

NORTH AND EAST PLANS PANEL

THURSDAY, 12TH MAY, 2022

PRESENT: Councillor C Gruen in the Chair

Councillors N Sharpe, M Midgley,
B Anderson, G Almass, E Flint, A Lamb,
K Brooks and T Smith

CHAIRS OPENING COMMENTS

The Chair opened the meeting by paying tribute to ex-councillor Elizabeth Nash saying that she had sat on Plans Panels for as long as she could remember and had contributed to many significant things across the city in addition to the influence she has had on the planning process. She had been a really valuable member of all three plans panels during her time on Council and had sat on parallel panels for many years.

She is a lady who knows her mind but always delivered her views in the most professional, precise and calculated way to make a positive difference. She is well-known for her passion for trees and cultural heritage and is exemplary in her field.

The Chair acknowledged that her views were shared across all the parties and round the table with officers and councillors alike. She would be sadly missed, and the Chair was sorry that she had not been successful at the last elections. However, she is an interesting and industrious person, and the Chair was sure that she would continue to do interesting things including her current occupation in travel.

The Panel wished her all the best for the future and showed their gratitude for her service to the Council with a round of applause.

The Chair also welcomed Cllr Kayleigh Brooks who had been appointed to the Panel until the end of the municipal year.

81 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against refusal of inspection of documents.

82 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no exempt items.

83 Late Items

There were no late items.

84 Declaration of Interests

No declaration of interests were made at the meeting.

85 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr R Stephenson. Cllr T Smith was present at the meeting as his substitute.

86 Minutes - 7th April 2022

RESOLVED – To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 7th April 2022 as a correct record.

87 18/06617/FU - Hybrid application for full planning permission for extensions and annexe building to existing clubhouse including changes to the car park, the construction of 35 holiday lodges with associated landscaping and parking and outline planning for change of use of agricultural land to golf course, realignment of the existing driving range, creation of adventure golf area and alterations to existing golf course to create footgolf course.

The report of the Chief Planning Officer presented for Members consideration a hybrid application for full planning permission for extensions and annexe building to existing clubhouse including changes to the car park, the construction of 35 holiday lodges with associated landscaping and parking and outline planning for change of use of agricultural land to golf course, realignment of the existing driving range, creation of adventure golf area and alterations to existing golf course to create footgolf course.

Members had attended a site visit and were shown slides and photographs throughout the officer presentation.

The Planning Officer presented the application providing the following information:

- Since the publication of the agenda a petition signed by 503 people objecting to the application with individual comments had been received along with another 5 letters of objection. Members were advised that the issues were as had previously been raised and had already been covered in the report. An update however was therefore provided on the number of representations received (as quoted in the report). 91 letters in support, 97 letters in objection plus the 503 on the petition plus 3 letters with general comments.
- A position statement in relation to this application was brought to Panel on 5th November 2020. Since this date numerous changes had been made to the scheme. The main changes included a reduction in the scale of the main clubhouse building and alterations to the design to give the building a more rural appearance whilst also enhancing its eco credentials. There had also been a reduction in the number of lodges from 37 to 35.
- This was a hybrid application seeking full planning permission for the clubhouse extension and holiday lodges and outline permission for the remaining elements including the footgolf course, adventure golf, academy course and realigned driving range.
- The 35-unit eco lodge development was proposed on the existing Par 3 and footgolf course to the south of the existing clubhouse and School

Lane. The proposed units were 7 four bed units and 28 two bed units constructed of timber with stone detailing and incorporated green roofs.

