

REPORT 7

APPLICATION NO.	P07/E0579
APPLICATION TYPE	Full
REGISTERED	11.05.2007
PARISH	Tetsworth
WARD MEMBER(S)	Mrs Dorothy Brown
APPLICANT	Leaderboard Golf Ltd
SITE	The Oxfordshire Golf Club, Rycote Lane, Thame
PROPOSALS	Erection of 50 bedroom hotel and extensions to existing clubhouse
AMENDMENTS	None
GRID REFERENCE	468120/203673
OFFICER	Mr T Wyatt

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This is a revised application following the withdrawal of application P06/E0946 on 5th December 2006. However, the details of the application in terms of the proposed development have not changed from the previously submitted scheme. One of the main driving forces behind the previous application was the Oxfordshire's bid to host the 2011 Solheim Cup. Unfortunately the Oxfordshire has not been successful in this bid, and therefore, the justification for the proposal based on the Solheim Cup bid as previously put forward is no longer relevant although it is still the intention and ambition of the Club to attract professional golf tournaments back to The Oxfordshire.
- 1.2 The application site forms part of The Oxfordshire Golf Club, a prestigious course located in open countryside off the A329 between Milton Common and Thame. The golf club is relatively young, having only been constructed in the early 1990s, however, soon after its construction it hosted several European tour events, including the Benson and Hedges between 1996 to 1999. Thus the course gained a rapid reputation as a quality championship course.
- 1.3 Despite its early success, the financial situation of the golf club became uncertain between 2000 and 2002 as its owners were placed in Administration. The current applicant bought the club in 2002 and has spent the last five years attempting to stabilise the club. The development proposed under this application is seen as an important step to safeguard the long term financial future of the club.
- 1.4 The golf club is located in an attractive area of countryside, with the course sloping down from the club house at its southern end towards the A329 to the north. The

course is dominated by the existing club house, which is sited in an elevated position overlooking the majority of the golf course and a large area of the surrounding landscape. The club house is a substantial building containing conference and dining facilities as well as a club shop and offices.

1.5 This application was advertised as a departure from the development plan due to the nature of the proposed development, and its conflict with development plan policies.

1.6

The application site is shown on the OS extract **attached** as Appendix A.

2.0 THE PROPOSAL

2.1 This application seeks permission for the construction of a new 50 bedroom hotel to be attached to the south elevation of the existing club house. This part of the site currently comprises a service yard, sub-station and a storage building. The hotel would have associated leisure facilities and it is proposed that the hotel accommodation would be provided in two 'pavilions' linked by way of a ground floor glazed link. The proposed hotel rooms would have a floor area of 30 square metres, apart from 4 suites proposed in each block. All of the rooms would have a balcony and glazed doors and windows to be in keeping with the openings on the existing club house.

2.2 The leisure facilities would be provided in the lower ground floor below the main hotel accommodation, whilst the existing service yard area would be retained as part of the proposals.

2.3 The proposed development is substantial in terms of size with the accommodation comprising a floor area only slightly short of 4000 square metres. This accommodation would be provided over four storeys within two main buildings, which would be of equal size. Each of the pavilions would have a footprint of approximately 400 square metres (23 metres in width by 17.5 metres in depth), and would extend to a height of 11.5 metres, which would be just over 1 metre below the height of the existing club house. However, the south east facing elevation of the building would extend to a height of 15.5 metres where it lies above the existing service yard. The pavilions would be linked to the existing reception area and to each other by a ground floor glazed link. As the two pavilions are essentially separate buildings, there has been an opportunity to provide a small courtyard garden area between the pavilions and the south

elevation of the existing club house.

2.4

As well as the main hotel blocks, two full height structures would be provided to the external face of the hotel blocks, to house a lift and staircase serving all floors of the buildings. In addition to the hotel blocks it is also proposed to extend the existing offices with a single storey addition projecting from the south elevation of the existing building and to extend the existing dining room with a first floor addition to provide an extended dining area, small office and new escape staircase. This would be expressed on the south east elevation of the existing building. These extensions to the existing office and dining facilities are relatively minor in relation to the development relating to the hotel and leisure accommodation. However, the extension of the existing facilities is evidently necessitated by the proposed hotel.

2.5

Although projecting towards the existing car park area, the hotel development would not affect the existing car parking area in terms of parking provision. However, no additional parking is proposed. The area to the south of the existing building consists of a steeply banked landscaped area and although the banking would help to conceal part of the south west elevation of the hotel, the development would result in the loss of shrubs and trees from this area of the site.

2.6

A copy of the proposed plans and supporting Planning Statement is **attached** as Appendix B.

