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Planning
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PLANNING STATEMENT

GREENWAY HALL GOLF CLUB

JULY 2017

Site Address:
Greenway Hall Golf Club, Stanley Road, Stockton Brook, ST9 9LJ

Applicant:
Mr. D. Burton

Proposal:
Installation of Floodlighting to Golf Driving Range

Planning Statement:
Date Issued: 27th July 2017
Job Reference: RDP/2017/122

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1. Introduction

1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy has been instructed by Mr. D. Burton to prepare a planning application for the installation of floodlighting onto the recently constructed golf driving range at Greenway Hall Golf Club, Stanley Road, Stockton Brook.

1.2 Planning permission for the golf driving range and extensions to the clubhouse was originally granted under application SMD/2014/0079. Planning permission was then subsequently granted for revisions to the approved scheme (SMD/2015/0355) encompassing amendments to the siting and design of the golf driving range, and alterations to the size of the approved extensions to the clubhouse.

1.3 This application seeks consent for the installation of 8no. Challenger 3 Floodlights onto the golf driving range in order to facilitate its use during darker evenings. The application is accompanied by a Floodlighting Technical Report prepared by Abacus Lighting Ltd. which should be read in conjunction with this Planning Statement.

2. Site & Surroundings

2.1 The application site forms part of a long-established golf course, which benefits from a clubhouse and golf driving range. The golf course is located on the southern side of Stanley Road in Stockton Brook. The site is accessed from the Stanley Road in the north-easternmost corner of the site which leads onto the club's existing car park. To the south of this car park lies the existing clubhouse and golf course, with the driving range located to its southeast. The land surrounding the driving range slopes upwards in a southerly direction, and is bordered to the east by Houghwood Lane. A

scattering of residential properties are located beyond Houghwood Lane to the east, with a farmhouse located at the far southeastern end of the site. A further dwelling is located to the rear of the golf driving range. The application site as a whole lies within the North Staffordshire Green Belt.

3. Planning Policy

3.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires proposals to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan taking into consideration any material considerations relevant to the determination of the application. The Development Plan for the area comprises the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy DPD of which the following policies are considered to be of relevance:

3.2 Policy SS1 of the Core Strategy relates to 'Development Principles' and states that the Council will expect development to contribute positively to the social, economic and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands in terms of delivering, amongst others, easy access to jobs, shops and transport services by all sections of the community; development which maintains the distinctive character of the Staffordshire Moorlands, its individual towns and villages and their settings, and development that secures high quality, sustainable environments.

3.3 Policy SS1a of the Core Strategy relates to the 'Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development' and states that when considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. It will always work pro-actively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic,

social and environmental conditions in the area. Planning applications that accord with the policies in the Core Strategy will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:

- *Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole;*

- *or specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted.*

3.4 Policy SS6c of the Core Strategy relates to the 'Other Rural Areas Area Strategy' and states that these areas will provide only for development which meets an essential local need, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside. The policy goes on to state that the Council will help to sustain the rural economy by enabling the limited expansion or re-development of an existing authorised business for employment uses, and allowing for small-scale tourism developments. Policy SS6c furthermore states that the Council will enhance and conserve the quality of the countryside by:

- *Giving priority to the need to protect the quality and character of the area and requiring all development proposals to respect and respond sensitively to the distinctive qualities of the surrounding landscape;*

- *Limiting uses which generate a substantial number of regular trips in areas that are not well served by public transport;*

3.5 Policy SS6c also confirms that strict control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate development within the Green Belt allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy.

3.6 Policy C2 of the Core Strategy relates to 'Sport, Recreation and Open Space' and states that the Council will support schemes that will protect and improve the quantity, quality and accessibility of open space and outdoor sports, leisure and children's play facilities throughout the district. New sport, recreation and open space facilities should be located in accessible locations and supported by the local transport infrastructure; protect the residential amenity of the area; be of an appropriate quality, scale and form compatible with the local area, especially if the site is located outside the settlement boundary in the open countryside; and not harm interests of acknowledged importance. Applications to improve the use and availability of existing outdoor sports and recreation provision such as the introduction of ancillary facilities such as changing rooms will be permitted provided that they are directly related to the needs of the facility; can be satisfactorily and economically serviced; and meet the above criteria for new sport, recreation and open space facilities.

