

WINCHESTER CITY COUNCIL
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE AGENDA 6 October 2005

Item No: 05
Address: Meon Valley Golf And Country Club Sandy Lane Shedfield
Southampton Hampshire SO32 2HQ

Parish/Ward Shedfield

Proposal Description: Extension to existing 9 hole golf course

Applicants Name Marriott Meon Valley Hotel

Case No: 05/01391/FUL

W No: W02833/24

Case Officer: Mr Neil Mackintosh

Date Valid: 2 June 2005

Delegated or Committee: Committee Decision

Reason for Committee: 4 or more representations contrary to the Officer's recommendations
have been received

Site Factors: Countryside
Public Footpath No. 5
Site of Importance for Nature Conservation

See Item 12 of PDC Committee agenda 08/09/05, copy attached as Annex A to this report.

- The Committee deferred a decision on this item pending further information on three topics;
- Water supply to the proposed golf course and any effect on the water table and the ecology of the area
- Car parking provision at the hotel/leisure centre
- Fencing to protect the Scouts and Guides at their camp sites

Water supply

Members were concerned that the proposal might lead to the extraction of water for irrigation purposes and that this would reduce the water table and adversely impact on the SINC.

However, the applicant has supplied the following information:

- The hotel/golf course does not have a water extraction licence
- Any irrigation of the course uses mains water
- This is expensive and is kept to the barest minimum
- An irrigation system will be installed on the new course but only for the tees and greens.
- Any watering is carefully controlled to prevent run-off
- Infiltration basins will be incorporated into the course to attenuate water flow into the SINC

Conclusion

There will be no adverse impact on the water table or the SINC.

(The Committee was concerned that the ecology of the area had not been surveyed. However, an ecological assessment of the site was submitted at pre-application stage and agreed with HCC and WCC officers. This formed the basis of the Landscape Appraisal and landscape proposals, and there has now been a separate Badger and Bat Survey, all of which has met with the approval of County ecologists)

Car parking

Members were concerned regarding the adequacy of car parking. This was in the context of general concerns about existing levels of traffic in the northern part of Sandy Lane and the possible impact of 9 additional holes.

The applicant wishes to inform Members, as follows;

- Wednesdays and Saturdays are the busiest days at the hotel so a car park survey was undertaken on these days in April and May this year
- The car park provides 216 spaces and at no time during the survey was the car park full
- The existing car park is well used but there is no need for additional provision as a result of this application.
- Although it is anticipated that more golf rounds will be played these will be by guests staying at the hotel.
- The membership of the Golf Club (ie. local players not staying at the hotel) will not be increased.
- Marriotts aim is to increase bedroom lettings by providing two full-sized golf courses and encouraging guests to stay longer.

Conclusion

There is no need to increase the level of parking provision. Indeed, PPG13 discourages the provision of car parking where an applicant considers this to be unnecessary. Even if the existing car park proved to be inadequate it is unlikely that this would cause parking to spill out of the site and cause safety problems on the public highway.

Fencing to Scout and Guide sites

Members were concerned to ensure the protection of young people on sites adjacent to the golf course.

- Safety is of paramount importance in modern golf course design and the designers have been careful to avoid any potential problems.
- Where the course crosses the Public Footpath tees have been moved to accommodate the safety of walkers.
- No holes play directly towards any boundary with the Scout or Guide property
- Some holes play parallel to these boundaries but are at some distance from them
- In any case, the boundaries already benefit from substantial tree and hedge planting, which will be further reinforced by additional planting.
- The privacy of those using these sites will continue to be protected by the boundary screening, which is unaffected by the proposal, and by additional planting

Conclusions

The applicants have carefully assessed whether any safety fencing is required at all of the boundaries and has concluded that this is not necessary.

The erection of safety fencing would detract from the appearance of the countryside and the amenities of the Scouts and Guides.

Recommendation

APPROVE – subject to the conditions set out in Annex A

Annex A

Site Description

- The Marriott Meon Valley Hotel and Country Club is situated to the North West of the village of Shedfield.
- Vehicular access is from Sandy Lane, the U147, which has been widened between the hotel access and the A334, Wickham to Botley Road.
- In addition to normal hotel facilities the Marriott has an 18-hole and a 9-hole golf course.
- This application seeks to extend and convert the 9-hole course to an 18-hole.
- The application site comprises 33.7ha of land that is currently used mainly for agriculture.
- Much of the site is arable land and improved grassland.
- However there is an area of wetland, designated as a SINC, and a tree nursery.
- There are open views of the site, particularly from the North and North West, and Public Footpath No.5 crosses the southern part of the application site.

Relevant Planning History

- The 18 hole course was permitted in 1972 and since then there have been applications for the hotel and many ancillary works.
- The 9-hole course was permitted in 1988

Proposal

- As per Proposal Description

Consultations

Archaeology

- A desk-based assessment has been submitted and this indicates that the application site has the potential for archaeological remains
- These include a Roman road known to pass through the site.

