

REPORT SUMMARY

REFERENCE NO - 18/504490/FULL			
<p>APPLICATION PROPOSAL Demolition of existing clubhouse and erection of new replacement clubhouse incorporating bar, meeting rooms, gym and exercise studio, linked 12 bay driving range, separate golf buggy store, bin store and covered bike rack. Existing car park and entrance road to be realigned and provide additional 47 parking spaces. Upgrade, re-model and re-contour the existing 18- hole golf course. Academy 9 hole course; short game activity zone all on practice ground outfield. Landscaping and biodiversity enhancement through extensive planting and the connectivity of habitats.</p>			
ADDRESS Cobtree Manor Golf Course Chatham Road Sandling Maidstone Kent ME14 3AZ			
RECOMMENDATION – Grant Permission subject to planning conditions set out in Section 8.0.			
<p>SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION – APPROVE SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The design of the proposal is considered to be acceptable and the proposal would not have a significant impact on the countryside, character of the area or residential amenity. • The application satisfactorily addresses arboricultural and ecology matters and would allow for appropriate protection and mitigation. • All other material planning considerations are considered acceptable and appropriate conditions could address matters relating to flooding, highways and neighbouring amenity. • Permission is therefore recommended. 			
<p>REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE Maidstone Borough Council is the joint owner of the site.</p>			
WARD Boxley	PARISH/TOWN Boxley	COUNCIL	APPLICANT Mytime Active AGENT Arkon Associates Ltd
DECISION DUE DATE 02/01/19	PUBLICITY EXPIRY DATE 02/11/18	OFFICER SITE VISIT DATE 11/10/18	
RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY (including appeals and relevant history on adjoining sites):			
App No	Proposal	Decision	Date
18/500845/PAME ET	Pre Application Advice meeting for Construction of new clubhouse and driving range at existing golf course, demolition of existing clubhouse, extension and reconfiguration of existing car park and re-contouring of existing golf course to improve irrigation and lengthen the course		30/04/2018
06/1175	An application for a certificate of lawfulness for a proposed development being installation of solar panels to south facing roof of existing clubhouse as described in application 06/1175	Refused	27/07/2006

94/0952	Phase 3 extension to Clubhouse changing rooms, internal alterations and single storey extension to front of building adjacent to main entrance	Approved	02/09/1994
85/0949	Alterations and extension to clubhouse and erection of groundsman's store and messroom	Approved	12/02/1986
82/1079	Erection of clubhouse	Approved	30/09/1982
79/1404	18 hole municipal golf course, as amended by memoranda dated 31.8.79 and 3.10.79	Approved	28/11/1979
74/0496	Use of land as leisure/recreation area as amended by agent's memorandum of 17/10/75, by memorandum of 12/5/76 and attached layout no. 5, by drawing received on 30/9/76 and by memorandum of 16/5/77	Approved	08/09/1977

MAIN REPORT

1.0 DESCRIPTION OF SITE

- 1.01 The entire application site currently forms Cobtree Manor Golf Course which is an extensive part Council owned public golf club covering 16.56 hectares. The site has been used as a public golf course since its completion in the 1970s. The golf club is under the operational management of MyTime Active.
- 1.02 The site is located within the countryside, outside of the defined urban area of Maidstone. The site is undulating in topography with the highest point at the western edge adjacent to Manor Park. The lowest part of the site is at the southern boundary adjacent to the M20 motorway. The site gently slopes upwards to the north and the northern boundary of the site is approximately 100m south of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). To the east of the site is the A229, to the south of the site is the M20 motorway and to the west of the site is Cobtree Manor Park. Further to the west of the site is Aylesford Industrial Estate which is adjacent to the boundary of the golf course in the north west corner of the site.
- 1.03 The golf club is existing and consists of manicured fairways, greens and tees with areas of longer grass, ponds and woodland. Located in the north east of the site is the existing club house which is a brick and tile one to two storey building. Next to the golf club are a number of outbuildings used for greenkeeper's equipment and buggy storage.
- 1.04 Within the site there are three blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland located within the northern half of the site. Public Rights of Way (PROW) KH16 runs along the western boundary of the site in a south to north direction. In addition PROW KH11A runs along part of the access road to the east of the site. A Local Wildlife

Site is located to the north east of the site along part of the access road off of the A229.

- 1.05 In terms of access, vehicular access is from an access road off the A229 to the east of the site. Pedestrian and cycle access to the site is possible via the footbridge over the A229 which links to Tyland Lane to the east. In terms of public transport, a bus stop is located on the A229 on the junction with the golf club access road.

2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.01 Planning permission is sought by the new operators of the site for the upgrading of Cobtree Manor Golf Course. The proposal includes the following elements:

- A new club house facility;
- A new driving range with covered driving bays with a re-contoured outfield consisting of synthetic target greens and lighting;
- Reconfiguration of existing golf courses;
- A new 9 hole short golf course;
- A synthetic grass "multi activity zone" to the front of the practice driving range;
- An irrigation lagoon as part of the proposed water harvesting scheme, which includes the construction of a water storage pond;
- Upgraded irrigation system;
- New woodland planting;
- Ecological enhancements; and
- Additional car parking.

