

24 SEPTEMBER 2019 PLANNING COMMITTEE

6A 18/1263

Ward: HE

LOCATION: Sutton Green Golf Club, New Lane, Sutton Green, Woking, Surrey, GU4 7QF

PROPOSAL: Ground modelling to edges of fairways consisting of engineering operations to improve safety and playability of holes 15 / 17 and 7 / 8.

APPLICANT: Mr Walker

OFFICER: Barry Curran

REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

The application is a major by reason of its site area (in excess of 1.ha) and therefore falls outside the Scheme of Delegation.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

This is an application for engineering operations to the fairways along holes 15 and 17 as well as holes 7 and 8 to raise the ground level to improve safety and playability of these holes. Improvements to biodiversity is also proposed as part of the application.

PLANNING STATUS

- Green Belt
- Great Crested Newt Zone (Orange)
- Thames Basin Heaths SPA Zone B

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT planning permission subject to conditions.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Sutton Green Golf Club is located off New Lane and runs along the western side of this highway within the defined Green Belt. Both application sites are located towards the centre of the course in close proximity to the residential property Lee Farm, a Grade II Listed property. Tree lined boundaries and fairways characterise the immediate vicinity around both of these sites contributing to the Sylvan setting.

PLANNING HISTORY

Numerous. Of relevance;

PLAN/2006/0179 - Proposed formation of mounding with associated planting and bunkering – Permitted 13.04.2006

PLAN/2004/1107 - Increase in ground levels and additional planting on certain areas of golf course to provide safety measures – Permitted 11.08.2004

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PLAN/2000/0057 - Formation of earth bunds on boundaries with New Lane, Pyle Hill and Loampits Farm and variation of originally agreed landscape works – Permitted 25.04.2000

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The application seeks permission to erect mounding and recontouring along the 15 and 15/17 fairways as well as the 7/8 fairways. The proposed recontouring will range in height from 3 to 4 metres and is aimed at improving the safety between these fairways and clearly establishing the differences between them.

CONSULTATIONS

Highway Authority: No objection subject to condition (28.03.19). *Officer Note: it is the officer's opinion that the recommended condition for a Construction Transport Management Plan is not considered enforceable from a planning perspective in this instance*

External Conservation Officer: No objection raised (25.03.19)

Surrey Wildlife Trust: Advise that should the LPA be minded to grant permission that the recommendation outlined in Sections 6 and 7 of the method statement should be undertaken (29.07.19)

Woking Council's Green Infrastructure Team: Recommend an informative in relation to working in conjunction with Woking Borough Council and a consultation with Surrey Wildlife Trust as well as recommendation on biodiversity measures and enhancements (09.05.19)

REPRESENTATIONS

None received

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

National Planning Policy Framework 2018
Section 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities
Section 12 – Achieving well-designed places

Core Strategy Publication Document 2012
CS7 – Biodiversity and nature conservation
CS9 – Flooding and water management
CS17 - Open space, green infrastructure, sport and recreation
CS21 - Design
CS25 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development

Development Management Policies DPD 2016
DM2 – Trees and Landscaping
DM3 - Outdoor Recreation and Sport

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

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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.

Principle of Development and Impact on Green belt

2. The application site is located within the extent of the Green Belt. Paragraph 143 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (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 provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. Paragraph 146 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. 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”.*
4. With regard to Golf Facilities, Policy DM3 also states that *“in addition to the criteria under ‘General Principles’ above, proposals for the development of new golf courses and extensions to existing golf courses will be permitted provided that the following criteria are met:*