3.0 CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

- 3.1 **Tetsworth Parish Council** – The Parish Council considers that the application should be approved as the ‘development could be beneficial to our village’.
- 3.2 **Thame Town Council** – The Town Council considers that the application should be approved although no reasons for such a view have been expressed.
- 3.3 **Great Haseley Parish Council** – The Parish Council considers that the application should be approved although again no reasons for such a view have been expressed.
- 3.4 **OCC Highways** – The local road network in the vicinity of the site is sufficient to cater for the likely level of traffic generated by this proposal, but not for major golf tournaments such as the Solheim Cup. The site access is acceptable in terms of design and capacity. The main concern relates to the sustainability of the location.

The location is considered unsustainable in transportation terms as there are no footways to aid pedestrian safety and the site is not well served by public transport.

3.5

However, it is acknowledged that the site has existing conference facilities whose delegates will benefit from the provision of on-site accommodation. In addition the hotel hosts wedding receptions and other functions where the hotel accommodation would reduce traffic movements between The Oxfordshire and other off-site accommodation.

3.6

If the LPA is minded to grant planning permission, a Green Travel Plan for the site should be drawn up. In order for the Travel Plan to be effective the Highway Authority recommends that it is linked through a Section 106 Agreement to include a mechanism of financial penalty (£20,000) for not meeting the agreed targets of the travel plan 5 years from its first implementation. A sum of £1000 is requested to be paid to Oxfordshire County Council towards monitoring costs of the travel plan. In addition the Highway Authority requests £67,000 towards improvements to the existing highway infrastructure and £19,000 towards the existing subsidised bus services in and around the Thame area to mitigate the impact of the development and its potential to increase visitor numbers, particularly through major

3.7 golf tournaments.

If the application is approved, a 'Major Tournament Management Plan' will need to be agreed to ensure that sufficient planning and preparation is undertaken prior to

3.8 any major golf tournaments.

OCC Planning (as Structure Plan Authority) – There is concern that this is a major development in an unsustainable location contrary to Structure Plan Policy G1. However, it is recognised that there may be circumstances that may outweigh the normal policy considerations in this case. Provision of an on-site hotel may reduce the need to travel to off-site accommodation for stays of longer than one day, however, conversely a quality hotel could attract guests who make no use of the existing facilities and who travel off-site to local tourist destinations.

3.9

If the LPA is minded to approve the application, planning permission should be subject to the implementation of a Green Travel Plan and a Major Tournament Management Plan and the health club use should be restricted to golf club

3.10 members and hotel/conference/function guests.

Landscape Consultant – No comments have been received in relation to the current proposal. However, as the details of the proposal are the same as the previous application, the previous comments supplied by the Landscape Consultant are still relevant.

The Oxfordshire golf course has been engineered so that the topography of the course is not in keeping with the local landscape. The club house on the site occupies high ground and as such can be viewed from up to 2km away although it can also be viewed from further distances such as from the Chilterns escarpment 7.3.12 km away.

Any development on the southerly side of the clubhouse would be on part of an existing developed area and it is acknowledged that the development would be easier assimilated on this elevation than on the exposed northern elevation of the building. However, the proposed development would be visible from the surrounding area and in particular from the Oxfordshire Way and the Bridleway 382/31 in respect of public views. The existing clubhouse is a considerable structure in its own right and the proposed development would be viewed in context with the existing building and as such would compound its impact.

In summary it is considered that, although the more distant views of the proposal would not be extensive, the closer views from the definitive footpath system would have an appreciable impact. The extension would compound the mass of the existing.

3.15

Environmental Health – There are no observations.

Waste Management – The submitted drawing shows only provision for a singular bin room with no indication for recycling. The bin store should be partitioned so that half of the space allocated for waste can be provided for recycling. Each of the hotel rooms should also be provided with a recycling bin. A composting facility for the kitchen waste is also recommended.

3.17

Environment Agency – The Environment Agency has assessed this application as having a low environmental risk.

3.18 **Monson** – Details of foul and surface water drainage should be submitted and approved prior to any development commencing. These requirements can be dealt with through conditions attached to any planning permission.

3.19

Thames Water – An Informative is recommended for attachment to any planning permission regarding the minimum pressure of the water supply.

Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) – The application is recommended for refusal as the development would be visually prominent and would damage the landscape of this rural area and it is considered that this damage would be compounded by the design of the proposal conflicting with the style and character of the existing building. It is also considered that the hotel will affect the viability of existing hotels and accommodation providers in the District.

Tourism South East - The application is supported. A successful bid to host the 2011 Solheim Cup would bring significant economic benefits to the area as well as boosting its profile. 2001 research conducted by the Southern Tourist board highlighted strong hotel performance in Oxfordshire and it is considered that in Oxford and the rest of Oxfordshire there is more of a mix of business and leisure markets than in Berkshire and Buckinghamshire. No statement regarding the suitability of the hotel in the location proposed is provided as the author is not familiar with this area.