New club house

- 2.02 The applicant outlines that the current club house facilities are slowly falling behind the current golfing needs, aspirations of the general public and business needs. The proposed replacement club house will include a number of functions; including reception, bar and function spaces with associated kitchen. The facilities are expected to provide changing rooms, gym and a multipurpose studio.
- 2.03 The replacement club house has a larger footprint than the existing club house and related buildings currently on site. It would be single storey with a low pitch roof which is expressed internally to maximise headroom within key spaces (function, meeting rooms, gym and studio).
- 2.04 The proposed materials consist of rough faced stone, timber cladding and a single ply flat roof. The windows and doors are to be aluminium frames finished in dark grey. The applicant is keen to utilise the roof slope to provide solar UV Panels, however, there is no policy support within the Local Plan or NPPF to require solar UV panels be installed by condition and this would be a decision for the applicant.

Upgrading of the existing 18 hole golf course

- 2.05 The applicant advises that the proposed new club house and driving range provides an opportunity to reassess the current 18 holes. The current course is poor draining in parts which leads to the course closing in the winter at certain times. The configuration of the course provides an opportunity for the inclusion of a new irrigation pond to take harvested water from the surface water network and to reuse it in the summer.
- 2.06 The applicant also advises that a number of the current holes are too steep in terms of gradient which makes the course difficult for less mobile users. The proposal therefore is to re-engineer the course to solve the current design issues.

New 9 hole course

- 2.07 The proposal seeks to introduce a short game proposal (9 hole short golf course) aimed at families, juniors, beginners and casual golfers. This would be located within the footprint and extend to the south of the driving range area to be used when the driving range is not in use.

Short game activity zone

- 2.08 To complement the practice ground it is proposed that a dedicated short game is created just in front of the covered bays. This area will be made of synthetic grass and will be used as a short game area and a multi activity area for various outdoor sporting activities.

Car parking

- 2.09 The applicant states that the current car parking is sufficient for the site operations, but as the intention is to increase visitors to the site the proposal is to expand the current provision. The car parking provision will increase to 132 regular spaces with an additional 8 main car parking spaces, 5 disabled spaces, 36 overflow spaces, 2 motorbike spaces and cycle parking. A number of parking spaces will provide EV charging.

Planting/landscaping

- 2.10 Landscaping would be through a combination of the retention of the existing trees/woodland and new planting.

3.0 POLICY AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)
Development Plan: SP17, SP21 DM1, DM2, DM3, DM8, DM19, DM23, DM30, DM37
Supplementary Planning Documents: Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2014-2019

4.0 LOCAL REPRESENTATIONS

4.01 2 neighbour representations submitted neither supporting nor objecting to the proposal on the following summarised grounds:

- Enhancement proposals are positive;
- Unnecessary damage to woodland and animal habitats;
- Temporary closure of golf course during the works;
- Golf balls in garden; and
- Membership benefits.

5.0 CONSULTATIONS

5.01 Boxley Parish Council – No objection

5.02 Cllr Tony Harwood – Pre app discussions around renewable energy generation and a biodiversity friendly approach, but the current proposal is utilitarian which does not acknowledge any sustainability imperatives. For a site in the AONB and within the scope of Breeam Standard a significant evolution of the submitted plans is required, with additional landscaping, surfacing and materials

5.03 KCC PROW – KH11A runs along the eastern boundary of the site and should not affect the application

5.04 Environmental Health – No objection

5.05 Natural England – No comments

5.06 KCC SUDS – No objection, subject to conditions

5.07 Kent Police – Would welcome meeting with agent to discuss crime prevention measures.

5.08 KCC Ecology – Sufficient information has been submitted in support of the application. Advise that conditions securing ecological enhancements and further details of lighting

5.09 Southern Water – Requires formal application for a connection to the public foul sewer

5.10 Environment Agency – Any waste imported to the site will require an Environmental Permit to be in compliance with the Environmental Permitting Regulations 2006. A permit must be obtained prior to importation

5.11 KCC Highways – No objection, subject to conditions

5.12 MBC Landscape – If the lighting can be resolved there are no objections on landscape grounds subject to landscape conditions. Main concern is in relation to proposed lighting, in particular in regards to the effects on views from the Kent Downs AONB and any potential landscape proposals to help mitigate any harmful

effects. The views of the AONB unit on this matter should be fully considered. Landscape conditions requested.

- 5.13 Tree Officer (Summarised with detailed comments contained within the report) – The demolition element of the proposal will not result in any significant landscape or arboricultural harm. The development proposals will result in the removal of a large number of trees of varying age and quality, but my general impression is that the majority of the trees lost are young to semi-mature and the larger trees being lost are of average to poor quality and/or landscape value. The submitted plans include broad replanting proposals which, although lacking detail, indicate that significant areas of new woodland planting of appropriate native species will more than compensate for the tree cover losses in the long term. Conditions are requested for a revised Arboricultural Method Statement, which should fully detail individual tree removals, require a more robust method of ensuring that the 10m construction buffer to ancient woodland is appropriately managed during works and include a programme of inspection and reporting to ensure compliance by the contractor.
- 5.14 KCC Archaeology – No objection, subject to conditions
- 5.15 Kent Downs AONB Unit (30/01/2019) (summarised) – No objection - Proposal seeks to minimise sky glow through a system that avoids lighting being provided from the tee stalls and that the proposed curfew for lighting of the driving range is in accordance with the requirements for E1 Environmental Zones. In view of this, and the site's location adjacent to the existing lit environment, subject to the imposition of a condition strictly controlling the hours of illumination of the driving range, we do not raise an objection.

