

Application No: 13/5006N

Location: ALVASTON HALL HOTEL, PEACH LANE, WISTASTON, CW5 6PD

Proposal: Development of existing driving range site to create additional recreational facilities areas for use by the hotel guests.

Applicant: Ken Younie, Bourne Leisure

Expiry Date: 27-Feb-2014

### **SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION**

Approve with Conditions

#### **MAIN ISSUES**

- Principle of development
- Impact on trees/landscape character of the park
- Landscape Design
- Impact on the amenity of neighbouring houses

### **REASON FOR REFERRAL**

The application is being referred to Southern Planning Committee as it is classified as a small scale major application.

### **DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT**

The site is Alvaston Hall Hotel which is a vibrant and popular hotel and recreational facility. It is surrounded by and located the open countryside to the north of the Middlewich Road between Nantwich and Crewe. An equipped golf driving range is located in the west of the site that is going through significant expansion of hotel facilities under 12/3735N that gave permission for "*Alterations and Extensions to Existing Hotel/ Leisure Site Including Part Demolition of Existing Buildings, New Build Bedroom Accommodation, Extension and Refurbishment of Dining/ Cabaret/ and Lounge Areas with Associated Parking and Landscape Works.*"

The site is relatively level. To the north and west the land falls to a significantly lower level where the Alvaston Hall golf course is located adjacent to the River Weaver. The hotel car park and complex are located to the east and the golf club house and Turley Farm Cottages to the south.

### **DETAILS OF PROPOSAL**

The proposals will provide a multitude of activity areas, including: mini golf; tennis; badminton; short mat bowls; shuffleboard; archery and shooting. The archery and shooting will make use of the existing driving range, which will be used as the backstop. A new shelter will be

provided at the firing point. The activities will be provided mostly within soft landscaping, with a mixture of lawn, structural and amenity planting and wildflower areas greatly improving the existing ecological value of the site. Hard landscaping is limited, however there will be a fully accessible pathway circling the activity area. The existing driving range will be painted, and the existing entrance will be over-clad with matching

Cladding, to prevent access from the rear. Hay bales will be inserted underneath the roof to provide a back-stop to the targets. A new open sided shelter with a timber frame and corrugated metal roof will be provided at the firing point. The kiosk will be clad in Scandinavian pine with a shingle pitched roof, reflecting the materials used on the new development. A new kiosk will be positioned at the north of the site, for equipment hire and light refreshments.

## **RELEVANT HISTORY**

Numerous through the years on the hotel site but most recent and relevant is described in the description section earlier.

## **POLICIES**

### **Local Plan Policy**

- BE.1 (Amenity)
- BE.2 (Design Standards)
- BE.3 (Access and Parking)
- BE.4 (Drainage, Utilities and Resources)
- BE.5 (Infrastructure)
- NE.2 (Open Countryside)

### **National Policy**

National Planning Policy Framework  
Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version

### **Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version**

Paragraph 216 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that, unless other material considerations indicate otherwise, decision-takers may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:

- the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced the preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);
- the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and
- the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the NPPF (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).

In view of the level of consultation already afforded to the plan-making process, together with the degree of consistency with national planning guidance, it is appropriate to attach enhanced weight to the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy - Submission Version in the decision-making process.

At its meeting on the 28<sup>th</sup> February 2014, the Council resolved to approve the *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version* for publication and submission to the Secretary of State. It was also resolved that this document be given weight as a material consideration for Development Management purposes with immediate effect.

### **CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)**

Environment Agency - No objections in principle to the proposed development and comment that although the total site area is greater than 1 ha, the majority of the development will be soft landscaping/permeable ground as it is now. The proposals do include a slight increase in impermeable area in terms of a path and a new kiosk, however it is unlikely that this small increase will cause flood risk elsewhere.

Environmental Health – Recommend that a condition is attached to limit the use of the shooting range to between 10 am to 3 pm. Also states that the acoustic report recommendations in respect of cladding, barriers and noise mitigation are attached. Rifles used should be limited to 22 air rifles and restricted to 2 in use at any one time.

### **VIEWS OF THE PARISH COUNCIL**

Object on grounds of excessive noise from the discharge of firearms at the proposed shooting range due to the close proximity of nearby properties in Peach Lane.

### **OTHER REPRESENTATIONS**

None

### **APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

Design and Access Statement  
Tree Survey and root and protection plan

### **OFFICER APPRAISAL**

#### **Principle of development**

Within the open countryside NE.2 specifies that only development which is essential for the purposes of agriculture, forestry, outdoor recreation, essential works undertaken by public service authorities or statutory undertakers, or for other uses appropriate to a rural area will be permitted. This proposal is for outdoor recreation that is already situated in the open countryside but is being enhanced and would protect and retain the character and amenity therefore it is acceptable.