3.22

It should be noted that this response is exactly the same as the response received in relation to application P06/E0946 hence the reference to the Solheim Cup bid.

3.23 **OCC Rights of Way Officer** – Public footpath 34 passes to the west of the clubhouse and public bridleway 31 runs to the south of the clubhouse. The development should not reduce the width of the paths and no materials, plant or temporary structures must be deposited on the paths at any time as a result of the proposed development.

Neighbours – No letters of objection or support have been received.

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 P06/E0946 – Erection of a new 50 bed hotel. Ground and first floor extensions to

provide additional office accommodation and a first floor dining room. Withdrawn prior to determination on 5th December 2006.

- 4.2 P03/E0749 - Ground floor extension to the 19th bar beneath existing canopy. Planning Permission on 10 December 2003.

- 4.3 P90/N0867 - Change of use from agriculture to an 18 hole golf course. Erection of clubhouse and ancillary buildings. Car parking and access. Planning Permission granted on 24 April 1991.

- 4.4 P90/N0204/O - 2 X 18 hole golf courses and clubhouse on site of Grade 3 agricultural land. Outline Planning Permission granted on 20 June 1990.

- 4.5 P89/N0672/O - 18 hole golf course and clubhouse. Planning Permission granted on 15 November 1989.

5.0 **POLICY AND GUIDANCE**

5.1 Adopted Structure Plan 2016 Policies:

- G1 – General Policies for Development
- G2 – Improving the Quality and Design of Development
- G3 – Infrastructure and Service Provision
- G5 – Development outside Settlements
- G6 – Energy and Resource Conservation
- T1 – Sustainable Travel
- T2 – Car Parking
- T3 – Public Transport
- T8 – Development Proposals
- E1 – Provision for Employment Development
- E5 – Tourism and Culture

-EN1 – Landscape Character

-TC2 – Maintaining and Enhancing Centres

-R1 – Countryside Recreation

5.2 Policies of the Adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (SOLP):

-G1 – General Restraint and Sustainable Development

-G2 – Protection and Enhancement of the Environment

-G3 – Locational Strategy

-G4 – Development in the Countryside and on the Edge of Settlements

-G6 – Promoting Good Design

-C1 – Landscape Character

-D1 – Good Design and Local Distinctiveness

-D2 – Vehicle and Bicycle Parking

-D6 – Design Against Crime

-D7 – Access for All

-D8 – Energy, Water and Materials Efficient Design

-D10 – Waste Management

-R5 – Golf Courses and Golf Driving Ranges

-E4 & E5 – General Employment Policies

-TSM2 – Tourist Attractions and Facilities

-TSM4 – Serviced Accommodation, Public Houses and Restaurants

-TC7 – Protecting Town Centres from Out-of-Centre Development

-T1 & T2 – Transport Requirements for New Developments

-T3 – Transport Assessments and Travel Plans

5.3 Government Guidance:

- PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development
- PPS7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
- PPS6 – Planning for Town Centres
- PPG13 - Transport
- PPG17 – Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation
- RPG9
- Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism

5.4 Supplementary Planning Guidance

- South Oxfordshire Design Guide December 2000 (SODG)

6.0 PLANNING ISSUES

6.1 The planning issues that are relevant to this application are:

1. The principle of the development
2. The sustainability of the development
3. The design of the development
4. The impact of the development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area
5. Other material considerations

The Principle of the Development

6.2 The principle of the development is largely governed in the first instance by Policies TSM4 and R5 of the SOLP. Policy TSM4 relates to proposals for the construction of hotels, other serviced accommodation, public houses and restaurants and Policy R5 relates to proposals for golf courses.

6.3

Policy TSM4 only refers to the construction of serviced accommodation, public houses and restaurants 'within the built up area of existing settlements'. Therefore, by implication, there is a presumption against any proposals for such development outside the built up area of settlements. Notwithstanding this, any proposal considered against Policy TSM4 would need to comply with criteria listed under this Policy, including the need to ensure that the location and scale of the development is appropriate and that the design and materials are in keeping with the locality and the need to ensure that the site is accessible by public transport and provision is made for pedestrian and cycle links to surrounding areas where appropriate. Consideration of the proposal in relation to these issues is outlined further on in this report.

6.4

Paragraph 6.65 of the SOLP, which relates to Policy TSM4 states, 'in accordance with long established planning policies permission will not normally be given for tourist accommodation in the Green Belt or in the countryside even if they are associated with existing recreational facilities such as golf courses or riding schools'.