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- Given the nature of the proposals, an archaeological field evaluation will not be necessary.
- However, any permission should include condition A010 (programme of archaeological work)

Landscape

- No objections, subject to conditions and responses from HCC Ecology
- There will be some tree loss but new planting will more than compensate for this, as will improved management regimes to encourage biodiversity.
- Existing and new planting will address any initial visual impact.

HCC Ecology:

- Many of the points previously discussed have been taken on board and, for the most part, the proposal is not as intrusive as it could be
- However, there are a few points that still need addressing before permission is granted.
- These include badger and bat surveys, a change of tree species, further details of construction works and management principles.

HCC Rights of Way:

- No objection, provided that the public footpath is unaffected by the works.
- Any signage must warn golfers to be aware of pedestrians.
- Two gravel paths will cross the footpath at right angles and these should not sit proud.

HCC Highways:

- All golf course users will continue to access the site for changing, parking etc. via the existing access.
- The hotel has carried out surveys of the level of use of the existing car parks and is satisfied that there is ample spare capacity to accommodate any additional customers generated by this application.
- I understand that locally there is a perceived 'rat running' problem which is said to occur to the north of the access on Sandy Lane.
- This stretch of road does not benefit from any form of widening and its horizontal alignment is tortuous.
- The letters of objection that have been assed to me suggest that the propose development will generate additional traffic to the Club and increase the dangers to road users and erosion along the length of the Lane.
- I have checked the last three years Personal Injury Accident(PIA) record for this area and no PIA's have occurred on the northern section of Sandy Lane.
- I believe it is reasonable to assume that there will not be any material increase in traffic on the northern section of the Lane associated with this application.
- Under the terms of the Agency Agreement your Authority has the power to negotiate and collect contributions from developers of up to £50,000.
- If your Authority considers a contribution is justified, in order to address the transport impact of this development, then this could be secured for future improvement works to Sandy Lane

Representations:

Shedfield Parish Council

- Comment only – Concerned about the increase in traffic on a busy minor road
- Car parking is inadequate at present on peak occasions
- Before the removal of any hedge it should be checked to ensure that it is not ancient

Curdridge Parish Council

- No response at time of writing

Hampshire Gardens Trust

- On part of the land proposed for the new golf course there is a four acre (1.6ha) tree nursery
- This has an unusually wide stock of historic varieties of fruit trees with connoisseur customers country wide.
- The owner of this nursery, Mr Philip House, would like a condition included in the planning consent to make a revised tenancy agreement and prevent the annihilation of his business and sole source of income.

Letters of representation have been received from 18 neighbours

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- Family Trees (Phillip House) - objects – it would terminate my 4 acre tree growing and fruit enterprise, which is my sole source of income
- This is a deep loam soil, ideal for fruit growing
- There is plenty of room here for the golf course and the nursery
- Why is it necessary to use twice as much ground as the existing 9 holes are occupying?
- Shedfield Grange – Mark Phillimore, the landowner – supports the application - there is a need for this extension, a golf course provides environmental benefits as well as employment
- Phillip House will be given 12 months notice and we have offered him alternative plots.
- 13 properties in Sandy Lane – (5 of which are a 'standard' letter of objection to which objectors have added notes. In summary the objections are;
- Loss of prime horticultural land and a wide and diverse range of flora and fauna
- There is no need for a further course, as there are plenty in the area already
- It will adversely affect the countryside way of life
- Sandy Lane is an ancient byway and was a pleasure for walkers, horse riders and cyclists, as there are no bridleways in the area.
- However, it is now used as a 'cut through' by Marriott visitors, including their own minibus
- The speed at which traffic uses this single track lane is dangerous and there have been accidents
- The Lane is in constant need of repair and passing places have been created by vehicles over-running the verge
- It should be made 'Access Only' or blocked off near the Girl Guide Camp.
- 3 other properties – object – re-iterating the above

Relevant Planning Policy:

Hampshire County Structure Plan Review:

- C1, C2, R3

Winchester District Local Plan

- C1, C2, C8, C24, RT9, EN5, HG2, T8

Winchester District Local Plan Review Deposit and Revised Deposit:

- C1, C6, C9, C11, C27, RT11, DP3, HE2

Supplementary Planning Guidance:

- Winchester District Landscape Character Assessment
- Hampshire Biodiversity Action Plan
- Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCS): Winchester District
- Golf Course Development in Hampshire – Policy and Practice
- Movement, Access, Streets and Spaces
- Parking Standards 2002

National Planning Policy Guidance/Statements:

- PPS 1 General Policy and Principles
- PPS 7 The Countryside – Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development
- PPG 9 Nature Conservation
- PPG 13 Transport
- PPG 16 Archaeology and Planning

Planning Considerations

The main considerations in respect of this application are:

- Principle of development
- Impact on the character of the area
- Detailed design
- Historic heritage
- Nature conservation
- Highways

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Principle of development

- PPS 7 states that local and regional policies should, 'support sustainable tourism and leisure developments that benefit rural businesses, communities and visitors and which utilise and enrich, but do not harm, the character of the countryside...'
- WDLP RT9 allows for new golf courses where they – 1. are contained by landform and are carefully designed to reduce the impact on the landscape, 2.incorporate safety features to include footpath users, 3. ensure that any structures are small scale and well screened and 4.avoid detrimental effects upon the farm structure in the locality.
- Policy RT11 in the Review is similar, but also takes into account nature conservation interests and water resources existing in the area
- Strategic Planning have previously stated that the vast majority of the land is only Grade 4 quality agricultural land.
- Agricultural tenancies, and their termination are not a planning matter
- The water resources implications of the development are the subject of on-going consultation.
- The other issues are dealt with below.

