

REPORT TO THE NORTHERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	24th November 2010		
Application Number	10/02378/FUL		
Site Address	Chippenham Golf Club, Malmesbury Road, Langley Burrell, Chippenham		
Proposal	Demolition of existing golf clubhouse; construction of a replacement clubhouse and erection of 75 extra care dwellings & 61 bed care home alongside ancillary communal facilities		
Applicant	Mr Freeman Ltd / Trustees of Chippenham Golf Club		
Town/Parish Council	Langley Burrell		
Electoral Division	Kington	Unitary Member	Councillor Greenman
Grid Ref	391009 175621		
Type of application	FULL		
Case Officer	S T Smith	01249706633	Simon.smith@wiltshire.gov.uk

Reason for the application being considered by Committee

Councillor Greenman has requested that this application be considered by the Development Control Committee because of the significance and importance of the proposal to Chippenham town.

1. Purpose of Report

To consider the above application and to recommend that planning permission be REFUSED subject to conditions.

2. Main Issues

To consider the proposed development in the context of the sites relationship to the northern approach to Chippenham and adopted North Wiltshire Local Plan 2011 policies C3 and H3. Specifically, to consider the following:

- Principle of development – policies CF1, CF2 and H4
- Scale of development and visual effect upon northern approach to Chippenham
- Housing
- Highways

3. Site Description

The application relates to a 2.22Ha site, part of the Chippenham Golf Club. The site is accessed via a pair of one-way junctions with A350 Malmesbury Road and currently consists of a practice green, the golf clubhouse and ancillary car parking for approximately 92 cars. The site is well landscaped with mature trees and hedgerow coverage to the North, South and East boundaries.

The site is the first “developed” piece of land that is reached when approaching Chippenham from the A350 northern approach. The site is some 110m north, outside of the Settlement Framework Boundary to Chippenham. Between the site and the SFB, however, there is substantial development in the form of a petrol filling station, hotel, restaurant(s) and care home.

4. Relevant Planning History		
Application Number	Proposal	Decision
07/00160/FUL	Extension of golf course onto adjacent land and minor modifications to existing course	Permission 19/04/07

5. Proposal

The proposal is for the redevelopment of the existing clubhouse, the ancillary car park and practice green to create a large care home complex consisting of a traditional 61 bed care-home together with associated 75 no. “extra care” apartments for private sale. Such apartments would be a mix of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom size.

The application outlines the intention of the Chippenham Golf Club to make use of the funds that would be released as part of the above development to fund the creation of a new and improved clubhouse, which is also part of the application.

6. Consultations

Chippenham Town Council – no objections

Chippenham Without Parish Council – Objects to the application on grounds of highway matters. The road system is constantly gridlocked at certain times and before development takes place suggests that the planned widening of A350 take place. Recent development in BANES has produced instances of gridlock to and from city centre – the same appears to be happening in Chippenham.

Kington St Michael Parish Council – None received

Langley Burrell Parish Council – Scale of development is substantial, but is accepted the area is part of M4 approach corridor. Former rural area has been blighted forever, therefore felt that proposed development would not be out of place in this location close to other development. But is regretted that it represents a further encroachment into the rural surroundings of Chippenham. Location not ideal for a care home and care dwellings given proximity to road and roundabout and overhead power lines, but do not believe these factors should significantly influence decision. Principle concern is access and egress. Traffic from north needs to circle roundabout and approach from south, whilst southbound traffic heads northbound to Kington Langley traffic lights and invariably performs a U turn. Very dangerous and dual carriageway access should be closed in favour of direct access from roundabout.

Highways Officer – Final comments awaited in respect of addendum to submitted Transport Assessment & Travel Plan.

Landscape Architect -

- Plans submitted are not clear as to which existing trees are to be retained (authors note, amended plans now received)
- Line of coniferous trees (Corsican Pines) screening existing clubhouse closest to A350 have been “ring-barked” (method to starve and eventually kill tree) by applicant. Irregular practice in this context and recommend that other trees on the site are protected by TPO to secure amenity value.
- Applicants own submitted Tree Survey and Constraints Plan identifies the pines as being clearly visible from Malmesbury Road and as such have significance upon the local landscape. The trees were assigned category “A” status.

- Trees and hedgerow along south side of access track could be better integrated into edge of proposed car park layout.
- Number of public rights of way pass through or close to application site – proposal would have consequential effects upon visual impact from such.
- Height of Corsican Pines at 12-13m allow height of proposed buildings (ranging from 8.7m – 16.5m) into context. Large consequent visual effect - most obvious from north and north-west and east approaches.
- Visual impact of proposal restricted to approx. 0.5km north and east by off-site mature landscaping and vegetation.
- Existing land use as golf course helps to provide a transitional landscape buffer from urban edge to farm land and countryside (north & east) beyond.
- Scale of proposal would change character of the urban edge from a green vegetated buffer, screening town from countryside beyond, into much more visually prominent built form and edge
- A reduction in scale of the development would reduce visual impact and facilitate a landscape strategy to respect and reinforce local landscape character.