6.5

Development assessed under Policy R5 of the SOLP is also subject to several criteria, including Criterion ii), which states, 'the only new buildings that will normally be permitted (on a golf course) will be a club-house and a maintenance building and these must be limited in scale and in keeping with the locality in terms of siting, design and appearance'. Further guidance is contained at Paragraph 5.90 of the SOLP, which states, 'The District Council's planning policies generally do not allow the erection of new buildings in the countryside. Wherever possible existing buildings should be re-used to provide a club house and maintenance facilities. Where this is not possible the only buildings that will be permitted are a modest club house and maintenance building and these must be sensitively designed and sited so as to have a minimum impact on the landscape'. Paragraph 5.91 of the SOLP states that, 'proposals for other forms of development (on a golf course), such as hotels ... will be assessed against other policies in this plan. Policies G2, G4, GB2 and E8 will be particularly relevant in this context'.

6.6

Policy G2 seeks to protect the District from adverse development, whilst Policy G4 seeks to protect the District's countryside from inappropriate development in the countryside and on the edge of settlements. Indeed Policy G4 states that, 'the need to protect the countryside for its own sake is an important consideration when assessing proposals for development. Unless permitted by other policies in the plan, new built development in the countryside, in the open gaps between settlements and on the edge of settlements where the built up area would be extended will not normally be permitted, except for agriculture and forestry.'

6.7

In light of the above considerations it is clear that the principle of the proposed development is contrary to the aims of Policies TSM4, R5 and G4 of the SOLP. Furthermore, the proposal is contrary to the relevant policies contained within the OSP. Policy G5 states that, 'the countryside will be protected from harmful development'. Policy EN5 relates to tourism and culture and states that, 'tourism projects which are based on the conservation and enjoyment of the county's inherent qualities and heritage will be encouraged in appropriate locations'. Due to the relatively isolated countryside location of the application site, it is not considered to be an appropriate location. Further support for this view is contained under Policy TC2 of the OSP, which seeks to ensure that major new development is located on city or town centre sites. A countryside location, such as the application site, would be considered the least preferable location for such

development with regard to the sequential approach.
6.8

The policy objections to the proposal can also be sustained when considered against regional and national planning policy guidance. Policy RE11 of RPG9 gives encouragement to the promotion of tourism but states that such facilities should be accessible by sustainable modes of transport.
6.9

One of the key principles of PPS7 states, 'new building development in the open countryside away from existing settlements, or outside areas allocated for development in development plans, should be strictly controlled; the Government's overall aim is to protect the countryside for the sake of its intrinsic character and beauty, the diversity of its landscapes, heritage and wildlife, the wealth of its natural resources and so it may be enjoyed by all.' (Paragraph 1 (iv)). This key aim is reflected by Policy G4 of the SOLP outlined above.
6.10

PPS7 also provides guidance on tourist accommodation in rural areas, and the opening paragraph of this section of the guidance states, 'The Government expects most tourist accommodation requiring new buildings to be located in, or adjacent to, existing towns and villages.' Paragraph 38 of the guidance gives some encouragement to proposals relating to the extension of existing tourist accommodation and the conversion of existing rural buildings to provide tourist accommodation, however, this encouragement is not extended to the provision of
6.11 new tourist accommodation.

In light of the above, it is considered that the principle of the proposed development is contrary to both the SOLP and the thrust of Central Government guidance, particularly with regard to PPS7. Now that the Club has failed in its bid to host the Solheim Cup, the driving force behind the proposed development is to secure the long term future of the club by enabling the improvement and expansion of existing facilities. It is argued that this in turn would attract major tournaments to The Oxfordshire. In expressing further justification for the development, the applicants assert that the new hotel would enhance the quality of the local tourism product in
6.12 the area and would result in economic benefits to the area as a whole.

An examination of the benefits of the proposal to the local tourist industry has also been submitted with the application. This report asserts that the need to raise the quality of the existing tourism product is a key issue. The report further argues that the economic benefits arising from tourism is proportionate to the quality of the product. A further key issue identified by the report is the need to encourage visitors to stay in the area as staying visitors account for a significantly greater

proportion of tourism expenditure than day trippers.
6.13

In support of the proposal, the report states that the hotel would encourage an increase in staying visitors to the area, and would spread the reach of tourism from the traditional tourist destinations such as Oxford. The report also outlines the importance that hosting a major sports event, such as the Solheim Cup, can have on the area both in terms of the measurable economic benefits and in terms of raising the profile of the area. It is argued that the benefits of an additional high quality hotel in the area could be provided without detriment to the viability of existing hotels. In this regard interviews were carried out with the operators of existing hotels in the area. The result of these interviews is that, on the whole, there was little concern with the proposal as it was recognised that the proposed hotel would be aimed at different markets such as the corporate and golf markets.

6.14

Although it is stated that the hotel would bring economic benefits to the wider area, no information has been submitted to indicate the type and scale of benefits. It is acknowledged that it is difficult to quantify the likely benefits arising from the hotel, however, the supporting documentation is very thin in terms of detailing the benefits. Clearly an important distinction needs to be made between the economic benefits to the golf club and the economic benefits to the wider area in terms of justification for the proposal. In addition, there is very little information provided to explore the impact of the development on existing hotel businesses in the area. The report states that the majority of hotels interviewed reacted positively to the proposed hotel, however, the report does not identify which local hotels were interviewed and does not provide any detailed comments from the existing hotels.

