provisions outlined in AEWC Ltd's Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (V4) dated September 2023.
- Identification of the person or body responsible for implementing the HMMP, ensuring they have the necessary expertise and resources.
- Financial provision for the implementation of the HMMP, covering the costs of management and monitoring activities for a minimum of 30 years, including specific costs associated with the Watercourse Management Plan.
- Plans and diagrams illustrating the location and extent of the habitats to be managed, as well as any proposed management interventions, including specific plans and diagrams for the portion of Ditch 2 on site and its management interventions as outlined in the Watercourse Management Plan.

Reason: To ensure the delivery and long-term maintenance of biodiversity net gains as a result of the development, in accordance with paragraphs 180 and 186 of the NPPF, including specific provisions for the protection and enhancement of the portion of Ditch 2 on site. To provide a clear and comprehensive framework for the management and monitoring of habitats for biodiversity net gain, ensuring their long-term viability and ecological value, with particular attention to the management of the portion of Ditch 2 on site as outlined in the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment.

11. ++ No development shall take place until a method statement/construction environmental management plan (CEMP) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. This shall deal with the treatment of any environmentally sensitive areas, their aftercare and maintenance as well as a plan detailing the works to be carried out showing how the environment will be protected during the works. Such a scheme shall include details of the following:

- The timing of the works.
- The measures to be used during construction in order to minimise the environmental impact of the works including potential disturbance to protected species.
- A map or plan showing habitat areas to be specifically protected during construction.
- Construction methods.
- Any necessary pollution prevention methods.
- Information on the Project Ecologist and/or Ecological Clerk of Works responsible for particular activities associated with the CEMP.
- Details of how the river bank and riparian zone will be restored and enhanced following construction.

The works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved CEMP.

Reason: This condition is necessary to ensure the protection of wildlife and supporting habitat and secure opportunities for the enhancement of the nature conservation value of the site in line with national planning policy.

19 MARCH 2024 PLANNING COMMITTEE

12. ++ Details of the external lighting/security lighting/floodlighting within the site including the design, position, orientation, and any screening of the lighting shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority prior to commencement of those works. The lighting shall be installed and operated in accordance with the approved scheme at all times thereafter.

Reason: To protect the general environment, the amenities of the area and the habitat for bats and other nocturnal animals in accordance with Policies CS7 and CS21 of the Woking Core Strategy 2012, Policy DM7 of the Development Management Policies DPD 2016 and the NPPF.

13. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Use Classes Order 1987 (as amended) (and/or any orders amending and/or re-enacting that order) and plans no sales of food and drink should take place from the proposed 'golf performance centre' hereby approved at any time.

Reason: To avoid the over intensive use of this building and ensure the building remains as appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and recreation and therefore remain appropriate in the Green Belt in the context of Policy CS6 of the Core Strategy 2012, Policy DM13 of the Development management Policies DPD 2016 and Section 13 of the NPPF.

Informatives:

1. The Council confirms that in assessing this planning application it has worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive way, in line with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023.
2. Your attention is specifically drawn to the conditions above marked ++. These condition(s) require the submission of details, information, drawings, etc. to the Local Planning Authority PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF ANY DEVELOPMENT ON THE SITE or, require works to be carried out PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE USE. Failure to observe these requirements will result in a contravention of the terms of the permission and the Local Planning Authority may serve Breach of Condition Notices to secure compliance.

You are advised that sufficient time needs to be given when submitting details in response to conditions, to allow the Authority to consider the details and discharge the condition. A period of between five and eight weeks should be allowed for.

3. You are advised that Council officers may undertake inspections without prior warning to check compliance with approved plans and to establish that all planning conditions are being complied with in full. Inspections may be undertaken both during and after construction.
4. The applicant is advised that works related to the construction of the development, including works of demolition or preparation prior to building operations, should not take place other than:
 - Mondays - Fridays (inclusive) working only between 08:00 - 18:00 hrs
 - Saturday working only between 08:00 - 13:00 hrs
 - No work to take place on Sundays or Bank/Public Holidays

19 MARCH 2024 PLANNING COMMITTEE

If works are intended to take place outside of the hours set out above the applicant should contact the Council's Environmental Health Service beforehand.