- The Golf Club is located in land defined as Green Belt and Special Landscape Area, to the west of the site is Wike Village, a small hamlet with no services and limited community facilities. The site is near the Harrogate Road which is the main route to the Grammar School at Leeds. Access to the site would be via School Lane which is a narrow lane part-made and part-unmade with some passing points. It was noted that there are other golf courses situated in the local area of north Leeds including Alwoodley, Moor Allerton, Sandmoor, Headingley, Horsforth, Scarcroft, Brandon and Cookridge Hall.
- It was acknowledged that the two-storey clubhouse has had some side extensions and houses a club shop and changing rooms. The club currently has parking for 204 cars.
- The main 18-hole golf course would remain unchanged with the current Par 3 course becoming the footgolf course.
- It was noted that the unauthorised driving range development was to be removed and Members were requested not to take this into consideration.
- The redeveloped and extended clubhouse proposals included:
 - Lower ground floor: Plant room, lobby, kitchen, WC's, adventure golf room, driving range store
 - Ground Floor: Bar kitchen, golf club bar area with large external patio area, function entrance, WC's, golf reception area, pro shop, changing rooms, office, teaching bays, 15 driving range bays, footgolf sports bar with external terrace and storerooms
 - First Floor: Large function room with balcony terrace, 2 meeting spaces with balcony terrace, kitchen, pre-function room, function store, staff office/ meeting room, WC's, multi-functional studio class/ teaching space, teaching bay, 15 driving range bays
 - Second Floor: Gym, health spa reception area with external balcony, health spa lounge with external balcony, 3 health spa treatment rooms, sauna/steam spa, storage room.
- The table at paragraph 97 of the report was highlighted to show the current measurements and the proposed measurements for the current scheme of the clubhouse.
- CGI images of the proposed clubhouse were shown and presented an attractive frontage with landscaping and solar panels. CGI images were also shown of the proposed eco lodges both during the day and at night, alongside proposed landscaping including the formation of a lake.
- Paragraphs 68 and 69 were highlighted to provide an explanation of what considerations should be taken into account in regard to any proposed development and / or the construction of new buildings in Green Belt. Such development is to be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt, unless certain exceptions can be applied
- The officer highlighted that the report's analysis had involved looking at the proposal as distinct elements with its components separated – as some of the development proposed could be regarded as appropriate

development in the Green Belt under the provisions of the NPPF, but other elements could not.

- In particular, it was noted that the holiday lodges did not any of the exceptions provided for within the NPPF.
- In relation to other elements of the scheme proposed, it was noted that exceptions could be applied – such that the elements may be regarded as appropriate development, but then the consideration arises as to whether there is harm caused to the openness of the Green Belt. Officers were also of the view that the adventure golf area proposed some significant structures and the scale of these would not provide openness. There was also the consideration of the visual impact from School Lane and bridle path.
- Planning officer's concerns included:
 - The 3-storey clubhouse was of significant bulk
 - The lodges would have more lighting impact than the current golf course
 - The proposal was stretching the boundaries and at odds with the wider area, the current golf centre sits neatly into the landscape.
 - There are currently no transport links to the golf centre and the proposal would increase the use of cars.
- Benefits were highlighted such as economic benefits in the creation of jobs and an uplift in visitor numbers, boosting tourism to the area.
- It was noted that no issues had been highlighted by Highways or Flood Risk Management.
- It was noted that paragraph 141 set out the factors, propounded as 'Very Special Circumstances' by the applicant. The officer considered each of the proposed 'Very Special Circumstances' in turn, explaining for Members (1) which could *in principle* be deemed 'Very Special Circumstances and (2) which officers considered *in this instance* were deemed 'Very Special Circumstances'.

Stephen Cirell attended the meeting as an objector to the application and informed the Panel of the following points:

- Mr Cirell said that he lived in Wike and represented the residents of Wike who had formed a group in opposition to this application and he was speaking with the support of all the residents of Wike.
- He emphasised the key issues with the application being traffic, noise, pollution and drainage.
- He was of the view that this was not the location for such a scheme as proposed which he likened to a Centre Parcs style development. He said it was an important Green Belt area. Green Belt is important, and he was of the view that the Council rightly defends the Green Belt.
- Further, there are no public transport links to Wike which means more traffic would be generated on roads which already struggle to cope. He said that local ward members and the police were aware that there were often accidents in this location. It is a small hamlet with only 38 houses.

- He agreed with the planning officer that there were no Very Special Circumstances to warrant this type of development and in his view the applicant had done little to reduce the harm to the Green Belt.
- There is no support from local residents, all letters in support had been from club members or supporters of the Park Lane group. He said that the golf club had made no effort to engage with the local community and ask for input which might shape a scheme that was acceptable.
- He said that 3 of the 5 Parish Councils were also in opposition to the scheme.
- He said the residents were deeply concerned about the impact on traffic, drainage, noise and pollution. If the application was to be granted it would double the size of Wike.
- Mr Cirell as an Environmental Advisor was of the view that the scheme lacked any green credentials.
- It was his view that the scheme was all about money, the applicant had accepted that the golf club was not sustainable in its current form and needed this development to survive. He thought it may set a precedent for other golf clubs in the area.