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- *the development preserves and respects important natural features and topography of the landscape including trees and water features; and*
 - *proposals only include buildings which are genuinely ancillary and which are sited so as to avoid damage to the open character of the area and minimise noise and disturbance”.*
5. It is proposed to erect mounds and recontouring along the fairways at the 15th and 17th holes as well as the fairways between the 7th and 8th holes altering the topography of the land. The developments would amount to engineering operations which, as outlined in Paragraph 146 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 as well as copse along the existing fairways. Both development sites are sited away from New Lane which itself is positioned behind a row of established trees and shrubbery.
 6. Undulating grounds and mounds are a characteristic feature of golf courses and serve both as design and safety features throughout such courses. These mounds are a typical feature one would expect to see on golf courses and are 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 existing contouring on the course. Despite having a maximum height of 4 metres, it is considered that the undulating topography of the existing course will cause the recontouring to remain in character to the existing course and help respect the established character and appearance of the Green belt maintaining the landscape and visual amenity of the area.
 7. Policy DM3 of the Development Management Policies DPD 2016 outlines a criteria for facilities for outdoor sport shown in Paragraph 3 of this report with extensions to golf course explored in more detail in Paragraph 4. On the 'Eastern Fill Area' along the fairways between the 17th and 15th holes is a group of copse as well as a mature Oak Tree. The proposed recontouring developments will be set amongst these existing landscape features with some replanting necessary. This situation on the 'Western Fill Area' between the 7th and 8th holes is similar that of the 'Eastern Fill Area' where the recontouring will be set amongst existing copse and the green for Hole 8, an existing landscape feature. The recontouring in this location will extend the copse planting in this location providing a continuous band setting out the different fairways. It is considered that the proposed developments, considering their locations, preserves the existing landscape features whilst also contributing in way which retains their character. The development is, therefore, considered to meet the criteria of Policy DM3 of the Development Management Policies DPD 2016.
 8. 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 2019.

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

9. 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 parkland setting consisting of manicured fairways and examples of vegetation spread through the course. Undulating landscapes define the different fairways and as such act as a rough natural guide through the course whilst serving as safety measures to differentiate the holes.
10. The proposed works would result in raised ground levels in line with other examples of mounds and undulating levels which also serve to create obstacles for the course users. Erection of the mounds and recontouring would tie in with the established landscape character of the course and complement the shaped fairways where one would expect to see such features. The submitted plans show established copse and protected trees to either be protected or indeed replaced as part of the proposal ensuring the density and amount of vegetation is secured.
11. 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 Residential Amenity

12. Given the proposed ground works and examples of vegetated boundaries around nearby residential properties, it is not considered that the residential amenities of properties would be infringed upon as a result of the proposed works.

Impact on Trees and Ecology

13. 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 sites are not within Tree Preservation Order areas but there is one Oak Tree within the 'Eastern Fill Area' which contributes significantly to the character of the area and shown to be retained and, therefore, requires protecting. It is, therefore, deemed necessary to attach a planning condition ensuring that tree protection details are submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to any development works being undertaken on site (Condition 3).
14. Policy CS7 of the Woking Core Strategy calls for the Council to "*encourage new development to make positive contribution to biodiversity through the*

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creation of green spaces, where appropriate, and the creation of linkages between sites to create a local and regional biodiversity network of wildlife corridors and green infrastructure". This policy is further supported by Policy CS22 of the Woking Core Strategy 2012 calls for all developments "to make biodiversity enhancements such as green roofs and bird and bat boxes" for example but this may be in the form of other ecological enhancements.

15. The application sites primarily consist of managed amenity grassland which is regularly disturbed from mowers and golfers. The new areas of copse planting and wildflower proposed for the development will include a mix in line with the current mix evident on site. The details of this vegetation can be secured by way of planning condition to ensure an appropriate mix suitable for the area and any wildlife it is currently or hoping to support (Condition 4). The application site is also with a Great Crested Newt (GCN) orange zone meaning that these areas are of greatest value to GCN and development in this area may have the most significant adverse impact on newts. A Great Crested Newt Non-licenced Method Statement has been carried out and submitted in support of this application (carried out by ADAS Dated July 2019) and makes a number of recommendations in throughout Section 6 and Section 7 of the report, which are considered reasonable and necessary to ensure that any adverse effects to legally protected species are prevented or off-set. These recommendations can be secured by way of planning condition (Condition 5).