6.15

A new hotel in the area would undoubtedly increase the local accommodation stock, and could bring economic benefits to the area. However, there is a very strong objection to the principle of the development in planning policy terms and a very strong and precise case for the hotel in terms of its benefits to the wider area would need to be put forward as a material consideration of sufficient weight to challenge the strong presumption against the development.

6.16

In the additional comments provided by the applicant, attention has been drawn to further guidance contained in PPS7, PPG17 and guidance published in May 2006 by the Department of Communities and Local Government entitled, 'Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism'. With respect to this Central Government planning policy guidance, Paragraph 36 of PPS7 is made reference to. This Paragraph states, 'Wherever possible, tourist and visitor facilities should be housed in existing or replacement buildings, particularly where they are located outside existing settlements. Facilities requiring new buildings in the countryside may be justified where the required facilities are needed in conjunction with a particular countryside

attraction; they meet the criteria in paragraph 35(ii); and there are no suitable existing buildings or developed sites available for re-use.'

6.17

Paragraph 35(ii) encourages LPAs to allow, 'essential facilities for tourist visitors ... vital for the development of the tourism industry in rural areas,' by allowing, 'appropriate facilities needed to enhance visitors' enjoyment, and/or improve the financial viability, of a particular countryside feature or attraction, providing they will not detract from the attractiveness or importance of the feature, or the surrounding countryside.' In this case it is not considered that the proposed hotel is vital for the development of the local tourist industry and furthermore, it is considered that the proposal would detract from the surrounding countryside.

6.18

PPG17 relates to open space, sport and recreation. Whilst the guidance encourages such development, it seeks to ensure that development is located in sustainable locations. Furthermore, the guidance relates to sports and recreational facilities and whilst the golf course falls in this use, one of the central tenets of the guidance is to promote social inclusion and community cohesion. The existing golf course is not a particularly affordable facility in the local area and it is considered very unlikely that the proposed hotel would comply with the general aims of

6.19 PPG17.

The applicant has drawn attention to Chapter 5 of the 'Good Practice Guide for Planning for Tourism'. This chapter relates to 'Key Planning Considerations for Tourism Developments'. The introduction to this chapter states that the following planning considerations will apply to most developments:

- 'where the development is located – developments need to be located where they are accessible to visitors (and for many, but not all developments, by means other than the private car).' This development is not easily accessible by means other than the private car.

6.20 - 'how they are designed', and

- 'how they fit into their surroundings... they should be designed to have a positive impact upon landscape'. It is not considered that this would be the case with regard to consideration of this issue later in this report.

The applicant has drawn attention to Paragraph 5.4 of this guidance, which states, 'There will be some occasions where development for tourism is sought at a location where it will be difficult to meet the objective of access by sustainable

modes of transport. The choice of location may have been determined by a functional need, such as in the above example of a visitor centre. Developers and
6.21 planners may find that in such cases there will be limited opportunities to make the development accessible by sustainable modes of transport or to reduce the number or proportion of visits made by car. For small-scale schemes, the traffic generated is likely to be fairly limited and additional traffic movements are therefore unlikely to be a reason for refusal for otherwise suitable tourism developments.'

It is clear from all the policies and guidance available that the hotels and other tourist accommodation should be located in sustainable locations wherever possible and that there is a general presumption against such accommodation in unsustainable rural locations. In this regard Paragraph 1 of Annex A of the above guidance on tourism states, 'Tourism accommodation takes many different forms,
6.22 including hotels, guest houses and bed and breakfast premises, self-catering, touring and static caravans and camping, and caters for a variety of tastes and budgets. But all are capable of bringing economic benefits to the areas in which they are located. These benefits will need to be assessed alongside other issues such as suitability of the location in terms of its sustainability.'

It is accepted that hotel accommodation can bring economic benefits to the local area. However, in this case the extent of the economic benefits is not clear although it would seem apparent that the majority of the economic benefits would be retained by the golf club as the hotel accommodation would be provided primarily to complement its conference and golfing facilities. Indeed, the applicant has argued that the hotel would be sustainable as it would be used primarily by visitors using the existing facilities at the golf club. If this is the case, most of the economic benefits would be retained by the club. If the hotel were to provide wider
6.23 economic benefits to the surrounding area, it would be expected that this would be through many of the guests visiting local tourist attractions and facilities, such as cinemas, restaurants and so on. In this case, the sustainability argument put forward by the applicant would be severely undermined.

