

CASE OFFICER'S REPORT

Application Reference: 18/05086/FUL
Date of Inspection: 3/7/18
Date site notice posted: 3/7/18
Date of press notice:

POLICIES

Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS)

CP1 – Settlement Strategy
CP2 – Delivery Strategy
CP3 – Infrastructure Requirements
CP31 – Spatial Strategy: Warminster Community Area
CP34 – Additional employment land
CP38 – Retail and leisure
CP39 – Tourist Development
CP40 – Hotels, bed and breakfasts, guest houses and conference facilities
CP48 – Supporting rural life
CP50 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity
CP51 – Landscape
CP57 – Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping
CP58 – Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment
CP60 – Sustainable Transport
CP61 – Transport and New Development
CP64 – Demand Management
CP67 – Flood Risk

Saved Policies for the West Wiltshire District Local Plan (1st Alteration)

U1a – Foul Water Disposal
SP3 – Out of Centre Shopping
C40 – Tree Planting
R15 – Development at Golf Courses

Saved Policies for the West Wiltshire Leisure and Recreation DPD

LP1 Protection and enhancement of existing open space or sport and recreation provision
LP2 Proposals that involve the loss of open space or sport and recreation provision

National Planning Policy Framework 2018 (the Framework)

2. Achieving sustainable development
6. Building a strong, competitive economy
7. Ensuring the vitality of town centres
8. Promoting healthy and safe communities
9. Promoting sustainable transport
11. Making effective use of land
12. Achieving well-designed places
15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Other

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

Wiltshire Car Parking Strategy

Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment December 2005

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

16/01065/FUL – Erection of a 2 storey office building with associated access, parking and landscaping and change of use of the land. – Refused

15/12100/FUL – Retrospective change of use of part of the former golf driving range for the storage of caravans – Approved

14/10453/FUL – Temporary change of use of the former golf driving range bays for storage of up to 8 touring caravans and residential occupation of a further 3 touring caravans) - Withdrawn

14/09146/OUT – Proposed hotel with associated public areas, bar, restaurant, spa, pool, gym treatment room and function suite. (Outline application to determine access) – Approved

14/04854/FUL – Change of use of part of former golf course to Yurt campsite – Approved

W/11/02179/FUL – Renewal of extant planning permission W/08/02107/FUL (Revised scheme for hotel) – Approved

W/08/02107/FUL – Revised scheme for hotel – Approved

W/05/02400/FUL – New 40 bedroom hotel, spa, function facility and ancillary activities and demolition of existing function suite building, associated car parking, servicing and landscaping – Approved

W/02/01813/FUL – Erection of new country house, outbuildings, two lodges and use of land for private parkland – Refused

W/01/01217/FUL – Erection of new country house with associated outbuildings and gardens, two lodge houses, change of use from golf course to private parkland, demolition of golf club house and associated buildings. Landscaping and other works. – Withdrawn

W/99/01072/OUT – Hotel, restaurant and craft workshops with children's play area, picnic area, associated car parking and balancing reservoir – Withdrawn

W/91/01246/FUL – Conversion of existing ground floor and garage into offices and three-bed flat on first floor and car parking – Approved

W/90/01456/FUL – Erection of two storey club house 20 bay floodlit golf driving range with shop/cafe and two flats over – Approved

ISSUES

- Principle of development
- Impact on the character of the area
- Impact on the living conditions of neighbouring residents
- Impact on the setting of the adjacent listed building
- Highway issues
- Ecology issues
- Drainage issues
- Public rights of way
- Archaeology
- Other issues

REPRESENTATIONS

Chapmanslade Parish Council: Support

‘The council agreed to support this application and would welcome more definition on proposals for cycleways and footpaths.’

