

COMMITTEE REPORT

Date: 20 March 2014 **Ward:** Rural West York
Team: Major and Commercial Team **Parish:** Askham Bryan Parish Council

Reference: 14/00113/FULM
Application at: Pikehills Golf Club, Tadcaster Road, Copmanthorpe, York, YO23 3UW
For: Change of use of 7.7 hectares of agricultural land (O.S. Field 4223 and 5014) to golf course
By: Pike Hills Golf Club
Application Type: Major Full Application (13 weeks)
Target Date: 23 April 2014
Recommendation: Delegated Authority to Approve

1.0 PROPOSAL

1.1 The application seeks planning permission for the change of use of existing agricultural land to an extension to the existing Pike Hills Golf Course, Tadcaster Road.

1.2 Planning permission was granted in 2004 for a similar scheme but the permission was not implemented.

1.3 The scheme does not propose the erection of any additional buildings and would not increase the number of holes on site. The extension would allow for the existing course to be reconfigured to allow for longer holes and to prevent holes from crossing each other. The land is currently cultivated and is classified as being Grade 3a agricultural land (good). The site lies to the north of the existing golf course and abuts the A1237 for a short distance. The site is very flat in nature and is bounded by hedging and a number of mature trees which are to be retained.

2.0 POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 Development Plan Allocation:

Air safeguarding GMS Constraints: Air Field safeguarding 0175

City Boundary GMS Constraints: York City Boundary 0001

DC Area Teams GMS Constraints: West Area 0004

2.2 Policies:

CYGP14 - Agricultural land

CYGB1 - Development within the Green Belt

CYGB13 - Sports facilities outside settlements

CYNE1 - Trees, woodlands, hedgerows

CYL3 - Criteria for golf course/driving ranges

3.0 CONSULTATIONS

3.1 Internal

Highway Network Management - No objections. The proposed course layout shows that the development will not add any additional holes to the course but rearrange them to create less congested/conflicting and slightly longer course, with each hole being more equal in length. We therefore do not anticipate a material increase in traffic or parking as a result of the development.

Design, Conservation and Sustainable Development - Awaiting the submission of an ecological assessment to confirm that the existing site does not provide habitat or significant value for species that would require mitigation.

Archaeologist - The site lies in an area where there is evidence for a late-prehistoric and Romano-British landscape. It is probable that elements of this landscape will be preserved on this site. The areas to be landscaped for the golf holes will need to be stripped of topsoil under archaeological supervision, the revealed surfaces cleaned and archaeological features excavated.

Environmental Protection Unit - No objections

3.2 External

Sport England - No comments to make

Natural England - This application is in close proximity to Askham Bog Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). However, given the nature and scale of this proposal it is considered that there is not likely to be an adverse effect on this site as a result of the proposal being carried out in strict accordance with the details of the application as submitted. As such the SSSI does not represent a constraint in determining this application. Recommend attaching a drainage condition.

Highways Agency - No objections

Yorkshire Water - No comments to make

York Natural Environment Trust - No reply

Environment Agency - No objections. The site lies wholly within the Marston Moor IDB, therefore any works affecting watercourses, will likely require consent under the Land Drainage Act 1991 from the IDB. All surface water drainage arrangements must be agreed with the IDB and City of York Councils Drainage Engineers.

Ainsty Internal Drainage Board - Askham Bogs and Pike Hills Drain are in close proximity to the site and are at their capacity and incapable of accepting further discharges of surface water without increasing the risk of flooding. However, no objections are raised there is an expectation that the proposal would not result in variations of flow or other characteristics that would prove problematic or increase the risk of flooding. A condition to secure drainage works is sought.

Yorkshire Wildlife Trust - No objections. The extension to the golf course would be more valuable to wildlife than the present arable field. Askham Bog SSSI is located less than 100m away from the proposed extension. It could be affected by changes in hydrology and if chemicals such as pesticides and fertilisers are used on the golf course. The SSSI would benefit from a landscape and planting plan which would support wildlife found on Askham Bog. Conditions are suggested.