Impact on character of area

- With the exception of a wetland SINC, the application site is not the subject of any specific landscape designation eg. ASLQ, AONB etc.
- Your Landscape Architect has no objection to the proposal, as she believes that any short-term impact will be ameliorated by the planting of thousands of trees and hedgerow plants
- The main impact foreseen by the objectors is the additional use of Sandy Lane, which will be dealt with below.

Detailed design

- The design of the course has been the subject of pre-application negotiation with your officers and those of Hampshire County Council
- It has been altered to take into account the safety of footpath users and the biodiversity of the site.

Historic heritage

- There may be potential for archaeological finds on the site and this will be dealt with by means of a planning condition to ensure further co-operation between the developers and your officers.

Nature conservation

- The proposal is acceptable to HCC Ecology, in principle, but further work will need to be done and this can be covered by condition
- They propose to be on site when any works likely to affect badgers and bats are taking place.

Highways

- 'Rat running' on Sandy Lane is, by far, the most contentious issue raised by objectors.
- HCC Highways experts have concluded that 'although some limited additional traffic is likely'.....'there will not be any material increase in traffic on the northern section of the U147 associated with this application'.
- In light of HCC comments your officers are reviewing the situation regarding future improvement works in the locality in order to address the transport impact of the development and will update Members at committee.

Comments on representations

- Although your officers sympathise with agricultural tenants having to relocate, this is beyond the control of the Local Planning Authority and insufficient reason to warrant refusal, particularly as the land has not been recognised as high quality agricultural land.
- Landscape and ecology experts accept that this proposal will not adversely affect the character and wildlife of the area, subject to conditions.
- According to experts, the creation of an additional nine holes will not materially increase the amount of traffic using the northern section of Sandy Lane.

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- Your officers have noted the existing problems themselves and agree that the number (and speed) of cars using Sandy Lane has increased in the past 30 years.
- However, it is considered that it would be unreasonable to refuse the application on this basis.

Recommendation

APPROVE – subject to the following condition(s):

Conditions/Reasons

01 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of five years from the date of this permission.

01 Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 (1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

02 No development or site preparation prior to operations which has any effect on disturbing or altering the level of composition of the land, shall take place within the site until the applicant or their agents or successors in title has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation to be submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

02 Reason: To ensure that the archaeological interest of the site is properly safeguarded and recorded.

03 Plans and particulars showing the detailed proposals for all the following aspects of the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before any development is commenced. The approved details shall be carried out as approved and fully implemented before the golf course is first used or as otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority;

- a) details of the species and specifications of new planting,
- b) a Landscape Management Plan,
- c) the exact position of Hole 2, following further investigation of badger activities,
- d) a bat survey of the site,
- e) details of the storage of topsoil during the course of works and the duration of such works,
- f) details of the removal of the raised earthen bridge across the wetland and
- g) details of any fencing of the sensitive wetland area.

03 Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and wildlife habitats.

04 All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details. The works shall be carried out before the use hereby permitted is commenced and prior to the completion of the development or in accordance with the programme agreed with the Local Planning Authority. If within a period of five years after planting any tree or plant is removed, dies or becomes, in the opinion of the Local Planning Authority, seriously damaged, defective or diseased another tree or plant of the same species and size as that originally approved shall be planted at the same place, within the next planting season, unless the Local Planning Authority gives its written consent to any variation.

04 Reason: To ensure the provision, establishment and maintenance of a reasonable standard of landscape in accordance with the approved designs.

05 All works shall be carried out in accordance with the submitted Ecological Report, dated May 2005, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

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05 Reason: In the interests of the biodiversity of the area.

Informatives

01. This permission is granted for the following reasons:

The development is in accordance with the Policies and Proposals of the Development Plan set out below, and other material considerations do not have sufficient weight to justify a refusal of the application. In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, planning permission should therefore be granted.

02. The Local Planning Authority has taken account of the following development plan policies and proposals:-

Hampshire County Structure Plan Review: C1,C2,C3

Winchester District Local Plan Proposals: C1,C2,C8,C24,RT9,EN5,HG2,T8

Emerging Development Plan- WDLP Review Deposit and Revised Deposit:
C1,C6,C9,C11,C27,RT11,DP3,HE2

03. Any works involving the surface, levels or obstruction of the public footpath should first be agreed with the Hampshire County Council Rights of Way Office.