3.7 Policy DC1 of the Core Strategy relates to 'Design Considerations' and states that all development shall be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and complementing the special character and heritage of the area in line with the Council's Design SPD (NB: Not Published). In particular, new development should (amongst others) be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area; be designed to respect the

site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance; should protect the amenity of the area, including residential amenity; and should provide for safe and satisfactory access.

3.8 Policy DC2 of the Core Strategy relates to 'The Historic Environment' and states that the Council will safeguard and, where possible, enhance the historic environment, areas of historic landscape character and interests of acknowledged importance, including in particular scheduled ancient monuments, significant buildings (both statutory listed and on a local register), the settings of designated assets, conservation areas, registered historic parks and gardens, registered battlefields and archaeological remains. It will seek to achieve this by resisting development which would harm or be detrimental to the special character and historic heritage of the District's towns and villages and those interests of acknowledged importance and preventing the loss of buildings and features which make a positive contribution to the character or heritage of an area through appropriate reuse and sensitive development, including enabling development, unless their retention is not viable or there would be substantial planning benefits to outweigh the loss.

3.9 Policy NE1 of the emerging Core Strategy relates to 'Biodiversity and Geological Resources' and states that the biodiversity and geological resources of the District and neighbouring areas will be protected and enhanced by positive management and strict control of development by (amongst others), ensuring development where appropriate produces a net gain in biodiversity and ensuring that any unavoidable impacts are appropriately mitigated for.

4 Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework places an emphasis on securing sustainable development, and sets out policies in respect of development in the green belt, and development affecting heritage assets (amongst others). The content of the National Planning Policy Framework is discussed in more detail within the Planning Assessment below.

5 Planning Assessment

Green Belt

5.1 The application proposes the installation of 8no. floodlights onto the existing approved golf driving range. The floodlights will attach to modest stanchions that will project off the southern elevation / roof of the driving range building. The proposed works will not increase the footprint of the existing building, nor will they amount to a substantial increase in its volume. Paragraph 89 of the NPPF makes provision for the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. The submitted proposal will not give rise to a disproportionate addition to the original building and is therefore considered to constitute an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt.

Residential & Visual Amenity

5.2 The existing driving range is located to the south east of the clubhouse and is enclosed on its northern boundary by a mature hedgerow / trees. Further vegetation runs up the eastern and western boundaries of the driving range, with the western boundary in particular comprising a mature area of

woodland. This woodland gradually wraps around the southern most end of the golf course.

5.3 The applicant is proposing the installation of floodlighting in order to enable the operational hours of the driving range to be extended during the darker winter months. The driving range first opened for trade in April of this year, and since then the following trends have emerged:

- The number of balls dispensed in first 12 weeks has totalled 445,125
- The average number of balls dispensed per week is 37,093
- The busiest times for issuing balls is between 3pm and 8pm
- Between 3pm – 8pm some 225,550 balls have been dispensed representing nearly half the total amount

5.4 The lack of floodlighting serves to reduce the operational hours of the driving range during the darker months of the year, as shown by the table in Figure 1 which sets out the times of sunset during the autumn / winter months.

Figure 1 – Table Showing Time of Sunset During Winter Months

	Time of Sunset (15th)
October	18:06 hrs*
November	16:10 hrs
December	15:51 hrs
January	16:20hrs
February	17:15hrs
March	18:04hrs

* BST – all other times given as GMT

5.5 As can be seen from the timings in Figure 1 above, the darker evenings will eat into the core hours of the driving range (3pm – 8pm) and diminish the income that it would otherwise be able to generate. The applicant estimates that the darker months will give rise to some 927 'lost' hours. The installation of the floodlighting will enable the driving range to stay open during the periods of the day where it has been at its busiest. This will serve to boost the income generated by the venture, as well as ensuring that the range is available after work hours, thereby encouraging participation in sport throughout the year.

5.6 The application is accompanied by a Floodlighting Technical Report prepared by Abacus Lighting Ltd. which has assessed the extent of illuminance that will be achieved by the proposed floodlighting. In order to meet the levels of illuminance set out by the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE) it is necessary to achieve a minimum level illuminance of +50 LUX over the range area.

