

## COMMITTEE REPORT

**Committee:** East Area  
**Date:** 11 January 2007

**Ward:** Strensall  
**Parish:** Earswick Parish Council

**Reference:** 06/00080/FUL  
**Application at:** Greystones Farm Towthorpe Moor Lane Strensall York YO32 9ST  
**For:** Installation of floodlighting for golf range and planting of coppice (retrospective)  
**By:** R G Chapman  
**Application Type:** Full Application  
**Target Date:** 10 March 2006

### 1.0 PROPOSAL

This application seeks retrospective planning permission for floodlights at Greystones Farm to illuminate an existing golf driving range. The golf driving range was granted planning permission in February 2002 at Planning Committee as part of an application to diversify and expand the activities of the farm (Ref No. 01/03091/FUL). The land in question is off Towthorpe Moor Lane in Strensall and is on land classified as Green Belt.

### 2.0 POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 Development Plan Allocation:

City Boundary York City Boundary 0001

2.2 Policies:

CYGP1  
Design

CYGB1  
Development within the Green Belt

CYGB13  
Sports facilities outside settlements

CYL3  
Criteria for golf course/driving ranges

CYGP4A  
Sustainability

## 3.0 CONSULTATIONS

### 3.1 Internal

Highways and Street Operations Engineer - The applicant has made good use of relevant recommendations for the reduction of light pollution. The planned coppice would also aid in the control of any visible glare and limit the light to within the driving range boundaries.

Environmental Protection Unit - There appears to be no statutory lighting nuisance under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environments Act 2005, although all properties in the area have not been investigated because complaints have not been received. The Environmental Protection Unit are obliged to investigate all complaints of light pollution under the aforementioned legislation and take enforcement action where the lighting is excessive.

Countryside Officer - Ideally lighting such as this should not be located in a countryside location close to woodland. However, it is considered that there is no legal wildlife legislation that would justify its refusal. Whilst legislation does cover disturbance to protected species it would be difficult to prove that lighting that is upwards of half a mile away would cause any possible roost decline / disappearance. Also, as the lights are only substantially used in the winter when bats are hibernating there is even less likelihood of this being justified. With regard to other wildlife matters, whilst lighting can affect them, the effect seems to be relatively limited, even badgers can become very used to lighting. There is a badger sett that could be affected by the lighting but this is some distance away from the adjacent woodland. Any potential impacts could be reduced through screen planting on the edge of the woodland with dense shrub species. A condition could be attached to any approval to ensure that this planting takes place and that a reasonable percentage of species do not shed leaves in winter. Lighting times could also be conditioned to ensure that lighting is turned off at a suitable time.

Highway Network Management - No objections.

### 3.2 External

Earswick Parish Council - No objections.

Neighbour consultation and site notice - Seven pieces of correspondence received from resident of Stockton Hermitage on Malton Road and one from Dam Hill Farm on Malton Road. A summary of the points raised are presented below:

- The light is too intense and is intrusive upon the sitting room, dining room, conservatory, rear landing, and a bedroom at Dam Hill Farm.
- The floodlighting is creating severe light pollution in a rural environment and is a distraction to motorists travelling along the A64.
- The proposed tree planting to screen any residual pollution would be of benefit, this planting should be evergreen trees of an appropriate height.
- The proposal does not comply with the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005.
- The lights illuminate the golf driving range but also the adjacent woodland.

- The lights illuminate the sky which can be clearly seen from Stockton on the Forest over a mile in the distance.
- It is possible to walk around some farm buildings without the need to turn on other lights.
- The woods in front of the Driving Range have been an important nature reserve for over 25 years with many birds, rare moths and butterflies, mammals and plants. The Environment Agency discussed the possibility of it becoming an SSSI. Since the floodlights were installed the amount of wildlife has reduced.
- The floodlights should be angled down as far as possible and conditions should be attached to reduce the amount of time the lights are on for.
- A better lighting scheme could be implemented which resulted in significantly less light pollution into the nature reserve.
- The resident has stated that the North Yorkshire Bat Group have stated that they believe that the light cast by the floodlights is damaging roosting sites.
- The proposal is contrary to parts a), b), c), e), f), and g) of Policy GP1 Design of the Draft Local Plan.
- The proposal is also contrary to parts f) and g) of Policy GP4a Sustainability of the Draft Local Plan.
- The floodlights light up the tops of 70 foot tall trees over 400 m away.
- A survey by the Central Science Laboratory in 1998 showed that there were seven different species of bat in these woods some of which are under habitat threat and highly protected.

