

**REPORT TO THE DEVELOPMENT CONTROL  
COMMITTEE**

Report No.

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	<b>20<sup>th</sup> February 2008</b>
<b>Application Number</b>	<b>07/03245/FUL</b>
<b>Site Address</b>	<b>Wiltshire Golf &amp; Country Club, Vastern, Wootton Bassett, Swindon, SN4 7PB</b>
<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Tourist Accommodation (39 Units)</b>
<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Messenger Leisure Limited</b>
<b>Town/Parish Council</b>	<b>Wootton Bassett</b>
<b>Grid Ref</b>	<b>405207 181356</b>
<b>Type of application</b>	<b>Full application</b>

**Reason for the application being considered by Committee**

This application has been submitted to the Committee for decision at the discretion of the Head of Development Control as a previous application for similar development on this site was determined by Committee and also due to the potential impact upon the surrounding area and local economy.

**Summary of Report**

This application proposes an additional 39 units of tourism accommodation (44 lodges were permitted in 2006 and are nearing completion).

- Implications on DC Core Policy C3 and Tourism Policy TM1
- Design and scale of the development
- Impact of the proposals on the rural landscape

**Officer Recommendation**

Planning Permission be REFUSED

<b>Contact Officer</b>	Brian Taylor	01249 706683	btaylor@northwilts.gov.uk
------------------------	--------------	--------------	---------------------------

**Proposal and Site Description**

The site lies to the north-east of the The Wiltshire Golf and Country Club Hotel. Application reference 06/00278/FUL gave permission for the erection of 44 lodges along the north-east boundary of the site. These are nearing completion. There are strong boundaries to the northwest and north east of the site which restricts views of the existing lodges at close quarters. The site slopes down from the hotel (which is very prominent in views to the golf club site) to the northern part of the site. A public footpath crosses the site to the south east.

The application site (and the existing lodges) is clearly visible from points near Wootton Bassett (particularly where the A3102 crosses the railway) and from Breach Lane to the north and east.

<b>Planning History</b>		
Application number	Proposal	Decision
99/00950/FUL	erection of 123 bed hotel	Permit
01/00815/FUL	erection of 49 bed hotel	Permit
04/01780/FUL	extension of club to provide conference facilities	Permit
05/01776/FUL	construction of access road to create two way road system	Withdrawn
05/01792/OUT	erection of 43 bed extension to existing hotel	Permit
05/02183/FUL	erection of 50 bed extension to existing hotel	Permit
06/02987/FUL	extension to reception, office, restaurant etc.	Permit
06/00278/FUL	Tourist accommodation comprising 44 holiday lodges	Permit

### **Consultations**

**Wootton Bassett Town Council** have no objections.

**Wiltshire County Council Highways** have no objections, subject to conditions to ensure that parking areas are maintained.

**Wiltshire County Council Archaeology** recommends imposition of planning condition requiring an archaeological watching brief.

**The Environment Agency** has no objections, subject to conditions requiring submission of drainage and surface run-off details.

**Highways Agency** have no objection.

**Wiltshire Wildlife Trust** has no objection subject to conditions securing protection of habitats and species

**Environmental Health** have no adverse comments.

### **Representations**

One (1) letter of objection that have been received raising the following concerns:

“The proposed units will be far more visible from various vantage points and the existing ones are more obtrusive than promised. It is not the hidden village represented! Take a trip up Breech lane for example. We would like to know what verifiable data has been collated and research has been conducted into the claims made in favour of the original development application, inter alia:-

- Increase in town business trade
- Full and timely compliance with County, district etc plans and tourism definition.
- Impact upon local tourists locations/amenities
- No increase in traffic. No problem accessing town by foot or cycle
- Employment of locals (rather than importation or immigrant)
- Contractors in immediate locality
- Environmental benefits”

**Campaign to Protect Rural England** object on a number of grounds summarised as follows:

- Earlier applications for 123 units were reduced in number in order to be acceptable, this application appears to be the first step to obtain permission for the original figure.
- Does this form of development bring economic and social benefits?
- Have checks been made on Occupancy?
- Energy efficiency does not make the scheme acceptable in itself
- Do existing units visually impinge on rural area
- Is there a market for 'holiday homes'; there is a need for affordable homes.
- The proposal is car dependent and therefore contrary to policy.

