

16th MARCH 2021 PLANNING COMMITTEE

6p PLAN/2020/0363

WARD: PY

LOCATION: Twisted Stone Golf Club, Pyrford Road, Woking, GU22 8UE

PROPOSAL: Temporary consent is sought for a period of 12 months for use of part of existing car park as a greenkeepers maintenance compound and siting of storage containers (retrospective)

APPLICANT: Mr G.Melhuish

OFFICER: David Raper

REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE:

The recommendation includes enforcement action which falls outside the scope of delegated powers.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposal seeks temporary consent for a period of 12 months for use of part of existing car park as a greenkeepers maintenance compound and siting of storage containers. The proposal is retrospective.

PLANNING STATUS

- Green Belt
- Surface Water Flood Risk
- Thames Basin Heaths SPA ZoneB (400m-5km)

RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE planning permission and authorise enforcement action.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The proposal relates to part of the car park of the Twisted Stone Golf Club which is located on Pyrford Road in the Pyrford area of the Borough and forms part of designated Green Belt. To the east of the proposal site is the golf course and to the north is the clubhouse. To the south of the proposal site are residential properties at Lees Farm Cottages and Lees Farm Barn. To the west on the opposite side of Pyrford Road are detached dwellings in the urban area.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

None of relevance.

CONSULTATIONS

- **Environmental Health:** OBJECT on grounds of potential noise disturbance to neighbours.
- **County Highway Authority:** No objection.

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- **Pyrford Neighbourhood Forum:** No comments received.

REPRESENTATIONS

Six objections have been received raising the following summarised concerns:

- The site generates a significant amount of noise, dust and disturbance, including in the early hours
- Proposal is an eyesore
- Proposal detracts from the Green Belt
- Heavy machinery is stored on the site which is unrelated to the Golf Course
- The compound has grown over the years
- There is no indication of where the compound would be located after 12 months.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

National Planning Policy Framework (2019):

Section 12 - Achieving well-designed places

Section 13 - Protecting Green Belt land

Woking Core Strategy (2012):

CS6 - Green Belt

CS21 - Design

CS24 - Woking's Landscape and Townscape

CS25 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

Woking Development Management Policies DPD (2016):

DM3 - Facilities for Outdoor Sport and Outdoor Recreation

DM13 - Buildings Within and Adjoining the Green Belt

Pyrford Neighbourhood Plan (2017):

BE1 - Maintaining the Character of the Village

BE2 - Parking Provision

BE3 - Spatial Character

OS1 - Community Character

Supplementary Planning Documents:

Design (2015)

Parking Standards (2018)

Outlook, Amenity, Privacy and Daylight (2008)

PLANNING ISSUES

Impact on Green Belt:

1. The proposal site is in designated Green Belt and as such Woking Core Strategy (2012) policy CS6 'Green Belt', Woking DMP DPD (2016) policy DM13 'Buildings Within and Adjoining the Green Belt' and Section 13 of the NPPF (2019) apply and these policies seek to preserve the openness of the Green Belt. The NPPF (2019) regards the erection of new buildings in the Green Belt as 'inappropriate development' however an exception to this includes "*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*

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preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it".

2. The NPPF (2019) goes on to state that "*Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations*".
3. Woking DMP DPD (2016) policy DM3 'Facilities for outdoor sport and recreation' states that the provision of outdoor sport and recreational facilities will be permitted where they meet the following criteria:

"(i) The development is of an appropriate design, scale and layout relative to its intended use and surrounding area;

(ii) The development will not have an adverse visual impact;

(iii) 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;

(iv) The development will not cause harm to a site of nature conservation, landscape or historic value that cannot be satisfactorily mitigated;

(v) 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;

(vi) 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

(vii) Opportunities are taken to connect to and enhance the surrounding Green Infrastructure Network.

The overall aim is for facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation in the Green Belt to demonstrate that they will preserve the openness of the Green Belt and will not conflict with the purpose of including land within it"

4. The proposal seeks the retention of a maintenance compound comprising the siting of four storage containers on an area of hardstanding formerly comprising a car park which is enclosed by post and rail fencing and vegetation. The storage of vehicles, materials and other items is also evident within the compound.
5. The maintenance compound relates to the surrounding Twisted Stone golf course which constitutes a facility for outdoor sport and recreation. As discussed above, the provision of 'appropriate facilities' for outdoor sport and recreation can be regarded as appropriate development in the Green Belt "*...as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it*".
6. It is not clear why the proposed compound is required or why it is required for a temporary period and it is not clear where the maintenance compound was located previously or why this location cannot be used at present. This information has been requested but is not forthcoming from the applicant. Whilst the site previously comprised a car park, there was nonetheless an absence of above ground development and the car park therefore maintained the openness of the Green Belt. The storage containers are above-ground structures with a degree of permanence.