6.0 APPRAISAL

6.01 The key issues for consideration relate to:

- Principle of development
- Impact on character and appearance of the countryside
- Highways
- Landscape and Ecology
- Residential Amenity
- Other Matters

Principle of Development

- 6.02 The application site is defined as countryside, as defined by the Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2017. Policy SP17 outlines that development proposals in the countryside will not be permitted unless they accord with other policies in this plan and they will not result in harm to the character and appearance of the area.
- 6.03 Policy SP21 (Economic Development) sets out that the Council is committed to supporting and improving the economy of the borough and providing for the needs of businesses. Criterion vii of the policy further sets out proposals for the expansion of existing economic development premises in the countryside,

including tourism related development, but is subject to a caveat that the development should be appropriate for its countryside location and in accordance with policy DM37.

- 6.04 Policy DM3 states that publically accessible open space should be designed to as part of the overall green and blue infrastructure and layout of a site, taking advantage of the potential multiple benefits including enhanced play, tree planting and landscape provision.
- 6.05 Policy DM37 sets out that planning permission will be granted for the sustainable growth and expansion of rural business in the rural area where the new development is appropriate in scale for the location and can be integrated into the landscape, would not result in unacceptable traffic levels and the development would not result in loss of amenity to the area. These issues are dealt with in more detail later in the report.
- 6.06 Paragraph 8 of the NPPF sets out the three dimensions to sustainable development, these being economic, social and environmental roles.

Economic Role

- 6.07 The economic role seeks to contribute to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, sought by identifying and coordinating development and the provision of infrastructure.
- 6.08 Whilst no financial information has been submitted with the application, this proposal would provide a cash injection into an existing golf course, it would provide an economic benefit to the upkeep of the public golf course and also provide additional employment opportunities with a further 7 employees at the course. It is therefore considered that the proposals would provide an economic benefit to the local economy.

Social Role

- 6.09 The NPPF sets out that strong, vibrant and healthy communities should be supported by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its well-being. The NPPF supports access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation.
- 6.10 It is recognised that the golf course already exists at the site and the proposals would broaden the appeal of the course by remodelling the existing course and by providing additional facilities. The redevelopment of the existing golf course would provide a social role by providing improved accessible opportunities for sport and recreation.

Environmental Role

- 6.11 The NPPF sets out the environmental role is to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural environment, built and historic environment, including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity.

Matters relating to the detailed assessment of the environmental role of the proposals are discussed in the following sections.

- 6.12 Overall, as this is the redevelopment of an existing golf course, the principle of the redevelopment is acceptable, subject to all other material planning considerations being acceptable.

Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Countryside

- 6.13 The landscape forms part of the setting of the Kent Downs AONB, which is approximately 100m to the north of the site. The preamble to policy SP17 in the Maidstone Local Plan states in paragraph 4.107 that *'the council will ensure proposals conserve and enhance the natural beauty, distinctive character, biodiversity and setting of the AONB, taking into account the economic and social well-being of the area.'*
- 6.14 In terms of landscape character, the site lies within landscape character area 12, Sandling Vale, and more specifically 12.1 Cobtree Manor Park as defined by the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment, March 2012. The subsequent Maidstone Landscape Capacity Study: Sensitivity Assessment (January 2015) outlines the character sensitivity to be low with the visual sensitivity to be moderate, giving an overall Landscape Sensitivity of low. The study concludes that this in an area tolerant to change which could support further development. The Landscape Officer considers that the most important landscape sensitivity issue is to ensure that a defined urban edge is maintained and the open countryside is protected by restricting urban sprawl and maintaining the open, rural character between Maidstone and other settlements.
- 6.15 To the south of the site is the M20 motorway with the urban boundary approximately 0.66km away. In terms of topography, the site is gently sloping with the highest part of the site on the western and north western edge of the site adjacent to Manor Park at +45m and with the lowest part at the southern boundary adjacent to the M20 motorway. In terms of views, the site has been used as a golf course since the 1970's and it is set within part country park, part woodland and part parkland garden. Within the course there are pockets of woodland interspersed with the existing open swathes of the golf course with boundaries presently screened with existing established trees and vegetation.
- 6.16 In view of the location of the site and its position at the foot of the North Downs escarpment, the application was accompanied by a landscape and visual impact assessment. This sought to assess the potential visual impact of the development from a number of points in the vicinity of the site and from the North Downs. This assessment included long distance views from the AONB along the North Downs Way and at Lower Warren Road and at shorter distances from lower down Bluebell Hill, north of the M20 and from within the golf course itself. The summary concludes that the landscape effect is considered to be moderate to

slight given that the intrinsic character of the landscape setting will not change a great deal in appearance and nature by the proposed development.

- 6.17 The Landscape Officer has reviewed the submitted Landscape and Visual Appraisal and comments the assessment broadly complies with the principles of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment (GLVIA3). The Landscape Officer has no objection to the proposals, subject to details of the flood lighting for the driving range being acceptable which is discussed in more detail below.

Driving Range Lighting

- 6.18 Policy DM8 sets out that external lighting will be permitted where the proposal meets the following criteria:
- i. It is demonstrated that the minimum amount of lighting necessary to achieve its purpose is proposed;*
 - ii. The design and specification of the lighting would minimise glare and light spillage and would not dazzle or distract drivers or pedestrians using nearby highways; and*
 - iii. The lighting scheme would not be visually detrimental to its immediate or wider setting, particularly intrinsically dark landscapes.*

In addition, in view of the site’s location, the floodlights must be carefully managed in accordance with policy SD7 of the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan for dark skies at night.