Upton Scudamore Parish Council: Support

Wiltshire Council Highway Authority: No objection to amended scheme subject to conditions

Wiltshire Council Rights of Way Officer: No objection

Wiltshire Council Landscape Officer: Support

Wiltshire Council Waste Collection Team: No objections

Wiltshire Council Urban Design Officer: No objections

Wiltshire Council Public Protection Team: No objection subject to conditions

Wiltshire Council Spatial Plans Team: Following receipt of additional information -

‘Spatial Planning welcome the applicant’s submission of further material to support the proposal. There continues to be a question over whether the application adequately addresses the policy requirement to pass the sequential test, although the information submitted indicates that the scheme is somewhat unique with the scheme comprising a rural retail/leisure offer that includes elements that would ordinarily be directed to town centre locations in the first instance. Bearing in mind the economic, social and environmental benefits that the scheme will deliver, and its effective use of an otherwise redundant previously developed site, it is considered appropriate in this case to address planning policy concerns in the planning balance of any subsequent recommendation.’

Natural England: No objection

Wiltshire Council Archaeology: Object

'The Wiltshire and Swindon Historic Environment Record shows two undated field systems containing possible enclosures within the proposed development site. Romano-British coins and pottery fragments have been recorded north of Thoulstone Farm. Thoulstone is a settlement with medieval origins, recorded as Tholvestone in 1257.

The proposed development appears to involve a much greater belowground impact than previous applications within this site and therefore I consider there to be potential for unknown archaeological remains to be impacted by the proposals. In line with the National Planning Policy Framework (in particular policies 128 and 129) I consider that field evaluation should be carried out and the results made available prior to determination of the application. This information is required in order to understand the significance of heritage assets impacted by the proposals.'

Following receipt of additional archaeological surveys no comments were received.

Wiltshire Police: No objections in principle

Wiltshire Council Landscape & Arboricultural Officer: No objection

Wiltshire Council Environmental Health Officer: Recommends conditions

Wessex Water: No comments

Wiltshire Council Drainage Engineer: Support subject to conditions

Highways England: No objection subject to condition

Environment Agency: No objection subject to condition

Wiltshire Council Ecology Officer: No comments received

Visit Wilshire: Support

Public Consultation: 4 letters of objection has been received. The principle planning points made are as follows:

- Overdevelopment of the site
- Poor access/egress from the site
- Lack of access via public transport
- Generation of more traffic/noise
- Poor condition of road
- Longer queues accessing A36
- Health and safety issues in relation to use of golf course

2 letters of support has been received.

ASSESSMENT

The site

The application site is comprised of the now disused Thoulstone Park golf club and contains the former golf club buildings and hardstandings. These buildings are currently vacant. The site is located in the open countryside and the village of Chapmanslade is located less than 1km to the west. The A36 runs to the south of the site. Spinney Farmhouse, a grade II listed building, is located approximately 230 metres to the southwest of the main club house. The site is located in the Avon Vale Countryside Character Area. Public footpath CHAP16 runs through the site while footpath CHAP15 is located along the western boundary of the site. Public footpath USCU5 is located to the northeast of the site.

The application

This is a full application for the erection of 28 holiday lodges, 2 dwellings for staff accommodation, a community and leisure building comprising swimming pool, WC's, changing facilities and community space and a 'central building' to comprise a farm shop, restaurant, spa and conference facilities. The scheme would include:

- 12 three bedroom holiday lodges
- 16 two bedroom holiday lodges
- 2 three bed dwellings for staff accommodation
- A 1,015m² leisure building comprising community hall, swimming pool and changing facilities
- A 1,950m² building comprising a farm shop, restaurant, conference/community space and spa facility.
- Golf pavilion
- Sports pavilion
- 173 car parking spaces
- Associated landscaping including, new tree planting, new bunds and 2 multi-use games areas, 10 hole golf course

The existing former golf club house and driving range would be demolished.

Principle of development

Paragraph 83 of the National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework) states planning policies should enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings, and enable sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside.