Sustainability

One of the key elements running through national planning policy and the
6.24 development plan relates to the requirement for development to be sustainable in location and form. Indeed the policy position discussed above in relation to the principle of the development has largely been formed in the context of sustainability. Three main aspects of sustainability are relevant to this proposal. Firstly, the need to protect the countryside for its own sake, which is largely outlined above, secondly the design of the proposal in the context of the existing built form and the surrounding landscape, and thirdly the location of development in

as far as it is accessible to other modes of transport other than the private car.

6.25

Policy G3 is a core policy of the SOLP and relates to the locational strategy in relation to new development. The Policy seeks to ensure that new development is located close to services and facilities, and where it can be well served by public transport. Furthermore, the Policy states, 'development that would give rise to a significant increase in traffic generation in relatively inaccessible or isolated rural locations will not be permitted'.

6.26 Indeed guidance contained within PPG13: 'Transport' seeks to ensure that Transport Assessments are submitted with applications where development will have significant transport implications. Such an Assessment is required to, 'illustrate accessibility to the site by all modes and the likely modal split of journeys to and from the site. It should also give details of proposed measures to improve access by public transport, walking and cycling, to reduce the need for parking associated with the proposal and to mitigate transport impacts.' (Paragraph 23). A Transport Assessment has not been submitted with this application, which is perhaps surprising given the scale and location of the proposal.

6.27 The applicant has stated that the sustainability of the site in terms of its accessibility is unlikely to be a significant issue as the existing users of the golf club's facilities will have the opportunity to stay on site. Whilst it is acknowledged that the existing facilities would to some degree mitigate the sustainability concerns relating to the new hotel, it would not be possible to ensure that the guests staying at the hotel were restricted to the users of the existing facilities at the golf club. Furthermore, if the use of the hotel were restricted to the users of the existing facilities at the golf club, it would undermine the applicant's assertion that the proposal would have economic benefits to the wider area as there would be little trickling effect of these benefits from the golf club.

6.28

PPS1 outlines the key aspects to ensure the delivery of sustainable development. This includes the need to 'reduce the need to travel and encourage accessible public transport provision to secure more sustainable patterns of transport development. Planning should actively manage patterns of urban growth to make the fullest use of public transport and focus development in existing centres and near to major public transport interchanges.' (Paragraph vii) of the General Approach). It is not considered that there any considerations of sufficient weight to outweigh the consideration that the application proposal is not sustainable in the location proposed.

6.29

The Highway Authority and Oxfordshire County Council as Strategic Planning Authority have not specifically objected to the proposal (although strong objections were received in relation to the previous identical proposal). The main reason for the lack of objection to the current proposal is that the applicant has explained that the proposed hotel accommodation would be used largely by people already visiting the site for such events as conferences, weddings, and golf breaks. Therefore, it is argued that the hotel accommodation would negate the need for visitors to the site to travel to other off-site hotel accommodation.

6.30 In a letter dated 27th June 2007, which is **attached** at **Appendix C**, to Oxfordshire County Council, the applicant's agent states, 'the proposed hotel accommodation will cater principally for existing visitors who are already making trips to and from the site.' This may often be the case, but there is no guarantee that hotel guests will also be visiting the site anyway to use the existing facilities, and there is no guarantee that hotel guests will not travel throughout the local area to visit tourist attractions and other sites such as Oxford where it would be more sustainable to stay close to those sites. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that the existing facilities at the club for conferences and weddings, for example, will remain popular. Therefore, if there was a significant decline in weddings or conferences at the site, the proportion of hotel guests not using the existing facilities at the site is likely to rise. Overall it is not considered that the existing facilities at the club can be used to provide justification of sufficient weight for new hotel accommodation contrary to the development plan.

6.31 Sustainability issues are also relevant in terms of Policies TC2 of the OSP and TC7 of the SOLP as well as guidance contained in PPS6. These policies relate to the maintenance and enhancement of town centres, and in this regard hotels are generally to be considered as town centre uses. Policy TC7 of the SOLP states that proposals for shops and other key town centre uses that attract many people will not be permitted in locations outside the town centre boundaries. The reason for this policy in relation to proposals for hotels can be summed up by part of Paragraph 3 of Annex A of the 'Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism', which states, 'Local planning authorities and the tourist industry should therefore engage constructively to identify suitable locations in plans for hotel accommodation to meet identified current and future needs. This is particularly important for major hotels – for example those with business, conference and banqueting facilities, or large hotels catering for tourists – where the preference should be to identify town centre sites wherever possible, in line with national policies set out in PPS6. Such sites are the most sustainable in planning terms, since they allow greater access by public transport, contribute to urban vitality and regeneration, and allow visitors to easily access other town centre facilities and attractions.

6.32

In relation to the sequential approach to town centre uses, the applicant would need to demonstrate that there is a lack of more centrally located sites suitable for the proposed development. Evidently in this case the applicant is seeking on site hotel provision at the golf course and off site hotel provision would not be suitable for the needs of the golf club. However, a need for the additional tourist accommodation has not been demonstrated in this location, and if there is a need for general additional tourist accommodation in the locality, locations within existing settlements should be explored first.