Technical Tree Officer – Notes that the Corsican Pine trees were “ring barked” the morning of the serving of a TPO. The trees are still covered by a provisional Tree Preservation Order, although due to the trees being ring barked and found to be diseased, it is the Councils intention not to confirm this Order.

Housing Officer – Wiltshire’s draft Accommodation Strategy for Older People provides clear indication of the need for extra care housing. It also identifies there is a pressing requirement to identify a site for mixed tenure extra care in Chippenham. Also notes that the proposal should bring forward a 30% of total units contribution towards affordable housing, as required by adopted Local Plan policy.

Council Ecologist – No objections subject to appropriate planning conditions being imposed.

Public Open Space – In accordance with the North Wiltshire Open Spaces Study, developments comprising nursing/residential homes require open space provision to be brought forward, but not play provision. In this case it is appropriate if amenity land were provided on site and managed privately.

7. Publicity

The application was advertised by site notice, press advert and neighbour consultation.

One hundred and ninety eight (198) letters of support received. Summary of key relevant points raised:

- *Development would bring much needed retirement accommodation to Chippenham*
- *Golf club is very important to the community and should be supported*
- *Club is in need of a new clubhouse*
- *New clubhouse would be a visual improvement over the existing*
- *Development would be beneficial to the town of Chippenham*

Eleven (11) letters in objection received. Main issues raised:

- *Developers wishing to building in open countryside with no regard for it.*
- *Site is outside of Settlement Framework Boundary of Chippenham*
- *Established care home to south-west is in different position between established development and cannot be used as precedent*
- *Visual impact upon landscape from such large scale development*
- *Overdevelopment of site*
- *Unnecessary for additional car facilities as close to existing care home.*

- *Unsustainable in traffic terms*
- *Impact upon ecological value of site.*
- *Applicants do not won all land suggested (NOTE: amended plans have now been received in this respect)*

8. Planning Considerations

Principle of development

The application site is position in open countryside and is some distance north, and outside of, the Settlement Framework Boundary to Chippenham. In this context the proposal must be broken into the two main constituent parts: replacement golf clubhouse and new care home/extra care dwellings.

In respect of the replacement clubhouse, in such countryside locations the principle of new and extended leisure facilities must be considered against Policy CF2 of the adopted North Wiltshire Local Plan 2011. It states that the principle of such a replacement would be established as acceptable, subject to consideration against a range of more generalised development control criteria such as Policies C1 and C3.

There is no specific policy within the adopted North Wiltshire Local Plan relating to proposal for care homes. Policy H4 relates to residential development in general, but perhaps has greater applicability to C3 dwelling houses, as opposed to C2 residential institutions. Nevertheless, this proposal does include a large proportion (75 no.) of what is described as “extra care dwellings”. These are essentially separate units of accommodation that are capable of being occupied independently, but subject to a maintenance charge that would allow access to an individually tailored level of support and care from on-site staff. Although, where set within a clearly defined care home context, such accommodation is generally accepted as falling into the C2 use class, it is also clear that the likely level of mobility of the occupants would be a good deal greater than stand alone traditional nursing accommodation. To this extent a consideration of the proposals location relative to Chippenham must be made. The principles set out by Policy H4 and Policy C1 (and PPS3 at the national level) is a good place to start to enable this consideration (ie. new development – particularly residential development - must be sited so as to maintain socially inclusive communities and access to community infrastructure and this would mostly likely mean being within the identified Settlement Framework Boundary of the towns and villages).

In this way, it must be noted that at the time of considering representations made at the time of the formulation of the current Local Plan, the Inspector did expressly state that sites beyond the settlement boundaries would be inappropriate for the development of residential institutions.

The existence of quite large scale development of varying types to the east and south of the site is not thought to alter the above conclusion. Although also outside of the Settlement Framework Boundary, it has occurred largely as a result of a long standing Local Plan commitment (albeit expressed in previous plans, and not the current) for the creation of roadside services.

Scale of development and visual effect upon the north approach to Chippenham

Although possibly attracting a view that the architecture is sadly unadventurous, the proposed replacement golf clubhouse is nonetheless considered to be an appropriate form of development. Its scale, appearance and positioning would entirely accord with the principle set out with policy cf2 and more general development control criteria in Policy C3. This aspect of the proposal is without objection and should therefore rightly be supported.

On the other hand the proposed care home/extra care dwellings development represents a singular built mass of significant proportions. Stretching for some 130m+ from end to end, and being mostly of three-storey height (plus roof accommodation), the building would at several points reach four-storey in height, which due to necessary topographical alterations would be read as elevations of up to 16.5m height.