Core Policy 1 outlines the settlement strategy for Wiltshire and identifies the settlements where sustainable development will take place. Core Policy 2 addresses the issue of development outside of settlement boundaries and states that, other than in circumstances permitted by other policies within the plan, development will not be permitted outside the limits of development (unless it has been identified within the

subsequent Site Allocations Development Plan Document and Neighbourhood Plan). The proposed scheme lies outside any settlement limit and is a tourist related development including tourist accommodation including the addition of conference facilities and a farm shop (albeit ancillary to the main use) and the erection of dwellings for staff accommodation use. As such Core Policy 38 'Retail and leisure', Core Policies 39 and 40 related to tourism development and Core Policy 48 'Supporting rural life' are of key relevance.

The application site forms part of the former Thoulstone Park Golf Club which closed in 2002. There have been several subsequent planning applications, including a planning permission in December 2014 for a hotel with associated public areas, bar, restaurant, spa, pool, gym treatment room and function suite (14/09146/OUT). The application was approved in the policy context of the former West Wiltshire District Local Plan (WWDP) which is now largely superseded by the WCS (adopted in 2015). The 2014 permission has now expired, and therefore it is necessary to consider the principle of development of the current application afresh in the context of current planning policy, albeit with due regard to what has been permitted on the site in the past.

As shown on the masterplan layouts, the configuration of the application proposals would see redevelopment of the former golf club buildings and car park area, as well as development on land forming part of the former golf course which the applicant has explained is currently in use for grazing. A golf course is considered under the NPPF definition of previously developed land (PDL). This definition excludes "*land that was previously developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape*", however in this case the permanent structures are in a state of disrepair but have not blended into the landscape.

Core Policy 38 requires that all proposals for retail or leisure uses not within a town centre and in excess of 200sqm gross floorspace must be accompanied by an impact assessment which demonstrates that the proposal will not harm the vitality or viability of any nearby centres. This is required to comply with the sequential approach to ensure that development is on the most central site available. As such a retail statement and leisure assessment evaluating the impact of the proposed farm shop, self-catering holiday accommodation, restaurant, swimming pool, gym and golf course on the vitality of local town centres has been submitted.

The submitted retail assessment and leisure assessment concludes that the retail element of the development, in this case the farm shop and restaurant, due to its limited size and range of retail facilities, would have no adverse impact on the vitality and viability of the nearby town centres. In addition the assessment also concludes that the leisure elements of the scheme, in particular the gym, swimming pool and health spa would mainly serve residents on site and therefore have very limited impact on local town centre facilities. As such it is considered the proposed development would not harm the vitality or viability of any nearby centres.

Core Policy 39 aims to steer rural tourist development to locations that are within or close to Local Service Centres, Large Villages or Small Villages. The application site is located away from existing settlements, the closest being the large village of Chapmanslade approximately 1km away. Core Policy 39 stipulates that in exceptional cases

development may be supported away from settlements where it can be demonstrated that five criteria can be met. These criteria are:

- i. There is evidence that the facilities are in conjunction with a particular countryside attraction;
- ii. No suitable alternative existing buildings or sites exist which are available for reuse;
- iii. The scale, design and use of the proposal is compatible with its wider landscape setting and would not detract from the character or appearance of the landscape or settlement and would not be detrimental to the amenities of residential areas;
- iv. The building is served by adequate access and infrastructure;
- v. The site has reasonable access to local services and a local employment base.

Regarding criterion i., the applicant has submitted details relating to the proposed business model of the expected site operator, Natural Retreats. The model is based on delivering self-catering holiday accommodation together with a range of other leisure facilities and amenities which would be available onsite for use by holiday makers and the local community. The proposal also seeks to provide for a remodelled golf course facility. Therefore, although the development is not strictly in conjunction with an existing countryside attraction, the site has planning permission as a golf course and therefore has an established leisure use. In addition, there was a recent outline scheme approved for a hotel on site (14/09146/OUT). The previous use of the site as a leisure facility and recent permission for a hotel are material considerations that must be given at least moderate weight in the planning balance. Accordingly, it is considered, in this case, the criterion has been satisfactorily addressed.

In terms of criterion ii, there are no suitable alternative buildings on site. The existing buildings on site, the former golf house and driving range building are in a poor state of repair and would not be suitable for re-use.