Impact on Flood Risk

16. The application site is with Flood Zone 1 (low risk) although it is at risk of surface water flooding. The application is a major given its site area (in excess of 1 hectare) and therefore carries with it the need for a site specific flood risk assessment. A Flood Risk Assessment prepared by RMA Environmental dated February 2019 has been submitted with the application which the Council's Drainage Officer has assessed and recommends a condition ensuring all development shall be constructed in accordance with the submitted and approved Flood Risk Assessment (Condition 6). A further condition is recommended requiring a verification report demonstrating that the proposed surface water run-off route has been fully implemented as per Drawing No. 1303-02 Rev C (Condition 7). This is to ensure the development achieves a high standard of sustainability and complies with Policies CS9 of the Woking Core Strategy 2012.

Conclusion

17. To conclude, it is considered that the proposed ground works would serve as appropriate works for outdoor sport or recreation in line with the golf club use and the running of the course. Further assessments have been considered with regard to impact of the engineering operation on the character of the area, impact on neighbouring residential properties as well as impact on trees, ecology and flood risk where it was found that it would have acceptable impacts on all the above.
18. The proposal is consequently considered to be an acceptable form of development that complies with Policies CS7, CS9, CS17, CS21 and CS25 of the Woking Core Strategy 2012, Supplementary Planning Documents 'Design' 2015 and 'Parking Standards' 2018, Sections 8 and 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework as well as Policies DM2 and DM3 of the

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Development Management Policies DPD 2016. Approval is accordingly recommended subject to the recommended conditions.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Site visit photographs
2. Site Notice (Major Development)(20.03.19)
3. Response from Highway Authority (28.03.19)
4. Response from External Conservation Officer (25.03.19)
5. Response from Surrey Wildlife Trust (29.07.19)
6. Response from Woking GI Team (09.05.19)

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:

Drawing No. 1303-04 Rev A
Drawing No. 1303-02 Rev B
Drawing No. 1303-03 Rev B

Reason:

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

3. ++ No development-related works shall be undertaken on site (including clearance and demolition) until tree protection details have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These details shall adhere to the principles embodied in BS 5837 (2012) and shall include a Tree Survey, Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Arboricultural Method Statement. The details shall make provision for the convening of a pre-commencement meeting and Arboricultural supervision by a suitably qualified and experienced Arboricultural Consultant for works within the RPAs of retained trees. Full details shall be provided to indicate exactly how and when the retained trees will be protected during the site works. The development shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the agreed details.

Reason:

To ensure the retention and protection of trees on and adjacent to the site in the interests of the visual amenities of the locality and the appearance of the development. This condition is required to be addressed prior to

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commencement in order that the ability to discharge its requirement is not prejudiced by the carrying out of building works or other operations on the site.

4. ++ The development hereby permitted shall not commence until details of the copse and wildflower planting has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority which specifies the location and type of plants.

Reason:

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

5. The development hereby approved shall be undertaken in accordance with the recommendations set out in Sections 6 and 7 of the submitted Great Crested Newt Non-licence Method Statement carried out by ADAS dated July 2019 which includes compiling a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan that has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The biodiversity enhancements shall be carried out and shall thereafter be retained on the site in accordance with the approved details.

Reason:

In order to maintain and enhance the biodiversity of the site.

6. All development shall be constructed in accordance with the submitted and approved Flood Risk Assessment Report Number: RMA-RC1943 (dated 8 February 2019) unless otherwise first approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason:

To ensure the flood risk is adequately addressed for the development and not increased.

7. Prior to first use, a verification report shall be submitted to demonstrate that the proposed surface water run-off route as shown in drawing 1303-02 Rev C has been fully completed as part of the proposed development.

Reason:

To ensure the flood risk is adequately addressed.

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 2019.
2. 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.

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3. 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.

4. The applicant is advised that, under the Control of Pollution Act 1974, site works which will be audible at the site boundaries are restricted to the following hours:-
08.00 – 18.00 Monday to Friday
08.00 – 13.00 Saturday
and not at all on Sundays and Bank/Public Holidays.