- 6.19 The driving range, which includes the proposed lighting, would be located on the existing 2nd Fairway located to the west of the existing club house located in the middle of the site. Proposals for lighting of the driving range are for 8 floodlights on the tee stalls, which will be accompanied by 11 BERM units lighting from the ground along the driving range length.
- 6.20 The application is supported by a Lighting Technical Report. The report outlines that the proposed lighting system aims to minimise the effects of sky glow by focusing the light more accurately in the areas where it is required compared to a system which provides all light from the tee stalls.
- 6.21 The Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP) has developed guidance that applies to multiple applications where artificial lighting is required. The guidance outlines key principles for ensuring the lighting design is not obtrusive by way of light spill (table 1). The guidance further states that some lighting schemes will require the deliberate and careful use of upward light but care should be taken by the proper application of suitably directional luminaires and light controlling attachments.

Environmental Zone	Sky ULR %	Glow (Max)	Luminaire intensity I		Building luminance L (cd/m ²)
			Pre-curfew	Post-curfew	
E1	0		2,500	0	0

Intrinsically dark landscapes National Parks, AONB etc.				
E2 Low District Brightness Rural, Small village, relatively dark urban location	2.5	7,500	500	5

Table1: Obtrusive light limitations for exterior lighting installations.

- 6.22 Clearly the introduction of lighting onto the site will result in some light intrusion into this rural location which is currently unlit. However, the boundaries of the driving range are lined by established trees, which would assist in blocking any direct line of sight of the driving range lighting units from outside of the site. The vegetation would also assist in containing the majority of the lighting within the confines of the driving range. In addition, it is considered that lighting of the M20 and A229 along with the junctions which are lit by column mounted LED luminaries as well as lighting of the industrial park to the west are also likely to feature some obtrusive elements that exceed the limits outlined in GN01 for E1 Environmental Zones (table 1).
- 6.23 The Kent Downs AONB unit has been consulted and has no objection subject to a condition controlling the hours of illumination of the driving range in accordance with E1 Environmental Zone (23:00hrs). The hours of lighting for the driving range can be secured by way of condition to ensure compliance with E1 Environmental Zone lighting curfew.
- 6.24 In terms of amenity impact from the light, the nearest dwellings are located east of the site at Chatham Road and to the south west at Forstal Road. These are sited approximately 315m and 350m respectively from the proposed driving range. As the driving range is heavily screened by trees along the boundaries and due to the distances involved there is unlikely to be significant effect from obtrusive light on residential amenity.
- 6.25 Lighting of the proposed driving range is a balanced case, but it is not considered that the potential impact of the lighting on the visual amenity and character of the surrounding countryside and the amenities of the adjacent residential properties will not be so harmful as to render this element of the scheme unacceptable, subject to conditions.

Club House

- 6.26 As part of the application submission, detailed plans have been produced to provide clarity as to the potential design and impact of the new building. The existing club house has a total gross area of 580 sqm. The gross external area of the replacement club house, driving range, covered bays and ancillary services is 1196 sqm. The replacement club house would be single storey with a maximum height of 4 metres. The building is split into operational sections including the fitness suite, bar, reception area and conference centre. The materials of the club house would consist of rough faced stone, timber cladding and single ply flat roof. The windows and doors are to be aluminium frames, finished in dark grey. The driving range bays would have a mono pitched roof with a rear elevation height of 3.5m and front elevation height of 5m. In terms of the materials the driving range would be dark grey trapezoidal metal cladding elevations and roof. The new club house would be set back from the A229 road and to the west of the existing club house by approximately 150m and 50m respectively.
- 6.27 The modern low lying design of the building would be a positive feature as it would reduce the prominence and visibility of the building. In addition, the proposed layout plan shows that existing trees to the north and east of the club house would be retained which would reduce the visual impact of the building from wider views. The building is not visible from the M20 or the A229 and views would be limited to short distance views.
- 6.28 The design of the building is sustainable. An energy and sustainability statement has been submitted in support of the application. A condition would be placed on the application requiring the club house to achieve BREEAM very good rating in accordance with Policy DM2.
- 6.29 The new clubhouse with the driving range bays would result in some additional built development within the site. However, it is considered with the design approach adopted and due to the land levels within the site, the building would not be unacceptably visually intrusive and harmful to the character of the immediate or wider area given that it is in an isolated position with a good level of screening. The design of the club house building is also considered to be a simple modern design, with a range of materials to add visual interest to the building. The design of the building is considered to be in accordance with Policy DM1.
- 6.30 In terms of the ancillary buildings in the form of the buggy store, this is considered to be minor development, which would not cause significant visual harm. The driving range netting would measure a maximum length of 70m with a maximum height of 15 metres. The synthetic grass area to the front of the driving bays would have an area of 29m x 90m. Due to the existing and proposed vegetation providing screening of this area, it is not considered that the netting or synthetic grass area would result in adverse visual harm.

Regrade of existing golf course

- 6.31 One of the key considerations with the development is the new landform created from the approximately 105,000 cubic metres of imported soils. The applicant states that the material to be imported will be clean material and not waste and this can be secured by condition. The Landscape and Visual Impact Statement

describes the current land form as undulating and considers that the site is well concealed within the local landscape.