In terms of criterion iii, the proposed development would consist of a 'central building', a community and leisure building, 28 holiday lodges and 2 dwellings for staff accommodation. The proposed central building and community and leisure building would be 2 storeys (or equivalent) in height while the holiday cottages would be 1 and 2 storey's in height. The main buildings would replace existing buildings on site and would be of a similar height and they would be set back on site with additional screening. In addition the holiday cottages would be screened from the public realm by additional screening to both the north and south. The design of the proposed buildings is considered acceptable and there are no objections to the scheme from the councils urban design officer. As such it is considered the development complies with criterion iii.

In terms of criterion iv, the councils highway team have no objection to the scheme subject to conditions relating to improvements to the access lane between the A36 and the site access. Therefore it is considered the scheme can be served by adequate access and there is adequate existing infrastructure.

In term of criterion v. the site is located approx. 1km from the centre of the Large Village of Chapmanslade, 4.3km from the centre Westbury and 4.4kms from the centre of Warminster. The site is also located off the A36 which is a main arterial road through

Wiltshire. As such it is considered the development has adequate access to local services and employment base and the scheme complies with criterion v.

Core Policy 40 relates to new conference facilities. The proposed development at Thoulstone Park includes the addition of a conference/community space located in the main central building. This comprises a number of units at first floor level. These facilities are considered ancillary to the main use of the site. However due to its limited size these facilities would have no adverse impact on the vitality and viability of the nearby town centres.

Core Policy 48 states outside the defined limits of development of the Principal Settlements, Market Towns, Local Service Centres and Large Villages, and outside the existing built areas of Small Villages, proposals for residential development will be supported where these meet the accommodation needs required to enable workers to live at or in the immediate vicinity of their place of work in the interests of agriculture or forestry or other employment essential to the countryside. Such proposals should be supported by functional and financial evidence.

The proposed development includes the addition of two 3 bedrooms dwellings for staff to live on site full time. It is argued by the applicant that there is a need for 2 full time members of staff to live on site for security reasons, on site health and safety for visitors and staff and some minor element of animal welfare. As such it considered there is a functional need for 2 members of staff to live on site full time. In addition the expected site operator, Natural Retreats is an established business with an established business plan and existing leisure operations as such it is considered the company is financially viable. It is therefore considered that the need for 2 members of staff to live on site is supported and the requirements of policy CP48 have been met.

Core Policy 60 states the council will use its planning and transport powers to help reduce the need to travel particularly by private car and encourage the sustainable, safe and efficient movement of people and this will be achieved, amongst others, by planning developments in accessible locations and promoting sustainable transport alternatives to the use of the private car. There are no objections to the scheme from the council's highways team. In addition a travel plan has been submitted to accompany the application and details a strategy for reducing dependence of staff on travel by private car.

West Wiltshire District Local Plan saved policy R15 states proposals for development associated with golf course proposals, such as golf driving ranges, hotels and restaurants, will be considered as a separate issue to the main use and will be subject to the following considerations:-

- 1 The appropriateness of the proposal to any associated development or proposal;
- 1a The impact of the proposal upon the Western Wiltshire Green Belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, landscape setting to towns, Areas of High Ecological Value, areas of recognised archaeological importance, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, and other interests of acknowledged importance including the conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape and the protection of Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas for wild birds, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Regionally Important

- Geological or Geomorphological Sites, Local Nature Reserves, protected species and Sites of Nature Conservation Importance;
- 2 The impact of the proposal upon the amenities of the countryside and nearby residents, including any visual or noise intrusion;
- 3 The appropriateness of measures such as artificial lighting and fencing within these areas;
- 3a The impact of the proposal upon the environment due to the provision of water supplies and the disposal of surface water;
- 4 Traffic generation, highway safety and parking provision;
- 5 The development does not conflict with other Structure Plan or District Plan 1st Alteration policies.

