

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

MEETING DATE: Wednesday 6 June 2012

BY: Executive Director (Services for Communities)

SUBJECT: Pre-determination Hearing: Planning Application No. 11/00459/PPM – Planning permission in principle for (i)3 chalets and (ii)7 houses as an enabling development for the extension of the existing clubhouse and chalets at Castle Park Golf Club, Gifford

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 A Pre-determination Hearing is mandatory where a planning application is made for a major development that is significantly contrary to the development plan and consequently has to be determined by a meeting of the full Council.
- 1.2 On the simple fact that the site of application 11/00459/PPM has an area greater than 2 hectares, the development in principle proposed in this application is, under the provisions of The Town and Country Planning (Hierarchy of Developments) (Scotland) Regulations 2009, defined as a major development. Furthermore the housing component of the proposed development is significantly contrary to Policy DC1 of the adopted East Lothian Local Plan 2008.
- 1.3 Application 11/00459/PPM is therefore brought before the Planning Committee for a Pre-determination Hearing prior to the consideration of the merits and determination of the application by the Council at their meeting on 26 June 2012.
- 1.4 The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with a description of the development proposal and with summaries of the development plan policies and other material considerations, consultation responses and public representations applicable to application 11/00459/PPM.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Committee refers to the content of the report as an informed context for the Pre-determination Hearing.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Description of Application

This planning application relates to Castle Park Golf Club, which occupies a countryside location to the southeast of Gifford. The Golf Club consists of an 18 hole golf course, clubhouse and a golf driving range. A car park serving the Golf Club is located to the south and southeast of the clubhouse. Access to the car park from the unclassified Quarryford to Gamuelston Bridge road is taken via a single track access road.

In July 2011 planning permission (Ref: 11/00458/P) was granted for the alteration and extension of the existing clubhouse building. Planning permission 11/00458/P has not yet been implemented but could be at any time up until the 29 July 2014.

The site that is the subject of this planning application has an area of some 3.3 hectares and mainly consists of the single track access road, car park, clubhouse and driving range of Castle Park Golf Club. It also includes an area of agricultural land to the east of the car park and part of the access road. The application site does not include the golf course of Castle Park Golf Club.

The application site is bounded to the north, west and partly to the east by the golf course of Castle Park Golf Club. Otherwise the application site is bounded to the east and to the south by agricultural land.

The application site is within the Yester House Designed Landscape.

Planning permission in principle is sought by Castle Park Golf Club for the development on the application site of 3 chalets and 7 houses.

The application is supported by an indicative site layout plan, a pre-application consultation report, a supporting statement and a financial appraisal report.

The submitted indicative drawings show two possible positions for the 3 chalets. The indicative site layout plan shows how the 3 chalets could be located on land that forms the southeast part of the existing car park. That drawing further shows that the chalets could be in a terraced form and on an east to west alignment. An indicative landscape strategy drawing alternatively shows how the 3 chalets could be located on land that is immediately to the east of the existing car park. It further shows that the chalets could be in a terraced form and on a north to south alignment. A floor plan submitted with the application shows that each of the 3 chalets could contain two bedrooms, a bathroom, a hall and a kitchen/ dining room. No elevation drawings of the chalets have been submitted with the application.

The principle of the 7 houses is being promoted by the applicant as a necessary provision of enabling development to cross-subsidise both the development of the 3 chalets and the alteration and extension of the existing clubhouse building approved by planning permission 11/00458/P.

The indicative site layout plan indicatively shows how the houses could be located on part of the agricultural land that is to the east of part of the access road. Those 7 houses could consist of 1 detached house, 2 semi-detached houses and a U-shaped terrace of 4 houses. Access to the 7 houses is shown to be taken from the existing golf club access road via a length of new road.

The applicant has subsequently submitted cross section drawings showing how proposed houses may appear from Baxtersyke and from the unclassified Quarryford to Gamuelston Bridge road, at a point to the south of the existing golf clubhouse.

The supporting statement informs that golf based tourism forms an important part of the tourism mix in East Lothian and attracts a substantial number of visitors each year. Castle Park Golf Club must offer not only an excellent round of golf but the facilities that golfers expect to go with it. Because the clubhouse was only intended to serve the original 9 hole golf course at Castle Park and to test the market to see if the course was going to be viable, it was only ever intended to provide basic facilities. There is not any room within the existing clubhouse for ladies or children's facilities that any competitive golf course would normally provide. The lack of basic facilities inhibits further growth of this leisure and tourism business. The already approved alterations and extensions to the clubhouse would ensure that the clubhouse was fit for purpose. The proposed remodelling of the clubhouse would enable basic facilities to be provided such as new ladies changing facilities, a new meeting room suitable for young golfers, improved kitchen facilities and an enlarged driving range bay. The proposed remodelling of the clubhouse would allow a far more effective use of the course by local schools and would enable the promotion of women's golf. The net result would be to continue this tourism asset within East Lothian on an economically sustainable basis.

The supporting statement also informs that the 3 proposed golf chalets would accommodate visiting golf parties so that they could enjoy the facilities after a round of golf without having to be concerned about driving that night. By offering these facilities the sustainable future of the golf club could be assured.