- 6.32 In terms of the existing landform, the majority of the site would essentially remain the same. The northern boundary of the site rises along the scarp slope of the North Downs. The site currently dips towards the middle of the site at 32-34m in height, the east of the site rises from the middle to a height of +34m, and the site also rises to +44m on the western side. Earth works would be carried out in the north of the site with varying increased heights of between 1 and 4 metres. These changes would be experienced against the current undulating topography and then visually blend into the slow rising land to the immediate north of the site. It is not considered that the land form changes here would be prominent and would be largely experienced as part of the existing golf course and topography of the area.
- 6.33 The rising topography of the north west corner of the site would also be re-profiled to address drainage issues in this area of the site. The area of the site currently slopes downwards with the northern section height of +21m rising to +33m in the southern part of this area of the site. The re-profiling would involve the rising of 2 metres in parts of fairway 13 and 3 metres in parts on fairway 12. Having regard to the submitted sectional drawings, the re-profiling of this section of the site would not materially raise the overall land levels in this part of the site and the resultant incline would not project significantly.
- 6.34 The remaining re-profiling would be to the middle and west side of the site to the proposed driving range and fairways 15, 17 and 18. In terms of north east to south west along the proposed driving range, the north eastern corner section of this part of the site is at a height of +37m, dipping in to the middle of the site to 35-37m and rising in the south west up to 44m. In terms of the re-profiling, this majority of the earth works to this area would be in the south west with rising of the levels of between 3-4 metres up to a maximum 48m. Due to the rising height levels to the south west, the re-profiling would not be immediately visible in views from this direction, and when viewed from the north-east, the increasing height would be seen against the backdrop of existing rising levels. Therefore, due to the current dip in this area of the course and the current rising topography towards the boundaries of the site, it is not considered that re-profiling to this area of the site would be prominent or cause visual harm to the area.
- 6.35 The site is located within landscape character area 12, Sandling Vale (and more specifically 12.1, Cobtree Manor Park) as defined in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment, March 2012 amended 19 July 2013. The site is described as an area of low sensitivity.
- 6.36 As set out in section 6.14, the Council's Landscape Capacity Study identifies the site as an area tolerant of change which could support further development. The impact of the regrading of the course is considered by the supporting Landscape and Visual Appraisal as moderate to slight given the intrinsic character of the landscape setting will not change a great deal in nature as a result of the proposed works. The Council's landscape officer has commented on the proposals and has no objection to the regrading of the golf course.

- 6.37 Looking at the submitted plans and during the site visit, it is considered that the design of the remodelled course has sought to correspond to the existing environment of the site. Additionally, it is not considered the layout would result in any harmful concentrations of incongruously undulating grounds. It is considered that the design of the course would preserve the current sense of openness to the site with sections of woodland and ponds.
- 6.38 Overall, based on the landscape appraisal of the site which considers the landscape sensitivity of the site to be low, it is not considered that the re-profiling would significantly raise the overall land levels or that the re-profiling of the course would cause significant visual harm to the area. It is considered that the visual impacts of the regrading proposal are unlikely to be of significant detriment to the character of the area or the setting of the AONB due to the existing landscape character. In addition the Council's Landscape Officer and the Kent Downs AONB unit has not objected and this element of the proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable.

Highways

- 6.39 The application seeks to use the existing vehicular access for visiting members via the link road off of the A229. It is proposed to provide a temporary construction vehicle access off of the golf club link road. An estimate of trip generation relating to the proposed development has been undertaken by the applicants and assessed by Kent Highways. In terms of traffic generation, when considering all of the additional facilities proposed as part of the development, the proposals are likely to result in an additional 32 movements in the AM peak and 59 movements in the PM peak. It is not considered that this increase will lead to a severe impact on the surrounding highway network.
- 6.40 In terms of parking provision, the site currently has parking provision for 124 vehicles and the proposal includes the provision of 8 additional main car parking spaces, 5 new disabled spaces, 2 motorbike spaces and an overflow car park with an additional 36 spaces. Secure cycle parking on site is also proposed. KCC Highways have also raised no objections to the proposed levels of car parking.
- 6.41 During the construction, inert materials are to be transported to the site. It is estimated by the agent that 105,000m³ of inert materials which are to be transported by HGV with a daily average arrival of 82 HGV's per day. KCC Highways have been consulted on the proposals and have no objection to the proposal subject to a condition requiring the submission of a Construction Management Plan before commencement of any development. In this instance, bearing in mind the number of lorry movements per day, it is considered that this condition is necessary to ensure that disturbance to residential amenity is minimised. Conditions requested in regards to loading/unloading and wheel washing are not considered to meet the 6 tests as set out in the NPPF.
- 6.42 There is opportunity as part of the application to increase the provision of electric vehicle charging points which is supported by policy DM23. The applicant has

agreed to the condition to provide a scheme of charging points which will be secured by condition.

Landscaping and Ecology

Ecology

- 6.43 In terms of ecology, a preliminary ecological report has been produced along with the required range of protected species surveys taken into consideration any detrimental impacts. Further surveys have been undertaken for great crested newts and reptiles; however no evidence or presence was recorded.
- 6.44 The proposed construction access will be through the southern part of a non statutory Local Wildlife Site along the verge of the access road which is located in the north eastern corner of the site. The submitted Preliminary Ecology Report outlines that this will be temporarily impacted on, however KCC Ecology are satisfied with the information that has been submitted and have no objection to the proposals. KCC Ecology advises that conditions securing the implementation of ecological enhancements are imposed as well as details of the driving range flood lighting.