Although no longer in operation the site has planning permission for a golf course and has a leisure use. In addition the scheme would have no adverse impact on local landscape character and the development includes additional screening and planting of trees throughout the site. There is sufficient distance between the built elements of the scheme and neighbouring residents to have no significant impact on their living conditions. Issues such as lighting and surface water drainage would be dealt with by condition. It is considered the scheme will have no adverse impact on highway safety and sufficient off road parking has been provided on site. As such it is considered the scheme complies with saved policy R15.

Saved policy LP1 of the West Wiltshire Leisure and Recreation DPD states high value and/or high quality open space and recreation provision will be protected from development for other land uses. Wherever possible, these facilities should be enhanced to meet identified local needs. Saved policy LP2 of the West Wiltshire Leisure and Recreation DPD states proposals that result in the loss of open spaces or sport and recreation facilities will be permitted only if this would not cause significant harm to nature conservation interests, to the landscape or settlement character and at least one of the following policy tests is met:

- (i) The site that will be lost is clearly surplus to requirements in terms of its current use, and there is no need for it to be used for a different form of open space or sport and recreation provision; or
- (ii) The development will result in the enhancement of other existing spaces or facilities - this will represent a greater benefit to the community served by the provision that will be lost than retaining the previous facilities; or
- (iii) The development will result in replacement provision that will be at least as accessible, at least equivalent in terms of attractiveness and quality, and capable of accommodating and sustaining at least the same levels and types of use as the provision that will be lost; or
- (iv) The proposed development is ancillary to the use of land used for sport and physical recreation and will not adversely affect either the level of use it can sustain or the quality of provision.

The proposed development will bring back into use an existing sporting facility and is for mainly leisure/recreation use and leisure accommodation with ancillary facilities. As such there would be no significant loss of open space or sport and recreation facilities. The proposed development therefore complies with policy LP1 and LP2 of the West Wiltshire Leisure and Recreation DPD.

Impact on the character of the area

Core Policy 51 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy states development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance landscape character and must not have a harmful impact upon landscape character and any negative impacts must be mitigated through sensible design and landscape measures. In particular development proposals must demonstrate that the local distinctive character of settlements and their landscape settings have been conserved and where possible enhanced. Core Policy 57 requires a high standard of design in all new developments and that development respond positively to the existing townscape and landscape in terms of building layout, built form, height, mass, scale, building line, plot size, design, materials and streetscape.

The site is located in the Avon Vale Countryside Character Area. The surrounding landscape is rural, being predominantly agricultural farmland and woodland with scattered local settlements. The site is bound to the north by Chalcot Lane (A3098), to the east by adjoining agricultural land and a further area of former golf course (now comprising recent native woodland planting and grazing land), to the south east by further agricultural land, and to the south and south west by the A36. Much of the site comprises open grassland dotted with ornamental stands of trees. The maintained appearance of the golf course has been diminished in recent years by its use for grazing. The boundaries of the site are primarily long established hedgerows and trees.

The proposal includes self-catering accommodation, staff accommodation, an enterprise/market place, and leisure hub, surrounded by woodland and park land. A comprehensive landscape character assessment has been submitted that provides a landscape strategy for the site.

The proposed holiday accommodation would be set back on site and consists of well designed terraced and semi-detached dormer bungalows and two storey buildings. The buildings would be constructed of mainly red brick with timber cladding and red and grey tiled roofs. The holiday accommodation would be heavily screened from the residential dwellings to the south fronting the highway by existing landscaping, additional screening is also proposed. The central building would be 2 story's in height and would be constructed of a range of materials such as red and buff brick and timber cladding with a metal standing roof. The leisure building would be single story in height with a high pitched roof and would be constructed of red brick with a metal standing roof. Both the central building and leisure building would be set back on site to the north of the proposed car park and located behind existing trees to be retained. The proposed staff accommodation would be constructed of natural stone with timber cladding with a slate tiled roof. The proposed dwellings would be located to the east of the main central buildings and would be heavily screened by native woodland planting and existing trees. The design of the buildings and materials used in their construction are therefore considered acceptable. The layout of the site is considered acceptable and the scheme will not result in overdevelopment of the site.