English Nature - No objection to the proposal in relation to species especially protected by law. However, bats are known to roost in the adjacent woodland and floodlighting can disrupt the 24-hour pattern of light and dark and can affect the natural behaviour of bats. Floodlights should be turned off at bat emergence time and during peak bat activity times. Therefore if the application is approved a condition should be used to ensure the lights are turned off after 8.30 pm between the months of May and September.

## **4.0 APPRAISAL**

### **4.1 Key Issues:**

- Green Belt
- Visual Amenity
- Wildlife

4.2 The Application Site - Greystones Farm Driving Range received planning permission in 2002. The applicant claims that three 2000 W floodlights were approved as part of this application in order to allow the golf driving range to be illuminated and used during hours of darkness. However, within the application file there is no evidence of floodlights being considered. Floodlights are not mentioned in the application supporting statement or the officer committee report and they do not appear on the approved drawings. More than three floodlights have been erected and they are located on top of the hitting area housing. This application seeks retrospective planning permission for four 1000 W and three 250 W floodlights.

### **4.3 GB1: Development within the Green Belt**

Planning permission for essential facilities for outdoor sport will only be granted where:

- a) the scale, location and design of such development would not detract from the open character of the Green Belt; and
- b) it would not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt; and
- c) it would not prejudice the setting and special character of the City of York.

#### GB13: Sports Facilities Outside Settlement Limits

Within the Green Belt proposals for the development of essential ancillary facilities for outdoor sport or recreation will be permitted where:

- the facilities are essential to support the outdoor provision; and
- the facilities are kept to a scale consistent with the requirements of the outdoor recreational activity.

4.4 Impact on the Green Belt - The application site is in a relatively remote part of Strensall off Towthorpe Moor Lane. Therefore the floodlights are visually prominent from the surrounding area which is generally in darkness. The floodlights are low lying, because of this they emit light horizontally in order for the golfer to be able to see the ball as it is in the air and as it lands. The lights can be seen from various vantage points including the A64. It is therefore considered that the floodlights detract from the character of the area. The level of illumination is excessive within this Green Belt location.

#### 4.5 GP4a : Sustainability

Proposals for all development should have regard to the principles of sustainable development. Development should:

- be of a high quality design, with the aim of conserving and enhancing the local character and distinctiveness of the City;
- minimise pollution, including light;
- conserve and enhance natural areas and landscape features

#### L3: Golf Courses and Driving Ranges

Applications for golf courses and driving range developments will be permitted providing... the proposal would not be visually intrusive due to the use of floodlighting.

4.6 Visual Amenity - The physical appearance of the floodlights themselves are not harmful. However, the design of the lighting scheme means that whilst illuminated the lights become visually prominent and the natural darkness of this rural area is lost. It is argued that the floodlights are visually intrusive and cause a level of light pollution which is not acceptable in this setting. A light intensity survey was submitted which shows that lighting levels around the boundary are low, however during the site inspection it is considered that a significant amount of light escapes the driving range boundary and the site stands out as a large area of illumination within a countryside location.

#### 4.7 GP1 : Design

Development proposals will be expected to:

- respect or enhance the local environment;

- design outdoor lighting schemes, which are energy efficient and provide the minimum lighting level required, taking into account any adverse impact on the character of the area and night sky illumination and ecological systems.

4.8 Wildlife - The golf driving range is located close to a woodland which supports a number of species of animals including some rarer varieties. The floodlights do project a significant level of artificial light into this habitat during dark evenings. However, in consultation with English Nature and the Countryside Officer it is considered that any potential damage to habits within the woodland cannot easily be quantified and therefore a refusal is not recommended on these grounds. Whilst it could be argued that the floodlights do not respect or enhance the local environment, impacts on the woodland could be controlled through conditions such as additional planting on the driving range boundary and a condition controlling hours of illumination.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

Harm to the Green Belt and visual amenity of the area.

## **6.0 RECOMMENDATION: Refuse**

- 1 The floodlighting has not been designed to respect or enhance the character and visual amenity of this rural area within the Green Belt. A significant amount of light emitted from the floodlights is lost outside of the driving range boundary which results in light pollution and further visual harm to the open countryside. Therefore it is considered that this application is contrary to Policies GP1, GP4a, GB1, GB13, and L3 of the City of York Draft Local Plan and design principles contained within PPS1.

## **7.0 INFORMATIVES:**

### **Contact details:**

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