Trees and landscaping

- 6.45 An Arboricultural Impact Assessment, Arboricultural Method Statement, tree protection details and a tree survey have been submitted in support of the application. The Council's Tree Officer has provided the following detailed comments on the proposals.
- 6.46 The demolition of the existing clubhouse will necessitate the removal of several trees (A Sumach T56, a Sycamore T55 and two Hawthorn) none of which are significant in size or quality. To the west of this is a poor conifer hedge G54 alongside the existing greenkeeper's compound, which is to be removed to enable the proposals around the new buggy store. On the north-western corner of the greenkeeper's compound, further tree removals are proposed, all of which are poor quality individuals.
- 6.47 The proposed new clubhouse will be located to the west of this and will be serviced by a new road from the existing car park. The road necessitates the removal of a group of average to low quality trees and shrubs lining the current path (G53), much of which is inappropriate ornamental planting such as Laurel, but it does include one or two young Pines of good form. The clubhouse footprint itself conflicts with part of tree group G58, resulting in the need to remove three semi-mature Birch, a young Pine and two large, mature Poplars. Three further mature Poplars would remain in between the new clubhouse building and driving range and could therefore be subject to future pressure for removal resulting from fears that they might break or fall.
- 6.48 A temporary construction access is proposed in the north-east corner of the site, which will necessitate tree felling. None of the trees in this area (G73/G74/G75) are significant or mature and I consider that their removal, subject to suitable

precautions to prevent ground compaction to ensure successful reinstatement to woodland, is acceptable.

- 6.49 Some of the course changes are in the vicinity of woodland identified as Ancient Woodland. The Tree Officer notes that the plans show a 'buffer' of 10m for any earthworks, which is considered generally acceptable to avoid or minimise likely conflict with root protection of any trees within these woodlands. This is not intended as an Ancient Woodland buffer in the sense referred to in standing advice. As the finished development will be similar to existing and semi-natural in nature, the Tree Officer considers that the proposal complies with the current standing advice for ancient woodland buffer zones.
- 6.50 The rest of the tree removals proposed relate to changes in course layout. The Tree Officer comments that the removals will not result in the loss of any trees that are significant as individuals and (such as breaking through for temporary construction access at G70) appear to have been well selected, in that poorer quality groups or parts of groups seem to have been selected for removal over better quality trees and groups. The Tree Officer further comments that nearly all of the removals appear to be planting associated with the existing golf course, much of which is relatively young and not thriving.
- 6.51 Overall, based on the submitted details and comments from the Council's Tree Officer and KCC Ecology, it is considered that the impact on ecology and trees would be acceptable subject to conditions.

Residential Amenity

- 6.52 The nearest residential properties to the site are located to the east of the site at Chatham Road, to the south west at Forstal Road and to the north at Great Cossington. These are sited approximately 315m, 350m and 480m respectively from the new club house and driving range.
- 6.53 It is recognised that upgraded facilities are likely to increase usage of the golf course and for alternative uses, such as the gym, however it is unlikely given the position of the existing dwellings to the development that excessive noise and disturbance will be generated resulting in residential harm. Whilst it is acknowledged that there may be some noise and disturbance whilst the re-development of the golf course takes place, this will be limited to a relatively short period.
- 6.54 During the course of the application the Council's Environmental Health team has been consulted and have no objection to the proposals.
- 6.55 Therefore, given the distance between the proposed development site and the nearest residential property it is considered that the potential harm generated would be minimal.

Other Matters

- 6.56 Surface water drainage is indicated to be provided using a SUDS based system which proposes to address some of the existing surface water flooding at the site. KCC SUDS has commented that while the principles of a new attenuation pond and swales to collect surface water is acceptable, further information is required as part of a detailed design stage by way of condition.
- 6.57 Southern Water has indicated that the developer will have to make a formal application to connect to the system at the nearest point of available capacity. A condition, as requested by Southern Water, is not considered necessary as this is a matter that is dealt with under the Water Industry Act 1991.
- 6.58 PROW KH11A runs inside the eastern boundary of the site and should not affect the application. KH16 would not affect the development.
- 6.59 There are no designated or non-designated heritage assets within the site, nor does the site lie within a conservation area. Heritage assets in the vicinity of the site include Cossington Manor (Grade II), which is located 315m north of the site, Tyland Farmhouse and Barn (Grade II) some 120m east of the site, No's 300 & 302 Pratling Street (Grade II). Bearing in mind that this application is for the redevelopment of an existing golf, it is considered that any impact on the settings of the listed buildings would be considered negligible.

Environmental Impact Assessment

- 6.60 The applicant has submitted an EIA Screening to accompany their application that concludes that an Environmental Statement is not required to support this application.
- 6.61 It is acknowledged that the proposal falls outside of the specified uses set out in schedule 1. Schedule 2 sets out at part 12 the tourism and leisure thresholds as the proposal exceeds 1 hectare.
- 6.62 The Local Planning Authority (LPA) has not considered the site to be 'sensitive' based upon consultee advice and the proposal would seek to develop an existing golf course. This is considered to be a completely different proposition than the creation of a completely new golf course.
- 6.63 Consequently based upon this information, the proposed development will not result in significant environmental impacts and as such is not considered EIA development.

7 Conclusion

- 7.01 The proposal would develop the existing golf enterprise to provide updated facilities and the proposals are considered to be acceptable in principle.
- 7.02 The potential impacts and harm caused by the development have been carefully weighed. The impact of lighting in particular has been carefully considered. The details submitted indicate that direct impact on the landscape, in particular the Kent Downs AONB can be mitigated in accordance with the ILE guidance. It is not

considered the impact of the proposed flood lighting will so harmful as to warrant refusal due to the existing and proposed landscape framework that the site is within.