The council's landscape officer has no objection to the scheme and concludes 'There will be no residual significant landscape or visual effects due to the embedded landscape mitigation which is integral to the design.' Therefore due to the design and positioning of

the buildings and screening by existing vegetation and proposed planting, it is considered the development would have no adverse impact on landscape character and the development complies with Core Policies 51 and 57 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

Impact on the living conditions of neighbouring residents

Core Policy 57 requires development to have regard to the compatibility of adjoining buildings and uses, the impact on the amenities of existing occupants, and ensuring that appropriate levels of amenity are achievable within the development itself, including the consideration of privacy, overshadowing, vibration, and pollution (e.g. light intrusion, noise, waste or litter).

The nearest residential properties are located directly on the south and west border of the site at 1 and 2 Thoulstone and Spinney Farmhouse and buildings. The site was in use as a golf course and, although no longer extant, there was a recent (2014) permission granted for a hotel on site. Although the scheme would result in additional vehicle movements to and from the site along Thoulstone, it is considered the scheme would not result in such an increase in noise or light pollution, over that associated with the either the golf course or previously approved hotel, that the application could be refused on these grounds. In addition the proposed development, including the main buildings and accommodation units, are a sufficient distance from adjacent residents to have no impact on their living conditions in terms of loss of privacy, or overlooking. The proposed development therefore complies with Core Policy 57 of the WCS.

Impact on the setting of the adjacent listed building

Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires 'special regard' to be given to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting.

Spinney Farmhouse, a grade II listed building, is located approximately 230 metres to the southwest of the proposed development. Due to this separation distance and the screening of the site, in particular the tourist accommodation, the development would have no adverse impact on the setting of the listed building or harm the heritage asset.

Highway issues

Core Policy 61 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy seeks to ensure that all new developments are capable of being served by safe access to the highway network. Subject to improvements to the access lane between the site access and A36 there are no objections to the scheme from the council's highway officer. As such the proposed development would not result in additional harm to highway or pedestrian safety and sufficient off road parking has been provided.

Ecology issues

Core Policy 50 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy requires that all development proposals must demonstrate how they protect features of nature conservation and geological value as part of the design rationale. There is an expectation that such features shall be retained, buffered, and managed favourably in order to maintain their ecological value,

connectivity and functionality in the long-term. Furthermore, the policy specifies that all development should seek opportunities to enhance biodiversity.

The proposals include extensive native woodland planting and rewilding, particularly around existing ponds, parkland and grassland. Significant additional tree planting throughout the proposed development and creation of a bund and new plantation woodland is also proposed. All semi-mature and mature trees will be retained within the proposals and a condition will be imposed requiring tree protection fencing to be erected during the construction phase of the development.

An ecological appraisal and protected species survey was undertaken and all buildings on site were inspected internally and externally for any evidence of bat activity. It was determined the site supports a number of protected species including roosting bats in the former clubhouse and changing rooms. Compensation for the loss of the buildings on site would comprise a replacement roost within the proposed new leisure centre building within a dedicated roof space and bat boxes on site. These will be conditioned. Significant additional tree planting throughout the proposed development and creation of a bund and new plantation woodland will attenuate light spill onto surrounding parkland from the proposed development maintaining dark corridors around the proposed development suitable for sensitive species. The proposed additional tree planting will also result in overall enhancement of key features for breeding birds. The proposed re-wilding of the landscape is also likely to result in an overall increase in bird species diversity and abundance. No evidence of dormice or crested newts was found on site.

A pre and post maternity greater horseshoe bat roost lies just under 2 km from the site and supports approximately 40 individuals. This is a Core Roost of Bath and Bradford-on-Avon Bats SAC. In addition greater horseshoe bats have been recorded foraging on site. Due to the proximity of the Core Roost (within 4 km) as well as the presence on site of greater horseshoe bats there is a risk that the proposals may have an adverse effect on the population of bats at the SAC. However these affects can be mitigated through the use of planting and the formation of dark corridors through the site. Formation of these corridors will be conditioned. As such the proposals are considered to have no significant effect on the overall status of the Bath and Bradford on Avon SACs.