Copmanthorpe Parish Council - No objections

Site Notice and Press advert - Consultation period expired 5th March 2014. One letter of objection from 6 Church Street Copmanthorpe stating that local planning authorities should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality. The amenity benefit of the golf course is not a necessity. It does not outweigh the loss of 7.7ha of good quality farmland.

4.0 APPRAISAL

4.1 Key Issues:

- Impact on the Green Belt
- Impact on the visual amenity of the area
- Impact on the highway
- Loss of best and most versatile agricultural land
- Any impact on Askham Bog SSSI

PLANNING POLICIES

4.2 The National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF) sets out the Government's overarching planning policies. At its heart is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The framework states that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people. One of 12 principles set out in paragraph 17 is that planning should always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings.

4.3 Paragraph 187 states that Local Planning Authorities should look for solutions rather than problems and decision takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible. The NPPF states that there are three dimensions to sustainable development - an economic role, a social role and an environmental role.

4.4 The proposed development lies in the York Green Belt and so should be assessed against Central Government Planning Policy as set out in paragraph 79 of the National Policy Framework (NPPF). The fundamental aim of green belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. It states that local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. The essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence (paragraph 79). The NPPF lists the types of development that are acceptable in the Green Belt. These include the provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and recreation, as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;. Certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in Green Belt provided they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in Green Belt.

4.5 Policy YH9 and Y1 of the Yorkshire and Humber Plan - Regional Spatial Strategy to 2026 defines the general extent of the green belt around York with an outer boundary about 6 miles from the city centre.

4.6 The 2005 Development Control Local Plan was approved for Development Control purposes in April 2005; its policies are material considerations although it is considered that their weight is limited except where in accordance with the content of the NPPF.

4.7 The relevant City of York Council Local Plan Policies are GB1, GB13, GP14, NE1 and L3. GB1 'Development in the Green Belt' follows the advice contained in the NPPF in stating that permission for development will only be granted where : the scale, location and design would not detract from the open character of the Green

Belt; it would not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt; and it would not prejudice the setting and special character of the City, and is for a type of development listed as appropriate development including the reuse of existing buildings. All other forms of development are considered to be inappropriate and very special circumstances would be required to justify where the presumption against development should not apply.

4.8 Policy GB13 is concerned with sports facilities outside settlement limits. It states that proposals for the development of essential ancillary facilities will be permitted where the facilities are essential to support the outdoor provision; they are kept to a scale consistent with the requirements of the activity; there are no opportunities to provide the built facilities in adjacent settlements; any new buildings do not detract from the openness and the proposal will not compromise grades 1,2 or 3a agricultural land.

4.9 Policy GP14 states that planning permission will only be granted for development that would result in the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land if an applicant can clearly demonstrate that very special circumstances exist which demonstrate that the proposal can not be located elsewhere.

4.10 Policy NE1 'Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows' seeks to protect trees that are of landscape, amenity or nature conservation value by, inter alia, refusing development proposals that would result in their loss and by seeking appropriate protection measures when they are proposed for removal. Appropriate replacement planting will be sought where trees are proposed for removal.

4.11 Policy L3 states that applications for golf courses will be permitted providing it would not have an adverse effect on the landscape; new buildings are kept to a minimum; proposals would not lead to the loss of public rights of way; does not involve development on the best agricultural land and the proposal would not be visually intrusive due to the use of floodlighting or extensive fencing.

IMPACT UPON GREEN BELT

4.12 As stated the site lies within the green belt. The use of the land as a golf course is considered to be an acceptable use within the green belt and accords with the NPPF. The submitted information does not indicate any major earthworks or buildings to the site and as such would not have any detrimental impact upon the open character of the greenbelt and would preserve its openness. No landscaping scheme has been submitted but the existing golf course is very open in nature with minimal landscaping. It is understood that the extension to the golf course would follow in a similar style.

IMPACT UPON VISUAL AMENITY

4.13 The application site is visible from a short section of the A1237. However, due to the nature of the scheme and the low lying topography of the land there would be limited impact upon the visual amenity of the area. Existing trees and boundary treatment are to be retained masking the limited development from view.