- 7.03 It is not considered that the impact of the other facilities at the site will cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the wider countryside. Neighbouring properties are sufficient distance from the proposal so there is not considered to be a significant impact on their amenity.
- 7.04 Concerns raised by the public regarding the temporary closure of some of the golf course and club membership are not for consideration as a planning matter.
- 7.05 On balance, having assessed the scheme, it is considered that the overall benefits in terms of the enhanced provision in this instance outweigh the impacts. Subject to appropriate safeguarding conditions the following recommendation is therefore appropriate.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION – GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the following conditions:

- (1) The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this decision.

Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- (2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: P101 (Existing Site Plan), P102 Rev G (Proposed Site Plan), P103 Rev I (Proposed Ground Floor Plan), P104 Rev D (Proposed Clubhouse Elevations), P105 Rev C (Proposed Clubhouse Sections), P106 Rev C (Proposed Roof Plan), P110 Rev C (Proposed Driving Range), P120 Rev (Proposed External Shelter), P125 (Cycle Shelter), 1697.02 Rev A (Proposed New Layout & Grading), 1697 Rev A (Cross Sections), 1697.04 Rev A (Proposed Landscape Plan), 1697.05 Rev A (Proposed Clearing & Construction Access), 1697.06 Rev C (Boundary Plan), 1697.07 (Proposed Gas Main Raft For Lorry Access), 1697.08 (Proposed Course Open During Construction Works), 1697.09 (Typical Details), 1697.11 (Short Course & Footgolf Course), 1697.13 (Detailed Planting Plan Club Entrance), 1697.16 (Temporary Construction Access), P.107 Rev C (Proposed Site Elevations & Visuals) and P115 Rev B (Proposed Buggy Store), P100 Rev E (Location Plan)

Reason: To clarify which plans have been approved.

- (3) The upgrade, re-model and re-contour of the site (drawing no. P100 Rev E) shall be implemented only in accordance with the level details as shown on the following approved plans:

1697.03 Rev A (Proposed New Layout & Grading Plan), 1697.03 Rev (Cross Sections) and 1697.11 Short Course & Footgolf Course.

Reason: In the interests of landscape, visual impact and amenity of the area and to ensure a satisfactory appearance to the development.

- (4) No development, other than demolition or site clearance, shall begin until a detailed sustainable surface water drainage scheme for the site has been submitted to (and approved in writing by) the local planning authority. The detailed drainage scheme shall be based on the principles within the Flood Risk Assessment (July 2018) by HydroGEO and shall demonstrate that the surface water generated by this development (for all rainfall durations and intensities up to and including the climate change adjusted critical 100 year storm) can be accommodated and disposed of without increase to flood risk on or off-site.

The drainage scheme shall also demonstrate (with reference to published guidance):

- that silt and pollutants resulting from the site use can be adequately managed to ensure there is no pollution risk to receiving water.
- appropriate operational and maintenance requirements for each drainage feature or SuDS component are adequately considered.

The drainage scheme shall be implemented prior to first occupation / use of the development (or within an agreed implementation schedule) and subsequently be maintained in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure the development is served by satisfactory arrangements for the disposal of surface water and to ensure that the development does not exacerbate the risk of on/off site flooding. These details and accompanying calculations are required prior to the commencement of the development (except for demolition / site clearance) as they form an intrinsic part of the proposal, the approval of which cannot be disaggregated from the carrying out of the rest of the development.

- (5) Prior to the commencement of development the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, will secure and implement:
- i archaeological field evaluation works in accordance with a specification and written timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority; and
 - ii further archaeological investigation, recording and reporting, determined by the results of the evaluation, in accordance with a specification and timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority

Reason: To ensure that features of archaeological interest are properly examined and recorded.

- (6) Prior to the commencement of any development or works on the site, a proposed phasing plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority setting out the proposed phasing of the development hereby permitted. The development shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the phasing plan as approved.

Reason: To ensure satisfactory progression of the development.

- (7) Prior to the commencement of development a landscape scheme for the entire site, designed in accordance with the principles of The Council's landscape character guidance has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme shall show all existing trees, hedges and blocks of landscaping on, and immediately adjacent to, the site and indicate whether they are to be retained or removed, provide details of on site replacement planting to mitigate any loss of amenity and biodiversity value. It shall include a planting specification, a programme of implementation and a long term management plan.

Reason: In the interests of landscape, visual impact and amenity of the area and to ensure a satisfactory appearance to the development.

- (8) All planting, seeding and turfing specified in the approved landscape details shall be carried out in the planting season following occupation of the replacement dwelling hereby permitted or the season following the commencement of the use of the proposed new access whichever is the sooner. All such landscaping shall be carried out during the planting season (October to February). Any seeding or turfing which fails to establish or any trees or plants which, within five years from the first occupation of a property, commencement of use or adoption of land, die or become so seriously damaged or diseased that their long term amenity value has been adversely affected shall be replaced in the next planting season with plants of the same species and size as detailed in the approved landscape scheme unless the local planning authority gives written consent to any variation.

Reason: In the interests of landscape, visual impact and amenity of the area and to ensure a satisfactory appearance to the development

- (9) No development including site clearance and demolition shall take place until an Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) in accordance with the current edition of BS 5837 has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The AMS should detail implementation of any aspect of the development that has the potential to result in the loss of, or damage to trees, including their roots and, for example, take account of site access, demolition and construction activities, foundations, service runs and level changes. It should also detail any tree works necessary to implement the approved scheme and include a tree protection plan. *It shall include a robust method of ensuring that the 10m construction buffer to ancient woodland is appropriately managed during works and include a programme of inspection and reporting to ensure compliance by the contractor*

Reason: In the interests of landscape, visual impact and amenity of the area and to ensure a satisfactory appearance to the development

- (10) No development above slab level shall take place until written details and samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the building(s) hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

Works shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed details.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory appearance to the development.