Responding to questions from Members, Mr Cirell provided the following information:

- When the application was first proposed letters were sent to the nearest 6 houses and they were invited to a presentation at the golf club, some had attended, and this was how the rest of the residents heard about the proposals. However, there has been no engagement with residents since.
- There have been speed issues along Wike Ridge Lane and a speed indicator device had been put up, but people do still speed along this road. The junction with School Lane, Forge Lane and Wike Ridge Lane are constantly seeing accidents and incidents some with injuries where the police have been called. The access to the golf club is a single-track road which is a bridleway and with a narrow entry-point into the club land. Residents had concerns that if the function room was at capacity there could be 200 people trying to get in and out of the golf club along this narrow road which would be simply unsuitable for such increased usage.
- There is no public transport to Wike, although there is public transport at East Keswick. To get a bus he had to walk about 1 mile along busy roads which had no footpaths to the nearest bus stop at Harewood gate. Mr Cirell was of the view that most of the traffic accessing the club would be petrol cars which would cause pollution.
- The resident's group had written to the planning officer to raise concerns in relation to flooding, as it is proposed that drainage from the site would be drained into the small beck that goes towards East Keswick. This beck is insufficient and often floods – which was a problem which would surely only be exacerbated by any substantive development on the site.
- The size of the clubhouse and the holidays lodges were the parts of the planning application which caused the most concern to the residents.

- There is only one local convenience store near to the proposed lodges.
- Some properties in Wike would be able to see the clubhouse, although there was a concern in relation to the driving ranges which currently use floodlighting and this can be seen clearly, the concern was that with even more driving ranges and the holiday lodges light pollution would be increased.

Attending in support of the application were Mr Andrew Windress, Agent for the applicant, Cllr Abigail Marshall- Katung of Leeds City Council and Hanif Malik of Park Lane Foundation who informed the Panel of the following points:

- The applicant had responded to Members comments after the presentation at the November 2020 meeting (Position Statement).
- It is the applicant's view that this application for a sports facility is appropriate development in the Green Belt. The driving ranges and the clubhouse will be in use all year round and are larger than the existing, but this is because they are intended to be a regional facility of renown.
- The Very Special Circumstances for this development include, that local jobs would be created, tourism would be enhanced and the proposal included the planting of approximately 300 trees, alongside extensive provisions to bring biodiversity net gain.
- There had been no technical objections in relation to highways or drainage.
- In relation to the lighting Mr Windress said that the lights are outdated, and this has led to local concerns regarding light pollution. The lights for the driving ranges and holiday lodges would use more up to date technology.
- Cllr Marshall-Katung explained that she worked with the Park Lane Foundation which makes sport inclusive for all. She said that children from the inner-city schools were taken to the golf centre so they could enjoy the use of the driving range and the footgolf. The young children enjoyed the experience and were excited for this type of activity.

Responding to questions from Members the Panel were provided with the following information:

- It was recognised that without this scheme the golf centre would close, and it had been losing money. A viability assessment statement had been provided and that the wider Park Lane Group had been supporting the centre to date.
- £200,000 per year is needed to be input to maintain the golf centre's operation.
- Should the holiday lodges not be granted it would not be possible for the scheme to be amended to provide for hotel development, as a new planning application would be required to change the scheme or facility's existing use
- The holiday lodges would be self-catering lodges and it was envisaged that the visiting residents would eat on site and use the golf centre's restaurant. However, should it be required, the shop could be extended to stock more than snacks.