Both at close range and distance, the visual effect of the proposal would be, undeniably, tremendous. As noted by the Council's Landscape Architect, no amount of existing or proposed planting would ameliorate the sheer mass of built form that will result. To the applicant's credit, the visual effect of the proposal has been acknowledged; pointing out that the building has been pushed as far away from site boundaries as possible so to take advantage of augmented landscaping scheme.

Nevertheless, the stark differential between what is currently a site that provides a nicely feathered transition between countryside and town and the hard urban form proposed remains. The proposed development would be both stark and blunt and forever alter the northern gateway to Chippenham.

The proposed architecture of the building is perhaps understandably conservative given its intended use (and indeed it is entirely reminiscent of care home development seen across the country). However, when combined with the substantial built form and mass of development on a site that does perform as a gateway to Chippenham town, the effect is decidedly unwelcome.

Housing issues

The applicant has submitted a document entitled "Care Needs Assessment". This document assesses available census and projected adult care needs information and concludes that both nationally and locally, there will be a need to provide a large number of care places. In particular, the report concludes at least 149 extra care flats and at least 243 residential care beds are currently required in the North Wiltshire District.

The Council's own Housing Officer appears to conclude similarly, but disaggregating requirements further by advising that there is a need for 68 units of extra care housing in the Chippenham Community Area.

A separate report on care home accommodation supply/demand has been prepared and submitted on behalf of the existing care home operator on the site to the immediate south of the application site. This report identifies several care home developments within the locality vicinity of Chippenham and a significant overprovision of care bed provision. It is argued that symptomatic of this overprovision is the non-implementation of consented schemes at the Royal Arthur site, Corsham.

Largely because of the conflicting information available on the level of available care accommodation, it is not considered to be the matter upon which this application should turn.

On the matter of whether the proposed scheme should bring forward a proportion of affordable housing, it has long been acknowledged by Planning Inspectors when this matter has been considered at appeal, that extra care accommodation (indeed the definition of what is "extra care" itself is often a matter of debate) would fall within the C2 residential institution use class, particularly where associated with traditional nursing home accommodation. In this context, it has typically not been legitimate to require affordable housing to be brought forward, as would be required by adopted Local Plan policy in respect of C3 residential development.

Highways

The application was submitted complete with a Transport Assessment. The Highway Officer had considered the submitted information and identified several matters that required further work, correction and clarification. However, at that stage the Highway Officer did set out minimum highway requirements:

- Dedication of the land identified as required for the A350 widening scheme (Policy T5 of adopted North Wiltshire Local Plan 2011)
- Improvement of pedestrian and cycle links between the development and the local bus stops and cycle network

- Provision of a bus shelter at the Chippenham bound bus stop.

In response to this, an addendum to the Transport Assessment has now been prepared and submitted for consideration. The final comments from the Highway Officer are now awaited.

Highway safety concerns have indeed been raised by at least two of the Parish Councils. However, the existing access system onto A350 would be retained and subject to the satisfaction of the Highway Officer in this regard, there would be no reasonable reason to refuse planning permission on highway safety grounds.

9. Conclusion

The Council's objective to provide additional nursing and care accommodation is acknowledged. However, the scale and type of development would render this proposal unacceptable at a fundamental policy level at both the national and local level

Indeed, the visual harm associated with such a significant built form and mass on a site that performs an important gateway role on the northern approach to Chippenham would be such that the positive aspects of the scheme such as the care accommodation and replacement golf clubhouse, are greatly outweighed.

It is important to note that in determining this application the Council does not have the ability to support part of the scheme (ie. the replacement golf clubhouse) and resist the remainder. In reaching its decision the Council must, therefore, considered the application in its entirety.

10. Recommendation

Subject to no new and substantive issues being raised by the Highway Officer in respect of the addendum to Transport Assessment and Travel Plan; then

Planning Permission be REFUSED for the following reasons:

1. The proposed development is of a nature and scale that would be inappropriate on this site, which is located in open countryside, some distance outside of the Settlement Framework Boundary of Chippenham. As such the proposal is contrary, at a fundamental level, to well established and clear policy at both the local and national level: Policies C1 and H4 of the adopted North Wiltshire Local Plan 2011 and PPS3: Housing.
2. By reason of its bulk, mass, scale, appearance and footprint, the proposed development would cause substantial and irrevocable visual harm upon the wider landscape, as well as upon a site that presently performs an important role as the gateway on the northern approach to Chippenham town and as a successful transition between countryside and urban form. As such, the proposal is considered to fail the requirements of Policies C3 and NE15 of the adopted North Wiltshire Local Plan 2011.

Appendices:	None
Background Documents Used in the Preparation of this Report:	1.20; 4.02; 4.04; 5.01; 5.03; 5.04