- (11) The clubhouse/driving range hereby approved shall not commence above slab level until details of any lighting (other than the floodlighting system) proposed within the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority and these measures shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved details and maintained thereafter;

Reason: To safeguard the visual amenity of the surrounding area.

- (12) The clubhouse/driving range hereby approved shall not commence above slab level until details of any permanent or temporary gates, walls, fences or other means of enclosure sited within the site area shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and implemented and retained in strict accordance with the approved details. These details shall include details of the proposed netting around the perimeter of the driving range.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to protect the visual amenities of the locality.

- (13) The use of the clubhouse hereby approved shall not commence until details of a scheme for providing publicly accessible electric vehicle charging points, including number, a programme for their installation, maintenance and management, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The electric vehicle charging points as approved shall be installed prior to occupation of the building hereby permitted and shall thereafter be retained and maintained in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To promote the reduction of CO2 emissions through the use of low emissions vehicles in accordance with paragraph 110 of the NPPF.

- (14) Prior to the occupation of the clubhouse hereby approved, details of a scheme for the protection and enhancements of biodiversity, including bat and bird boxes, use of native species in landscaping and incorporation of features beneficial to wildlife wherever possible within and around the perimeter of the site, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. A detailed management plans shall be submitted

outlining how any ecological features will be managed long term to provide net gains for biodiversity. The approved scheme shall be fully implemented and thereafter maintained.

Reason : To protect and enhance the ecology and biodiversity on the site in the future.

- (15) No external lighting shall be installed on the driving range until a detailed scheme of lighting has been submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme must include a plan to demonstrate that it will minimise/avoid impact on ecologically sensitive areas. The scheme should be designed to take the following in to consideration:
- i) This scheme shall take note of and refer to the Institute of Lighting Engineers Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Lighting, GN01, dated 2011 (and any subsequent revisions) and shall include a layout plan with beam orientation and a schedule of light equipment proposed (luminaire type; mounting height; aiming angles and luminaire profiles) and an ISO lux plan showing light spill.
 - ii) Habitats/features on the site that are particularly sensitive for ecology

The scheme of lighting shall be installed, maintained and operated in accordance with the approved scheme unless the Local Planning Authority gives its written consent to any variation.

Reason: In the interests of protecting visual amenity and biodiversity.

- (16) The lighting associated with the driving range as shown on drawing no. 0987-DFLLSD001 and to be approved under condition 15 shall not be used outside of the hours of 08:00-22:00.

Reason: To prevent light pollution and in the interests of residential amenity.

- (17) The proposed club house building as shown on drawing no. P1-4 Rev D shall achieve a VERY GOOD BREEAM rating. A final certificate shall be issued to the Local Planning Authority for written approval to certify that a VERY GOOD BREEAM RATING has been achieved within 6 months of the first occupation of the building.

Reason: To ensure a sustainable and energy efficient form of development.

- (18) The approved details of the cycle parking as shown on drawing no. P125 shall be completed before the commencement of the use of the buildings hereby permitted and shall thereafter be kept available for such use.

Reason: In the interests of promoting sustainable travel.

- (19) The existing club house as shown on drawing no. P099 shall be demolished and the resulting materials and debris removed from the site to the satisfaction of the local planning authority within 3 months of the first occupation of the buildings hereby permitted;

Reason: To prevent an overdevelopment of the site and to safeguard the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

- (20) The approved details of the parking/turning areas shall be completed before the commencement of the use of the clubhouse hereby permitted and shall thereafter be kept available for such use. No development, whether permitted by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (or any order revoking and re-enacting that Order, with or without modification) or not, shall be carried out on the areas indicated or in such a position as to preclude vehicular access to them;

Reason: Development without adequate parking/turning provision is likely to lead to parking inconvenient to other road users and in the interests of road safety.

- (21) No materials other than clean naturally occurring soil and mineral including top and sub soils; underlying rock from which constituent parts make up part of the soil; clays, silts, sands and gravels; underlying geology shall be imported to the site. All materials imported must be capable of direct use as part of the development, hereby permitted, without the need for treatment.

Reason: Waste material outside of the aforementioned would raise additional environmental concerns which would need to be considered afresh

INFORMATIVES

- (1) If a formal application for connection to the public sewerage system is required in order to service this development, please contact Southern Water, Sparrowgrove House Sparrowgrove, Otterbourne, Hampshire RG21 2SW (Tel: 03303030119) or www.southernwater.co.uk
- (2) Any waste imported to the site and/or permanently deposited to land at the site will require an Environmental Permit to be in compliance with the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016. A permit must be obtained prior to any importation of waste material or works taking place as deposits of waste to land cannot be retrospectively permitted. The operator will need to demonstrate that all pollution risks are being managed appropriately at the site giving particular attention to the planning and management of transferred/imported materials and the protection of groundwater and watercourses through the implementation of an approved site specific Environmental Management System. Additionally, pre-application

discussions will need to take place with the applicant where advice and guidance can be given regarding these proposed waste management activities. Further guidance on what is required of the applicant can also be found here <https://www.gov.uk/environmental-permit-how-toapply>.

Case Officer: Adam Reynolds

NB For full details of all papers submitted with this application please refer to the relevant Public Access pages on the council's website.