6.33 It is of interest that an appeal was recently dismissed on 3rd April 2006 in relation to a proposed 60 bedroom hotel at Banbury Golf Centre, Adderbury. The OSP was also relevant to this proposal. In his decision notice, the Inspector states, 'it is clear that the appeal site lies outside existing settlements and is poorly served by existing public transport facilities. The majority of trips would be by private car. To my mind these aspects of the proposal would conflict with sustainable development objectives'.

6.34

It is acknowledged that there are some important differences between the proposal at The Oxfordshire and the proposals at Banbury Golf Centre such as The Oxfordshire being a 'destination course' as asserted by the applicant, where, due to its prestige as a result of hosting professional golf tournaments, it is an attractive destination for golfing 'tourists'. The applicant considers that this status represents an exceptional circumstance due to the importance of consolidating and expanding the club's status as a destination for major golf tournaments and golf tourists. In this regard, the Planning Statement submitted in support of the application states, 'it (the proposed hotel) demonstrates the genuine intentions of Leaderboard to develop a golf hotel for Championship golf matches rather than a desire for a general hotel development. If a general hotel to serve the conference and function room capacity of the existing clubhouse was the driving reason for the application, considerably more bedrooms would have been applied for to reflect the 200 delegates or guests that can currently be accommodated within the building'.

6.35

6.36 The above statement appears to conflict with the general thrust of the justification for the hotel on sustainability grounds with regard to supplying hotel accommodation on-site so that conference and other function users do not need to travel to other off-site accommodation.

6.37 Whilst it is not disputed that a hotel at the site would increase the appeal of the course in terms of attracting major golf tournaments and golf tourism, it is not considered that this can outweigh the basic policy objection to the proposal as already outlined and as ratified by the Inspector in relation his appeal decision for a

hotel at Banbury Golf Centre.

6.38

The Design of the Development

The existing club house is a very substantial building in terms of its size and scale. It is also in an imposing position on elevated land within a relatively isolated location in the countryside with far reaching views across the surrounding area. The proposed development has been sited in the most logical part of the site being attached to the south west elevation of the existing building. This part of the building currently consists of the service yard area and is the least visually prominent part of the building.

6.39

Guidance contained in PPS1 as well as the relevant policies of the development plan emphasises the need for high quality, inclusive design. The club house sits in a prominent position and the hotel would be used and viewed by large numbers of people.

Due to the visual prominence of the site and the size and scale of the development it is considered that the design of the development should be outstanding. In this respect the proposal falls significantly short of this standard. Officers consider the design of the proposed development to be uninspiring and rather bland and one that would not serve to enhance the appearance of the built form on the site. The design and siting of the development are visually detached from the existing building and as such they would not integrate well with the existing built form. In addition, the proposed development includes several substantial and prominent areas of blank brickwork, particularly to the south west elevation. These areas serve to emphasise the functional nature and substantial size, bulk and massing of the development.

The Design Statement submitted with the application does state that the development has been designed to comply with current Building Regulations. This is evidently a requirement of the development rather than a voluntary measure.

6.41 However, the Design Statement lists a number of energy efficiency measures, which may be incorporated into the development. These are the collecting of rainwater to maintain the golf course, and room controls to automatically control lights and other electrical equipment. The Design Statement also states that, 'the pros and cons of using renewable energy sources will be fully considered'. Given the scale and size of the development, along with its use, it is somewhat disappointing that there has been little apparent desire to design the development with a greater emphasis on energy efficiency and resource conservation. In this

regard Policy D8 seeks to ensure that all new development demonstrates 'high standards in the conservation and efficient use of energy, water, materials through its siting, landscaping, building design, use of materials, layout and orientation of buildings.

Overall it is not considered that the design of the development is acceptable in this visually prominent and rural location, particularly given the size and scale of the development and its functional and visual relationship with the existing built form.

6.43

The Impact of the Development on the Character and Appearance of the Surrounding Area

As already stated the application site lies in an isolated and elevated position where there are far reaching views over the surrounding countryside, particularly to the north and east. The siting of the building on the southern elevation of the existing club house is the least intrusive option in terms of the visual impact of the development on the surrounding countryside. This is due to the land immediately to the south and south west of the application site being flat and slightly above the level of the site of the proposed development.

Despite the lack of any significant long range views of the site from the south and south west, it is still considered that the proposed building would add substantially to the bulk and massing of the existing building, to the detriment of the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The new building would still be visible from far reaching views to the south east in particular as far as the Chilterns escarpment, which is approximately 8km to the south east of the site. As such the building would add significantly to the visual prominence of the development on the site.