5.7 The light spillage plan accompanying the report demonstrates that the required level of illuminance will be achieved on the main driving range area. It furthermore shows that the level of illuminance at the eastern boundary of Houghwood Lane will be only +10 Lux. The eastern boundary to Houghwood Lane lies some 120 metres from the driving range, and to the southeast of the main driving range area. The light spillage plan shows that the level of illuminance from the driving range decreases substantially towards the eastern and western sides of the course where the driving range is located, as the floodlights are focused onto the main driving range area.

5.8 The nearest residential properties to the golf driving range are as follows:

- Oakland Villa – approx. 90m distant to the northeast

- Oakdene – approx. 110m distant to the north
- Houghwood Farm – approx. 203m distant to the southeast
- Houghwood House – approx. 270m distant to the south/southeast
- Houghwood House Barn – approx. 280m distant to the south/southeast

5.9 Both Oakland Village and Oakdene lie to the north of the driving range and given the floodlighting faces in a southerly direction, these properties will not be significantly affected by illumination from the floodlighting.

5.10 Houghwood Farm lies to the southeast of the driving range, and owing to the change in levels observable in the area, sits to a higher level. It is however, located some 203m from the driving range, and the light spillage plan submitted demonstrates that the level of illuminance where the driveway of that property meets Houghwood Lane will be +10 Lux, with the property.at a lesser level still. It is considered that the levels of illuminance experienced by this property will not be significant.

5.11 Similar conclusions are reached in respect of Houghwood House and its attached barn, which benefits from consent for conversion to residential use under application DET/2016/0037. These lie even further away from the site, and whilst there may be a perception of illuminance by virtue of the flood lights being on, the levels of illuminance will not be significant having regard to their distance from the site and the change in levels between the two.

5.12 Having regard to the technical evidence presented, it is concluded that the proposed floodlighting will not give rise to significant harm to neighbouring residential amenity. The proposed driving range will not operate beyond

10pm in the evenings as per its current operating hours and the floodlights will facilitate its usage during hours where it would otherwise be unavailable.

5.13 The presence of existing boundary vegetation, particular to the west and to the south of the site, coupled with the rising nature of the surrounding landscape, means the proposed floodlighting will also have an insignificant impact on the visual amenity of the area. The proposed development is therefore considered to accord with the provisions of policy DC1 of the Core Strategy in this regard.

Ecology

5.14 The originally submitted scheme for the driving range was accompanied by a Phase 1 Habitat Survey prepared by Absolute Ecology. Within that report it was highlighted that light spill can affect the foraging and commuting strategy of many species, and it was therefore recommended that any lighting proposed should be designed to avoid impacting of nearby trees / shrubs and should not exceed 200 lumens. It was furthermore recommended that no lighting be installed above a height of 8 metres.

5.15 The proposed floodlighting will be sited at a height of approximately 5 metres and the submitted light spillage plan demonstrates that that the maximum level of illuminance at the boundary with the existing trees / hedgerows will be +10 LUX. LUX is defined as one lumen per square metre, and therefore the recommendations set out within the original Phase 1 Habitat Survey will be met by this proposal. The proposed development is therefore considered to accord with the provisions of policy NE1 of the Core Strategy.

Impact on Heritage Assets

5.16 The northern boundary of the golf course adjoins with the Caldon Canal Conservation Area. The proposed driving range is located over 100m away

from the canal and is obscured by existing mature vegetation. The proposed floodlighting will not impinge on any important views within the Conservation Area, particularly when travelling along the canal, and as a consequence the proposal will result in no adverse impact to the Conservation Area as a heritage asset. The proposed development is therefore considered to accord with the provisions of policy DC2 of the Core Strategy.

Other Considerations

5.17 Paragraph 18 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that:

> *"the Government is committed to securing economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity, building on the country's inherent strengths"*

5.18 It goes on to state in paragraph 19 that:

> *"The Government is committed to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth. Planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth. Therefore significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system"* (my emphasis)

5.19 This is reflected in two of the 12 Core Planning Principles which underpin the NPPF which is that planning decisions should:

> *"proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and*

thriving local places that the country needs" (Core Planning Principle 3)

And should:

"support existing business sectors, taking account of whether they are expanding or contracting" (Core Planning Principle 9)

5.20 The support for sustainable economic growth is also reflected in paragraph 28 of the National Planning Policy Framework which relates to the rural economy. It states that:

"Planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development".