3.2 Development Plan Policy and Other Material Policy Considerations

The development plan is the approved Edinburgh and the Lothians Structure Plan 2015 and the adopted East Lothian Local Plan 2008.

Policies HOU8 (Development on Greenfield Land), ENV1C (International and National Historic or Built Environment Designations) and ENV3 (Development in the Countryside) of the approved Edinburgh and the Lothians Structure Plan 2015 and Policies DC1 (Development in the Countryside and Undeveloped Coast), ENV8 (Gardens and Designed Landscapes), INF3 (Infrastructure and Facilities Provision) and T2 (General Transport Impact) of the adopted East Lothian Local Plan 2008 are relevant to the determination of the application.

Material to the determination of the application is Scottish Planning Policy: February 2010 where it states that planning authorities have a role in protecting, preserving and enhancing gardens and designed landscapes of national importance that are included in Historic Scotland's Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes. The affect of a proposed development on a garden or designed landscape should be a consideration in decisions on planning applications. Change should be managed to ensure that the significant elements justifying designation are protected or enhanced.

3.3 Consultations

Transportation raise no objection to the principle of the proposed development.

The Council's Senior Environmental & Consumer Services Manager raises no objection to the principle of the proposed development.

The Policy and Projects Manager advises that the wider public benefits of securing the primary use (the chalets and the extension of the existing golf clubhouse) of the proposed development do not outweigh the normal policy presumption against new build housing development in the countryside of East Lothian. He recommends that planning permission in principle for the proposed development be refused.

The Council's Economic Development Manager raises concerns over the applicant's financial assessment that was submitted with the planning application.

Historic Scotland raise no objection to the principle of the proposed development.

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency raise no objection to the principle of the proposed development.

With regard to the housing component of the proposed development, the Council's Executive Director (Services for People) advises of the need for a developer contribution towards the cost of provision of additional accommodation at Knox Academy.

Gifford Community Council raise concerns that the proposal would constitute a major item of unwelcome sporadic development and its intrusive impact on the countryside would be exacerbated by its location on the hillock. The additional traffic generated would be unwelcome in the countryside. Moreover the proposal should not be considered as enabling, as the improvements that the housing would cross fund would remain in the ownership of the applicant, with little or no benefit to the wider community. Gifford Community Council ask that planning permission in principle for the proposed development be refused.

3.4 Representations

A total of 18 written representations have been received in respect of this application. Of these 11 make objection to the principle of the proposed development. One of these is from the Haddington and District Amenity Society. There are 5 representations in support of the principle of the proposed development. 2 of the total of 18 written representations do not support or object to the principle of the proposed development.

A copy of each written representation is contained in a shared electronic folder to which all Members of the Committee have access.

One of the written representation of objection is a petition, with a total of 15 signatories to it. In the petitions it is stated that "We, the undersigned, object strongly to the proposed development at Castle Park Golf Course, because we

believe it would severely impact the beauty of this area, is out of character with nearby housing, and in any case is not necessary for a small local golf course”.

The main grounds of objection of the other written representations are summarised as follows:

- Proposed houses would be highly visible, obviously intrusive and would diminish the quality of this outstanding landscape;
- There is no justification for the proposed chalets, as the local area is already well served by hotels, bed and breakfasts and holiday lets;
- Other regular commercial funding could be used to fund the development;
- There would be no public benefits from the proposed development;
- Local roads could not cope with the traffic generated by the proposed development;
- The proposed development would not secure the primary use, which is the golf course and which has long since been completed;
- The proposed development is contrary to the adopted East Lothian Local Plan; and
- Approval of this planning application would set an unfortunate precedent, which could result in other golf clubs and commercial enterprises within the countryside of east Lothian also seeking planning permission for enabling housing to upgrade their existing facilities.

The 5 representations support the proposed development as it would:

- Not affect the stunning rural scenery;
- Ensure the future security of the golf course;
- Ensure that the clubhouse would be big enough to accommodate all of the members of the Golf Club; and
- Benefit tourism through the erection of 3 chalets.

In the 2 other representations it is stated that prescriptive planning controls should be imposed to ensure that all buildings are complimentary to each other and to their surrounding environment, and that construction works do not impact on the local area.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None.

5 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1 This report is not applicable to the well being of equalities groups and an Equalities Impact Assessment is not required.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial - None

6.2 Personnel - None

6.3 Other - None

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 Planning application 11/00458/P- Alteration and extensions to building at Castlepark Golf Club, Gifford

7.2 Planning application 11/00459/PPM- Planning permission in principle for (i)3 chalets and (ii)7 houses as an enabling development for the extension of the existing clubhouse and chalets at Castlepark Golf Club, Gifford

7.3 Adopted East Lothian Local Plan 2008

7.4 Approved Edinburgh and the Lothians Structure Plan 2015

7.5 Scottish Planning Policy: February 2010

AUTHOR'S NAME	Keith Dingwall
DESIGNATION	Principal Planner (Development Management)
CONTACT INFO	kdingwall@eastlothian.gov.uk Tel:01620 827229
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