## Planning Considerations

### Policy Background

Policy C3 sets out criteria by which all development must be judged. The criteria include respect for local character (i), respect for natural environment (ii), energy conservation features (v) and promoting sustainable patterns of transport (vi).

The principal policy in determining this application (in addition to the Core Policies) is TM1 of the Local Plan:

*"Proposals for new tourist accommodation will be expected to be located in, or adjacent to, existing towns and villages. Proposals for tourist development within the countryside that improves or extends the range of tourist facilities, including tourist accommodation will be permitted, provided that:*

- i) It would result in the conversion of a suitable rural building; or
- ii) Forms part of a farm diversification scheme; or
- iii) *Is an extension to existing facilities, of a scale appropriate to its location."*

The applicants have suggested that the site is located 'in or adjacent to' Wootton Bassett. The site is at its closest 900m from the framework boundary of Wootton Bassett. It is clearly in the countryside and should be assessed on that basis. Policy TM1 allows for new-build tourist accommodation in the countryside provided it is an 'extension to existing facilities, of a scale appropriate to its location'.

The Wiltshire Structure Plan also refers to Tourist Accommodation in the form of chalet/static holiday homes in Policy RLT10. This reinforces the Local Plan Policies in terms that any proposals 'should have regard to their impact on the countryside'.

### History

Originally an application in 2006 was submitted for 123 holiday units (06/00278/FUL). This would have generated an additional 373 bedrooms. Officers expressed concern that this three-fold increase in bedrooms would not fall within the definition or spirit of an 'extension to an existing facility'.

The applicants subsequently reduced the number of lodges (and omitted any serviced accommodation). The revised scheme for 72 lodges would have generated an additional 252 bedrooms. This revised scheme was reported to Development Committee on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2006 with a recommendation of refusal (on the grounds that its size, massing and design would have an adverse impact on the appearance and character of the rural landscape). Prior to that meeting the applicants indicated that they would be content to reduce the numbers further to 44 lodges.

Concerns were raised that the original 123 units and the revised 72 units were not an 'extension to an existing facility', but rather a *new unrelated* facility. In support of the 44 lodges the applicants submitted information to address this particular concern. The current Golf and Country Club has an 18m swimming pool, sauna, beauty spa, gym (48 items of equipment), bar, restaurant and conference/function room. In addition the club has hotel accommodation in the form of 58 rooms

currently with another 50 room extension granted consent. The documentation provided by the applicants sought to demonstrate that there was significant capacity in each of the facilities during off peak periods and a reasonable level of capacity in peak periods. The introduction of family groups (through the introduction of the lodges) was, it was argued, designed to secure increased use of existing facilities without compromising the availability of facilities for existing users.

The scheme for 44 lodges represented 143 bedrooms and increase in bedroom numbers on the site from 108 to 251. The scale of the proposal had been reduced and in terms of *numbers* of lodges the reduced scheme was considered much more comparable to other such developments in the area. In these terms the scale was argued to reflect the level of services provided by the existing club.

The report to Committee identified that the site has strong boundaries to the north west (to the main road) and north east and the site is not clearly visible from close vantage points - except from a public footpath that crosses the golf course site itself. However, the principal public vantage points of the site are from a distance, from the main A3102 heading out of Wootton Bassett, from a minor road to the east and from the Swindon-Chippenham railway line. The report identified that *any* additional buildings here will be very visible within the landscape. The 44 lodges permitted comprise 14 separate buildings in groups of two, three and four lodges. 11 of these Lodges incorporate a three-storey tower element (7.75 m to eaves; 11.5m to ridge).

This was reported to Members as: "a finely balanced proposal. Whilst the current policies (in the 2001 Plan) support the principal of tourist accommodation, there is concern regarding the impact the proposed development will have on the appearance of the surrounding countryside. However, on balance Officers believe the applicants have made sufficient changes to render the scheme acceptable."