5.21 The NPPF also advises that pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in people's quality of life including improving the conditions in which people live, work, travel and take leisure. This is reflected in Core Principle 12 of the NPPF which states that Local Authorities should:

"take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs".

5.22 At a local level the District Council's Sport and Physical Activity Strategy identifies that within the Staffordshire Moorlands there are higher than average levels of adult obesity, high levels of obesity amongst young people, and a higher than average proportion of residents with diabetes. The Strategy

furthermore recognises the wider contribution of sport and physical activity in improving health and community safety and contributing towards greater social cohesion. It identifies a key national requirement that there should be an increase the number of adults participating in sports and physical activity for at least three sessions of 30 minutes by 1% per annum, reflecting the recommendations of the Government's Chief Medical Officer. This equates to approximately 6000 people within the Staffordshire Moorlands alone.

5.23 The vision of the Sports and Physical Activity Strategy is as follows:

> *"Staffordshire Moorlands will have an active population that is able to engage in exciting opportunities for sport and physical activity in high quality facilities"*

5.24 The vision is articulated by three aims which are as follows:

- *Provide opportunities for sports and physical activity by people of all abilities;*
- *Improve and make accessible sports and leisure facilities throughout the district; and*
- *Support the development of sports clubs and individuals*

5.25 The objectives of the Strategy are (amongst others) to:

- *increase participation in sports and physical activity, ensure equality of access to sports and physical activity;*
- *Provide choice and opportunity for participation across the district*
- *Ensure a high level of quality of facilities and activities*
- *Maintain a high level of user and resident satisfaction*

- *Increase the sporting achievement and performance of sports clubs and individuals across the district*

5.26 The aspirations of the Sports and Physical Activity Strategy are furthermore reinforced by policies and aims set out within the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy. Policy C2 of the Core Strategy states that the Council will support schemes that will:

> *"protect and improve the quantity, quality and accessibility of open space and outdoor sports, leisure and children's play facilities throughout the district" (my emphasis)*

5.27 The proposed floodlighting will enable the driving range facility to be made available during its most busiest times, throughout the year, whereas at present, without any floodlighting, it would not be able to open during the darker winter months. The proposed floodlighting would therefore improve the quality of outdoor sports within the District and contribute positively to encouraging participation in sport, beyond that which it is currently able to.

5.28 The driving range offers a safe and dry area in which Members can practice and have lessons. This facility in turn has the potential to generate further new membership of the Club, as the absence of training/practice areas can act as a disincentive to taking up the sport as it can be a daunting prospect to take to the main course if you are inexperienced or not played previously. Ensuring that the facility is available year round to meet demand is important for continuing to encourage people to take up golf and enabling newcomers to learn how to play the sport throughout the year.

5.29 A typical round of golf involves walking around 5-6 miles and burns around 900 calories. It also derives toning and muscle strengthening benefits of

swinging clubs and carrying a golf bag. It can also be of benefit to community cohesion as it represents a way to meet new people, develop camaraderie, and help combat stress. All of these benefits can combine to help people live longer, and it is therefore considered that the potential health benefits associated with the proposed development, which facilities and encourages participation in golf, amount to a material planning consideration that weighs strongly in favour of the proposed development.

6 Conclusion

6.1 The National Planning Policy Framework introduces a presumption in favour of sustainable, and states in paragraph 186 that local planning authorities should approach decision-taking in a positive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development. It goes on to state in paragraph 187 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.

6.2 It is considered that this proposal represents an appropriate form of sustainable development having regard to the following conclusions:

- The proposed floodlighting will not result in a disproportionate addition to the original building and is therefore an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt;

- The Floodlighting Technical Report accompanying the application demonstrates that neighbouring residential amenity will not be adversely affected by light spillage;

- The proposal will derive economic and health benefits by enabling the driving range to remain open during its busiest periods of the day during the darker months of the year;

- The proposal will not give rise to harm to the nearby Caldon Canal Conservation Area;

- The proposal will not give rise to harm to protected species.

6.3 It is therefore considered that the proposed development accords with the provisions of policies SS1, SS6c, C2, DC1, DC2 and NE1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy and policies contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

6.4 The Local Authority is therefore respectfully requested to grant planning permission accordingly.