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7. Whilst storage containers can constitute temporary structures, they can develop a degree of permanence over time; in this case the storage containers appear to have been in place since July 2019 and if permitted, the proposal would result in the containers being in-situ for at least a further 12x months which would prolong the impact on the Green Belt. The containers are considered to have a degree of permanence and their size, bulk and massing are considered to result in a harmful loss of openness to the Green Belt.
8. It is not clear what the applicant's intentions would be at the end of the temporary period and there is the potential for the applicant to seek to retain the compound for a further temporary period if the current application were permitted. If the application were permitted on a temporary basis, it would be difficult to resist further applications for temporary permissions which would further prolong the impact on the Green Belt.
9. The containers represent structures in the Green Belt which are considered visually detracting features which result in a loss of openness to the Green Belt. The proposal is not considered to preserve the openness of the Green Belt and the proposal therefore constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt which is harmful by definition. The proposal is therefore contrary to Core Strategy (2012) policy CS6, DMP DPD (2016) policies DM3 and DM13 and the NPPF (2019). No Very Special Circumstances exist which would clearly outweigh the harm caused to the Green Belt by reason of the proposal's inappropriateness.

Impact on Character:

10. Woking Core Strategy (2012) policy CS21 'Design' requires development proposals to "*respect and make a positive contribution to the street scene and the character of the area in which they are situated, paying due regard to the scale, height, proportions, building lines, layout, materials and other characteristics of adjoining buildings and land*". Section 12 of the NPPF (2019) states that "*Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions*" and requires proposals to "*add to the overall quality of the area...*", to be "*visually attractive as a result of good architecture...*" and "*sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment...*".
11. The proposal site is within the Pyrford Neighbourhood Plan area. Policy BE1 of the Pyrford Neighbourhood Plan (2017) states that new development should "*be designed to a high quality...ensure that the specific context of the site and the wider character of the street scene are fully taken into account in relation to scale, appearance and materials...*" and policy BE3 states that all new development must respect "*local character and appearance, with particular regard to using landscape to ensure that developments blend into, and do not appear incongruous with, their surroundings*".
12. The proposal site is clearly visible from public vantage points including from Pyrford Road to the west and from the public footpath that runs alongside the proposal site and through the golf course. The proposal site comprises storage containers positioned at angles to each other along with the open storage of materials and other items including machinery and vehicles. Whilst there are elements of landscaping around the site the containers and other items are clearly appreciable from the surrounding area. The containers and the site generally are considered to have a highly incongruous, discordant and cluttered appearance which detracts from visual amenities of the area. Whilst the application seeks temporary consent, the harmful

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impact described above would occur for a prolonged period which is considered unacceptable.

13. The storage containers appear to have been in place since July 2019 and the development is considered an unacceptably detracting feature in the area. Allowing the proposal for a temporary period would further extend this harm for another year. Considering the points discussed above, it is not clear why the maintenance compound is required and what the applicant's intentions would be at the end of the temporary period. There is therefore a potential for the applicant to seek to retain the development for a longer period which would be difficult to resist if the current application were permitted.
14. The proposed development, by reason of its form and appearance, results in an incongruous and visually harmful development, to the detriment of the character and visual amenities of the area. The proposal is therefore contrary to Woking Core Strategy (2012) policies CS21 'Design' and CS24 'Woking's Landscape and Townscape', Woking DMP DPD (2016) policy DM3 'Facilities for outdoor sport and recreation', Pyrford Neighbourhood Plan (2017) policies BE1 'Maintaining the Character of the Village' and BE3 'Spatial Character', Supplementary Planning Document 'Woking Design' (2015) and the National Planning Policy Framework (2019).

Impact on Neighbours:

15. Section 12 of the NPPF (2019) states that planning decisions should ensure that a 'high standard of amenity' is achieved for existing and future residents and Woking Core Strategy (2012) policy CS21 'Design' requires development proposals to be designed "*to avoid significant harm to the environment and general amenity, resulting from noise, dust, vibrations, light or other releases*".
16. The proposal site has a close relationship with residential neighbours to the south at Lees Farm Cottages and Less Farm Barn. The north-eastern entrance to the compound is positioned approximately 10m from the boundary of No.1 Lees Farm Cottages and the proposal site is positioned approximately 10m from the boundaries with No.3 and No.4 Lees Farm Barn. The rear elevations of these neighbours face the proposal site and their private amenity spaces back onto the proposal site.
17. The applicant indicates that the site is being used as a maintenance compound for the surrounding golf course and on the proposal site vehicles and machinery are present along with the open storage of materials and other items. The coming and going of vehicles was observed during the Officer's site visits and neighbour representations indicate that the current use generates noise, dust and general disturbance, including in the early hours.
18. No information has been provided by the applicant which assesses the noise impact on neighbours. The use of the site as a maintenance compound has the potential to result in significant noise and general disturbance to neighbours, which are located in close proximity, through activities such as the use of tools, machinery and engines being started and revved, along with the general disturbance associated with vehicle movements and comings and goings.
19. It has not been demonstrated that the development does not impact unacceptably on the amenities of neighbours through noise and general disturbance and the Council's Environmental Health Team objects to the proposal on this basis. The proposal is therefore contrary to Woking Core Strategy (2012) policy CS21 'Design', Woking DMP