- Cllr Marshall-Katung agreed to Chair a committee to ensure that delivery of the proposed community and inclusivity / diversity benefits would be achieved and delivered in practice
- It was acknowledged that residents had attended an initial presentation of the proposals. However, the Panel had heard that residents of Wike had not been consulted with since the initial presentation or their views taken into account. It was acknowledged by the applicant that the engagement with and consultation of local residents could have been improved upon.
- A sustainability consultant had been used for the eco lodges and the following credentials were listed:
 - Low carbon emissions
 - Heat pumps
 - Solar Panels
 - Green roofs
 - BREEAM excellence ratings for clubhouse and driving ranges also
- Mr Malik explained the role of the Park Lane Foundation working alongside Leeds United, Rhinos Foundation, Leeds Beckett University and Leeds City College. He said that 6 different schools from the inner-city areas used the golf centre for activities. Park Lane could offer transport to the centre if the school did not have any. He said that this golf centre was the only one in Leeds to be receptive to this type of scheme for young people with approximately 170 young people using this facility each week travelling by mini-bus on different days and times, therefore minimal impact on the road network. He was of the view that there was a misconception that this was a Centre Parcs style development. It was noted that Members were of the view that the work of the Park Lane Foundation was to be applauded and thought it would be a loss if this type of activity could not be accessed by young people in the city.
- In relation to the concerns of light pollution, this had been considered by the sustainability consultant who had advised on the latest lighting technology and that this would be used. It was noted that the driving range, although used throughout the year closed at 8pm during the winter months.
- Members were advised that the spa was only a small area of the development. The holiday lodges were to offer a different type of golfing holiday for those wishing to go together offering a relaxing space to spend time together rather than room only accommodation. It was also thought to be good accommodation for families.
- It was acknowledged that after the pandemic golf courses were the first type of sporting activity to open up due to the open nature of the sport. However, they had been closed during lockdown and had lost income. It was the view that reducing fees would not increase membership of the club to reduce the deficit.
- In relation to fulfilment of EN1 and EN2 this had been detailed in paragraphs 129 and 130 of the submitted report. It was acknowledged that the scheme would be of BREEAM standard and that the developers had gone further than usual to meet climate change policy.

- A robust assessment of traffic generation had been undertaken using similar sites. This had taken account of peak travel hours and peak weekend travel hours with no more than 100 trips being generated. It was acknowledged this had only taken account of peak travel times not for the whole of the day. The local junction had been assessed as being sufficient to cope with anticipated capacity. There were passing places already on School Lane.
- It was not envisaged that there would be such increased number of trips generated from such an increased number of vehicles that this would bring an adverse impact on highways.
- In relation to service vehicles this would be taken into account, so that servicing was not done during peak travel times.
- It was confirmed that 13 no. trees would be removed, with some removal due to the poor health of the trees in question. Approximately 300 no. trees would be provided as replacement.

Members comments included:

- A high bar is set for any development being able to take place in the Green Belt and the applicant could not evidence any Very Special Circumstances.
- There is a clearly established policy to dissuade development of holiday accommodation in the Green Belt. Such a type of development should therefore not be allowed to proceed.
- Lack of engagement with the community was disappointing.
- The holiday lodges were not necessary in this location. It was the view that the lodges had a good design which was sympathetic to the area. However, there was concern in relation to the number of lodges proposed and the location in the Green Belt. Further, the lodges would create the equivalent of a small hamlet of buildings in complete disproportionate to nearby Wike.
- The benefits for the community and the city undertaken by the Park Lane Foundation were admirable but greater detail regarding the numbers of young people taking part and from which areas would have been useful. Further, it had not been evidenced that this engagement and delivery of community benefits was not either (1) already taking place or (2) could not substantially continue if the development did not proceed.
- The development was too large for this location.
- To keep the footgolf, adventure golf and golf course was deemed acceptable as it was the view that these activities would keep the openness of the Green Belt. However, there had been no attempt by the applicant to “break bulk” in its presentation of the application – that is, considering its separate elements and proceeding on that basis.
- Concerns in relation to the generation of traffic and the impact on highways and the lack of public transport in the area.
- Viability information provided was not substantive enough to evidence that ‘Very Special Circumstances’ existed to justify the development. For instance, how many jobs would be created? Or how many would be lost if the development could not proceed?

It was the view of the Panel that if a viability assessment was provided for Member's consideration this could be discussed in private session. The Panel were also of the view that consultation with the local community, taking account of their views may assist with any future proposals for this site.

RESOLVED – To refuse permission for the reasons set out in the submitted report.

88 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RESOLVED – To note that the next meeting of North and East Plans Panel will be on 30th June 2022 at 1:30pm.

The meeting concluded at 16:25