It is therefore considered the proposed development complies with Core Policy 50 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

Drainage issues

Wessex Water has not objected to the scheme. Paragraph 163 of the Framework states that when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure flood risk is not increased elsewhere. In this case, the site is recognised as being flood zone 1 – land that has the lowest probability of flooding and there are no known land drainage constraints which cannot be addressed.

The applicant's surface water drainage strategy involves localised collection and disposal through a transportation train comprising swales, soakaways and small detention ponds. Any water not infiltrated along the transportation train would be discharged via large soakways in the main parking area. In terms of foul water, foul water flows from each

building would be captured locally and discharged to the site gravity sewer network. These sewers will run under the roadways through the site and follow the main access routes towards the central car parking area. The sewers will be directed to a single high specification Foul Water Treatment Plant located in the south east of the site, adjacent to the central car parking area. Both surface water and foul drainage will be conditioned.

Public rights of way

Public right of way CHAP15, CHAP16 and USCU5 bisect the site. The Council's public rights of way officer has no objection to the scheme and the proposed development would not adversely impact the public rights of way.

Archaeology

The council's archaeology officer requested a field evaluation in order to understand the significance of heritage assets impacted by the proposals.

Following submission by the applicant of gradiometer survey with the aim of establishing the presence, or otherwise, and nature of detectable archaeological features on the site the councils archaeology officer was re-consulted. However no response to the additional information was received.

Two pits of possible archaeological interest were found on site, and a number of other features were detected including agricultural features, golf course features and at least two modern services, however the survey concludes these are not considered to be especially significant.

Other issues

Other issues have been raised by third parties namely health and safety issues in relation to the use of the golf course however these issues carry very little weight in the determination. In addition the council's public protection team have requested conditions relating to construction or demolition work hours and burning of waste or other materials, however these issues are dealt with under other legislation.

Conclusion (Planning Balance)

The application site is comprised of the now disused Thoulstone Park golf club and contains the former golf club buildings and hardstandings. These buildings are currently vacant. The site is located in the open countryside however it is considered to have a leisure use.

In terms of neutral impacts, the supporting information demonstrates that the proposed development would be a sufficient distance from neighbouring residential properties to have no adverse impact on their living conditions. The level of development proposed could be satisfactorily accommodated on site in terms of landscape, character and visual impacts. The development would cause no harm to the setting of the listed building at Spinney Farmhouse. The development would be served by a safe access to the highway network and the scheme would not result in severe cumulative harm to highway safety or

result in harm to pedestrian safety. Sufficient parking could be secured and drainage issues can be adequately dealt with.

In terms of the negative impacts of the development, it is recognised that the site is located in the open countryside where development is strictly controlled. However the site, although vacant, has planning permission as a golf course and therefore an established leisure use. In addition, there was a recent scheme approved for a hotel on site (14/09146/OUT). The previous use of the site as a leisure facility and recent permission for a hotel are material considerations that must be given at least moderate weight in the planning balance. Although it is recognised there would be an intensification of use of the site due to the level of proposed holiday accommodation, this intensification would not be so severe that the application could be refused and this impact can only be given limited weight.

In terms of positive aspects, the development would bring back into use a vacant site and would employ up to 28 full time equivalent staff, many of whom would live in the local area. This would result in significant benefits to the local economy. In addition the additional tree and hedgerow planting and re-wilding would result in an improvement and enhancement to local biodiversity. The scheme would result in highway improvements to the access road to the A36. These improvements can be given moderate weight. There would also be some short terms benefits during the construction phase of the development through direct and indirect job creation which can be given some weight as part of the planning balance determination.

The site has good transport links, and is able to be accessed via a variety of sustainable transport methods. It is therefore considered that the benefits of the development outweigh the negative aspects and in the planning balance the proposed development is considered acceptable.

RECOMMENDATION:

APPROVE: subject to conditions