## **Impact on trees/landscape character of the site**

The site is located within the open countryside and therefore consideration has to be given to whether the proposed development is appropriately design and sited so as to not result in unacceptable harm on the character and appearance of the area. It is very open in character and as the actual above ground development is minimal, effectively the kiosk, it is therefore considered that the proposals would not result in a detrimental intrusion into the open countryside. Once construction is complete the old driving range area would return to being a full useable and vibrant space.

The application is supported by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment Tree Survey and Tree Protection Statement by B. J. Unwin Forestry Consultancy. The report indicates that the assessment has been carried out in accordance with the recommendations of British Standard BS5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction. The report has been carried out to assess the environmental and amenity values of all trees on or adjacent to the development area and the arboricultural implications of retaining trees with a satisfactory juxtaposition to the new development.

*BS5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and Construction – Recommendations* references Arboricultural Impact Assessments (sub section 5.4 of the Standard). The assessment should evaluate the effects of the proposed design, including potentially damaging activities such as proposed excavations and changes in levels, positions of structures and roads etc in relation to retained trees. In this regard BS5837:2012 places greater robustness and level of confidence necessary to ensure the technical feasibility of the development in respect of the successful retention of trees.

The British Standard identifies at paragraph 5.2 *Constraints posed by Trees* that all relevant constraints including Root Protection Areas (RPAs) should be plotted around all trees for retention and shown on the relevant drawings, including proposed site layout plans. Above ground constraints should also be taken into account as part of the layout design

The submitted plans and particulars illustrate which trees are suggested for retention and are cross referenced with their Root Protection Areas and respective Tree protection details onto a proposed Master Plan. As a consequence it is possible to determine the direct or indirect impact of the proposed layout on retained trees.

The redevelopment of the driving range requires no tree removal, with all trees identified for retention able to be protected in accordance with current best practice BS5837:2010. Levels changes have been modified outside Root Protection Areas (RPA) with no direct implications for trees. Subject to the appropriate condition the proposed development would proceed without any significant detrimental impact on the immediate area or the wider landscape.

## **Landscape Design**

The majority of the site is laid to grass with the existing driving bays to the south and a ball stop fence to the west. There is one mature Oak tree within the site midway long its length, a line of hybrid Poplar trees along part of the south western boundary and a line of Leyland Cypress on the northern boundary. The proposals would incorporate spoil arising from the

ongoing works within the hotel complex and would provide a new landscape setting for a variety of leisure activities. A specification is provided for structural planting with a concept plan for a golf area and proposals for hard landscaping. The development would be relatively localised and in combination with retained trees and proposed mounding, once established the new structural planting proposed would provide some containment. The proposed tennis and badminton courts would be grass surfaced.

The landscape proposals are generally appropriate for the intended use although but it has been suggested to the applicants that the number of Purple Beech be significantly reduced overall and replaced with an alternative native species of tree. This is particularly relevant on the western boundary where it would be desirable to avoid prominent features on the skyline. A condition is proposed to require these landscape details In the event of approval, together with details for the golf area and an implementation condition for all landscape works. The application therefore complies with BE.2 (Design Standards).

### **Impact on the amenity of nearest houses**

The nearest houses are a significant distance from the site on Peach Lane and any lingering concerns about the discharging of firearms on the shooting range are well capable of control via the conditions recommended by the Environmental Health Officer. Thus the application is not envisaged to have any notable impact on residential amenity and therefore complies with policy BE.1 (Amenity).

### **Ecology**

The Nature Conservation Officer advises that there are unlikely to be any significant ecological issues associated with the proposed development but recommends that standard conditions are attached to safeguard breeding birds.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND REASON(S) FOR THE DECISION**

It is considered that there would be no harm caused to the character and amenity of the open countryside. The proposal is therefore in compliance with NE.2. It is also in compliance with BE.1 (Amenity), BE.2 (Design Standards), BE.4 (Drainage, Utilities and Resources), of the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011.

## **RECOMMENDATION – Approve subject to the following conditions**

1. Standard time limit
2. Approved Plans
3. Tree Protection
- 4 Safeguard Breeding Birds
5. Shooting range hours 10.00 to 15.00 hrs
6. Rifle use limited to 2 at any one time and 22 overall.

7. Implementation of the proposed noise mitigation measures.
8. Submission of landscape scheme.
9. Implementation of landscape scheme.

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