IMPACT UPON HIGHWAY

4.14 As the extension to the golf course proposes the reconfiguration of the course only and no additional holes or additional facilities it is not envisaged that the course will attract a significant number of additional visitors. Whilst the existing access from the A1079 is not ideal, being single width for part of its length, it is considered acceptable and capable of accepting any additional traffic which may result from the proposal.

LOSS OF AGRICULTURAL LAND

4.15 The Agricultural Land Classification system classifies land into five grades, with Grade 3 subdivided into Sub grades 3a and 3b. The best and most versatile land is defined as Grades 1, 2 and 3a by policy guidance contained within Annex 2 of the NPPF. This is the land which is most flexible, productive and efficient in response to inputs and which can best deliver future crops for food and non food uses such as biomass, fibres and pharmaceuticals. Current estimates are that Grades 1 and 2 together form about 21% of all farmland in England; Sub grade 3a also covers about 21%.

4.16 Whilst local planning authorities should seek the use poorer quality land in preference to that of higher quality it is not always practical. The golf course is an existing facility which is bounded by highways and a SSSI leaving limited scope for its expansion. The site of the extension is the only available land abutting the golf course which could be utilised. The site is relatively small, at 7.7 hectares, and as the development of the site does not involve any permanent structures or major earth works the use as a golf course is reversible, allowing the site to revert to agriculture in the future if needed.

IMPACT UPON ASKHAM BOG

4.17 Askham Bog is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and is bounded on 3 sides by Pikehills Golf Course. The site is a diverse mix of fen, bog, grassland and woodland. It is managed by The Wildlife Trust who consider that the extension to the golf course would be more valuable to wildlife than the present arable field. However, it could be affected by changes in hydrology and if chemicals such as pesticides and fertilisers are used on the golf course. As stated the current golf

course bounds Askham Bog and is managed closely to prevent any impact in terms of run off and pollution arising. The same processes and practices will be used on the extension.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 It is considered that the proposed change of use of the existing arable land to golf course is acceptable in principle within the Green Belt, constituting appropriate development, subject to the requested survey confirming the anticipated minimal ecological impact on the site, the application is recommended for approval.

COMMITTEE TO VISIT

6.0 RECOMMENDATION: Delegated Authority to Approve

1 TIME2 Development start within three years -

2 LAND1 IN New Landscape details - to be planted

3 No development approved by this permission shall be commenced until the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Internal Drainage Board has approved a Scheme for the provision of surface water drainage works. Any such Scheme shall be implemented to the reasonable satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority before the development is brought into use. The following criteria should be considered:

- Discharge from "greenfield sites" taken as 1.4 lit/sec/ha (1:1yr storm).
- Storage volume should accommodate a 1:30 yr event with no surface flooding and no overland discharge off the site in a 1:100yr event.
- A 20% allowance for climate change should be included in all calculations.
- A range of durations should be used to establish the worst-case scenario.
- The suitability of soakaways, as a means of surface water disposal, should be ascertained in accordance with BRE Digest 365 or other approved methodology.

Reason: To ensure that the development is provided with satisfactory means of drainage and to reduce the risk of flooding.

4 Details of any engineering operations and/or regrading works shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority and agreed in writing prior to works commencing on site.

Reason: So the Local Planning Authority can be satisfied with the proposed scheme.

5 No work shall commence on site until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work (an archaeological excavation and subsequent programme of analysis and publication by an approved archaeological unit) in accordance with the specification supplied by the Local Planning Authority. This programme and the archaeological unit shall be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before development commences.

Reason: The site lies within an Area of Archaeological Importance and the development will affect important archaeological deposits which must be recorded prior to destruction.

7.0 INFORMATIVES: Notes to Applicant

1. STATEMENT OF THE COUNCIL'S POSITIVE AND PROACTIVE APPROACH

In considering the application, the Local Planning Authority has implemented the requirements set out within the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraphs 186 and 187) in seeking solutions to problems identified during the processing of the application. The Local Planning Authority took the following steps in order to achieve a positive outcome:

Requested ecological statement

Attached conditions

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