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DPD (2016) policy DM3 'Facilities for outdoor sport and recreation' and the NPPF (2019).

Transportation Impact:

20. The proposal occupies an area of car park comprising approximately 25x parking spaces. There is a large car park on the northern side of the clubhouse and the proposal is not considered to result in an undue loss of parking. The County Highway Authority raises no objection. Overall the proposal is considered to result in an acceptable transportation impact.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

21. The proposal does not involve an increase in residential floor area over 100m² and so is not CIL liable.

CONCLUSION

22. The proposed development represents inappropriate development in the Green Belt, which is harmful by definition, and impacts detrimentally on the openness of the Green Belt and on the character and visual amenities of the surrounding area. Furthermore, it has not been demonstrated that the development does not impact unacceptably on the amenities of neighbours through noise and general disturbance. The proposal is therefore contrary to Woking Core Strategy (2012) policies CS6 'Green Belt', CS21 'Design' and CS24 'Woking's Landscape and Townscape', Woking DMP DPD (2016) policies DM3 'Facilities for outdoor sport and recreation' and DM13 'Buildings Within and Adjoining the Green Belt', Pyrford Neighbourhood Plan (2017) policies BE1 'Maintaining the Character of the Village' and BE3 'Spatial Character', Supplementary Planning Document 'Woking Design' (2015) and the National Planning Policy Framework (2019).
23. For the above reasons it is considered that it would be expedient to take enforcement action against the unauthorised development.
24. It is therefore recommended that planning permission is refused and enforcement proceedings authorised

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Site visit photographs
2. Consultation responses
3. Representations

RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE planning permission for the following reasons:

01. The proposed development represents inappropriate development in the Green Belt which is harmful by definition and impacts detrimentally on the openness of the Green Belt. No Very Special Circumstances exist which would clearly outweigh the harm caused to the Green Belt by reason of the proposal's inappropriateness. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Woking Core Strategy (2012) policy CS6 'Green Belt', Woking Development Management Policies DPD (2016) policies DM3

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'Facilities for outdoor sport and recreation' and DM13 'Buildings Within and Adjoining the Green Belt' and the National Planning Policy Framework (2019).

02. The proposed development, by reason of its form and appearance, results in an incongruous and visually harmful development, to the detriment of the character and visual amenities of the area. The proposal is therefore contrary to Woking Core Strategy (2012) policies CS21 'Design' and CS24 'Woking's Landscape and Townscape', Woking Development Management Policies DPD (2016) policy DM3 'Facilities for outdoor sport and recreation', Pyrford Neighbourhood Plan (2017) policies BE1 'Maintaining the Character of the Village' and BE3 'Spatial Character', Supplementary Planning Document 'Woking Design' (2015) and the National Planning Policy Framework (2019).
03. It has not been demonstrated that the development does not impact unacceptably on the amenities of neighbours through noise and general disturbance. The proposal is therefore contrary to Woking Core Strategy (2012) policy CS21 'Design', Woking Development Management Policies DPD (2016) policy DM3 'Facilities for outdoor sport and recreation' and the National Planning Policy Framework (2019).

It is further recommended that:-

The Head of Legal Services be instructed to issue an Enforcement Notice under Section 172 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and officers be authorised in the event of non-compliance to prosecute under Section 179 of the Act, or appropriate power, and/or take direct action under Section 178 in the event of non-compliance with the Notice.

Enforcement action be authorised to issue an Enforcement Notice in respect of the above land requiring the following within two months of the notice taking effect:

- i. Cessation of use of the site as a maintenance compound
- ii. Removal of the storage containers from the site
- iii. Removal from the land all materials, rubble and debris including all associated paraphernalia arising from compliance with the above

Informatives

1. The plans relating to the development hereby refused are listed below:

2019-05-LOC (Location Plan) received by the LPA on 04.05.2020

2019-05-04 (Site Plan) received by the LPA on 29.04.2020

2019-05-05 (Plans and Elevations) received by the LPA on 29.04.2020