The subsequent permission was not for residential use. Condition 1 restricts the development to be used for holiday accommodation only and that it shall not be occupied at all between January 31<sup>st</sup> to February 28<sup>th</sup> inclusive, and not for permanent residential accommodation. Other conditions restrict extensions to the individual lodges, establishment of any 'curtilage' or the introduction of domestic paraphernalia.

### Current application

The 'first phase' of development (that permitted by 06/00278/ful) is largely complete.

The current application proposal includes an additional 39 holiday units (12 x2 bed flats; 19 x 4 bed lodges and 8 x 5 bed lodges). The total number of bedrooms proposed would be a maximum of 140 (one of the bedrooms in the five bed units are annotated bed/study).

The number of resulting lodges (83) would be 11 more than the 72 lodges that were considered (by Officers at least) too great and recommended for refusal in April 2006. The 72 lodges would have generated 252 bedrooms (in addition to the 108 at the hotel). The current 44 lodges created 143 bedrooms; the additional 39 flats/lodges will provide 132-140 bedrooms - a total of 275-283 additional bedrooms a 250% increase in bedrooms in the original hotel.

The reasons for Officers concerns are two-fold: the impact of these buildings on the rural location (given that there is a public footpath crossing the site); and whether the level of building could be considered an appropriate extension of an existing facility.

Firstly the impact upon the surrounding rural landscape. The additional units will be seen in the context of the existing lodges and the hotel building itself. Generally, the lodges are not prominent in the landscape. It is only really from parts of Wootton Bassett, the railway line, the lane to the north-east and from the footpath to the south-west that the development is clearly visible. The proposed units to the south of the existing lodges will to a greater extent be screened from view by the existing lodges. It is only the units around the turning heads to the south east and north-west of the site that extend the built development in the openness of the landscape. The design of the new units reflects those of the existing ones, except for the two storey 'contemporary lodges' which have no pitched roof (and appear as a timber box).

The new development will extend the line of development, but in the context of the existing permitted lodges would not be so out of place and does not extend beyond established boundaries.

Secondly, whether the number of lodges is justified. In the previous submissions it was argued that there was 'spare capacity' in the facilities offered by the hotel. Whilst this argument was not felt to justify the 123 or 72 lodge proposal it influenced the conclusion reached on the 44 lodges. Members considered that the earlier proposal of 44 lodges represented an 'extension to existing facilities appropriate to its location'. However, as detailed above, the current proposal represents a further significant addition to the built form in this location. In numbers of bedrooms (which is considered to be a reasonable measure of the scale of development, in comparison to the existing hotel accommodation) the cumulative increase is significant. The resultant 83 lodges would in effect represent a new, stand alone facility rather than an extension to the hotel and its facilities. As a new facility in a rural location it would fail to "provide sustainable patterns of development". Officers believe that the increase in bedspaces made available by the additional 39 units is not justified in terms of Policy TM1 and fails to meet C3(vi).

Whilst the considerable amount of information that has been submitted in relation to energy efficiency is admirable it does not affect the decision that needs to be made on the principal of the development (an unacceptable scheme in the terms of TM1 cannot be made acceptable by the integration of green measures).

### **Conclusion**

In the context of previously approved lodges the impact of the additional lodges will have a limited impact upon the appearance of the surrounding rural landscape, but there is no doubt that they will be visible from a number of vantage points, not least the adjacent public footpath.

However, Policy allows for new build tourist accommodation where this is an extension to an existing facility appropriate to its location. It is considered the cumulative impact of 83 lodges is not appropriate in terms of scale to this rural location.

### **Recommendation**

Planning Permission be REFUSED

### **Reason for Decision**

The proposed lodges at The Wiltshire Golf and Country Club are considered to conflict with Policy C3 (vi) and Policy TM1 of the North Wiltshire Local Plan. The scale of the proposal is inappropriate representing a significant increase in the amount of accommodation provided at the site. Despite the energy efficiency demonstrated by the proposed construction of the lodges this does not outweigh the policy objections to a significant amount of new development in this rural location. The proposal would fail to promote sustainable patterns of development.

<b>Appendices:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>NONE</b></li></ul>
<b>Background Documents Used in the Preparation of this Report:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>1.03 1.20 2.07 2.25 2.34 2.37 4.02 4.04 4.06 4.08 5.01 5.03</b></li></ul>