

Environment and Conservation - No objections to the proposal in terms of the impact on the character of the Green Belt. Although the extension of the golf course would result in a change in character of the landscape it would be seen in the context of the existing golf course. The proposed earthworks are subtle and will not create a significant visual change to the land.

Lifelong Learning and Culture - Strongly support the plans for the expansion of the golf course. The proposal may increase participation in sport and ensure the long term viability of the club.

3.2 External

Wheldrake Parish Council - No objection to the application, however the following safeguards should be considered. A) Improved safety at the entrance as the visibility splay at the entrance is poor. B) There should be adequate aftercare to trees/planting. C) Safeguards to prevent vehicles being hit by wayward golf balls.

York Natural Environment Panel - Not opposed to the development in principle. A more detailed landscaping scheme should have been included in order to ensure compliance with the Council's policy on biodiversity.

Sport England - The proposal would help increase the level of participation in this sport as well as help develop the existing facility.

4.0 APPRAISAL

4.1 Key Issues:

- Impact on the Green Belt
- Impact on the visual amenity of the area
- Impact on the highway

4.2 The Application Site and Nature of Proposal - Swallow Hall Golf Course and Driving Range is within Wheldrake. The current site is a monoculture, cultivated field seen against the backdrop of Wheldrake Wood, with a hedge running along the boundary with Wheldrake Lane. Swallow Hall currently operates a short (mostly par 3's) 18 hole golf course. The proposal is to extend the golf course into and adjacent agricultural field to create a longer 18 hole course and a shorter 9 hole course. The golf course and the adjacent agricultural land are all within the City of York Green Belt.

4.3 PLANNING POLICIES

4.3.1 Planning Policy Guidance 2: Green Belts states that land within the Green Belt has a positive role to play in providing opportunities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation near urban areas. Development within the Green Belt is considered inappropriate unless it is for one of the uses listed; outdoor sport and recreation facilities are included within this.

4.3.2 Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation states that in rural areas those sports and recreational facilities which are likely to attract significant numbers of participants or spectators should be located in, or on the edge of country towns. Smaller scale facilities will be acceptable where they are located in, or adjacent to villages to meet the needs of the local community.

4.3.3 Draft Local Plan Policy GB1: Development in the Green Belt states that planning permission for essential facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation will only be granted where:

- the scale, location and design would not detract from the open character of the Green Belt; and
- 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 of York.

4.3.4 Draft Local Plan Policy L3: Golf Courses and Driving Ranges states that applications for golf courses and driving range developments will be permitted providing:

- the proposal would not have an adverse effect on the landscape; and
- new buildings are kept to the minimum in line with operational requirements of the activity; and
- proposals would not lead to the loss of existing public rights of way; and
- the proposal does not involve development on the best and most versatile agricultural land; and
- the proposal would not be visually intrusive due to the use of floodlighting or extensive fencing.

4.4 Impact on the Green Belt - Green Belt policy states that developments are inappropriate unless they are for one of the developments listed, this includes outdoor sport. The main purpose of the Green Belt is to maintain the open character of the area and to reduce urban sprawl. The extension of the existing golf course does not compromise the purposes of Green Belt classification. The agricultural land would be grassed and gently undulated with numerous trees planted within the site. It is considered that the proposal is appropriate development within the Green Belt.

4.5 Policy L3 - There would be no buildings on the new golf course area. The new landscaping including tree planting would help the course fit well within its surroundings. There would be no loss of a public right of way and the area is classified as Grade 3b agricultural land which is considered of moderate quality and not worthy of special protection. There would be no new lighting and the area would not be fenced off, merely screened by green landscaping.

4.6 Impact on the visual amenity of the area - The proposed undulation of the land is relatively gentle and would not look out of place within the wider area. The proposed planting scheme includes a high proportion of native trees which would help the golf course blend well within the local area over time. A landscaping condition could be attached to any approval to ensure that a full and detailed planting scheme is submitted to and approved by the City Council before work commences.

4.7 Highway issues - It is considered that the golf course expansion would not bring significantly greater customer numbers. There is an overspill car park around the clubhouse which could be used if customer numbers are significantly greater than anticipated. The front hedge requires regular trimming in order to maintain visibility splays, this is a maintenance issue which can be controlled under highway regulations.

5.0 CONCLUSION

It is considered that the proposed golf course expansion complies with relevant local and national planning policies.

6.0 RECOMMENDATION: Approve

1 TIME2

2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out only in accordance with the following plans:-

Drawing Job No. GD 089 received by The CoYC on 30/03/06

or any plans or details subsequently agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority as amendment to the approved plans.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out only as approved by the Local Planning Authority.

3 No development shall take place until there has been submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority a detailed landscaping scheme which shall illustrate the number, species, height and position of trees and shrubs. This scheme shall be implemented within a period of six months of the completion of the development. Any trees or plants which within a period of five years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of a similar size and species, unless alternatives are agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: So that the Local Planning Authority may be satisfied with the variety, suitability and disposition of species within the site.

4 No development shall take place until there has been submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority a detailed earthworks engineering plan indicating all changes to the existing ground levels.

Reason: So that the Local Planning Authority may be satisfied with the finished development

7.0 INFORMATIVES:

Notes to Applicant

1. REASON FOR APPROVAL

In the opinion of the Local Planning Authority the proposal, subject to the conditions listed above, would not cause undue harm to interests of acknowledged importance, with particular reference to the impact on the Green Belt, visual amenity of the area, and the highway network. As such the proposal complies with Policies GB1, GB13 and L3 of the City of York Draft Local Plan.

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