The Council's Landscape Consultant acknowledges that the siting of the proposed development on the southern elevation of the existing building would mean that the proposal would be less prominent than if it were sited on the more exposed north elevation of the building. However, he is still concerned that the development would be visible from the surrounding landscape.

Many of the views of the development can be derived from the public rights of way running in close proximity to the site. The Landscape Consultant has identified two rights of way from which the development would be clearly visible. These are the

6.46 Oxfordshire Way (Tetsworth Footpath 34), which crosses the golf course to the east of the building, and Tetsworth Bridleway 31, which crosses to the south east of the site. Views from other nearby public rights of way would also be possible, particularly in respect of routes to the north and east of the site.

6.47 In his summary, the Landscape Consultant states, 'although wider, more distant views of the proposal are not extensive, the closer views from the definitive footpath system would have an appreciable impact. The sight of such a large existing clubhouse is unexpected in this countryside location. It is not a modest scale and resembles more a commercial HQ structure. The extension proposed would merely compound its mass'.

6.48 The site is in a visually sensitive location, and although the landscape of the site and surrounding area is not designated as an AONB, the predominant character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area derives from the attractive rural landscape surrounding the site. The existing clubhouse is a large and prominent structure within the local landscape, and the proposed development would consolidate the built form and increase its visual impact. The development would still visually intrude into the surrounding countryside to the detriment of the rural character and appearance of the surrounding area. As such the proposal would not comply with the relevant policies and Central Government Planning Policy guidance outlined above.

Other Material Considerations

There is a large car parking area to the south of the existing building, which would not be affected by the proposals. The Highway Authority considers that the current car parking provision on the site would be sufficient to accommodate the additional parking required in connection with the hotel.

Proposals for new development need to ensure that there is adequate provision for waste management and recycling facilities. In this regard it has been recommended by the Public Amenities Department that additional facilities for recycling and composting are provided as part of the development. This would include the provision of recycling bins in each of the bedrooms. Although these details have not been indicated on the submitted plans, a planning condition could be imposed to ensure that such facilities are provided.

The application site is located in an isolated position and is buffered from the neighbouring agricultural land by the golf course. As such it is not considered that the proposal would have a significant impact on the amenity of adjoining landowners.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 The application proposal does not accord with relevant development plan policies and planning policy guidance as there is a general presumption against new development in the countryside and there are no material considerations of sufficient weight to overcome the basic policy objections to the development. In addition, the proposal would not be sustainable in terms of its location and form and it would have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 **That planning permission be refused for the following reasons:**

1. **The application site is located in a prominent position in an attractive area of countryside away from any established settlements. The principle of the proposed development of a new 50 bedroom hotel in this isolated countryside location is contrary to Policy TSM4 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (SOLP), which only permits the construction of new hotels within the built up area of existing settlements. Furthermore the proposal is contrary to Policy R5 of the SOLP, which usually only allows for the construction of a club house and maintenance building in connection with golf courses. In addition the proposal is contrary to the general aims of Policy G4 of the SOLP, which seeks to protect the countryside for its own sake through a strong presumption against new development in the countryside. Therefore, the principle of the development is not acceptable with regard to Policies G4, TSM4, and R5 of the SOLP, and also guidance contained within Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas. There are no material considerations of sufficient weight to overcome the basic objections to the principle of the development.**
2. **The application site is in a remote location away from any established settlements and their associated services and facilities. It is unlikely that traffic movements to and from the site would be by any other means other than the private car. As such the site is not in a sustainable location and the scale and form of the proposed development would result in the increased reliance on the use of the private car. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies G3, and T1 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011, Policies G1, G2, T1, and E5 of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2016 and guidance contained within Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development,**

Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas and Planning Policy Guidance Note 13: Transport.

- 3. Hotels are key town centre uses and justification for siting a hotel outside of an existing town centre is required. Insufficient information has been submitted to demonstrate that there is an established need for a new hotel in this countryside location against sustainability objectives and objectives to maintain the vitality and viability of town centre areas. In the absence of such need, the proposal is contrary to Policies G3 and TC7 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011, Policy TC2 of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2016 and guidance contained within Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres.**
- 4. The application site lies outside of any defined settlement boundary and in an attractive area of open countryside. The proposal, due to its siting, size, design, scale, bulk and massing would represent a substantial and inappropriate extension to the existing building, which would consolidate the existing built form resulting in a significant increase in the visual impact of the development. This would be to the detriment of the attractive rural character and appearance of the surrounding area. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policies G2, G4, G6, C1 and D1 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011, Policies G2, G5 and EN1 of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2016 and guidance contained within the South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2000, Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development and Planning Policy Guidance Note 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas.**
- 5. The proposed development, due to its size, design, scale, bulk and massing, fails to integrate with and respect the design, character and appearance of the existing built form and the rural character and appearance of the surrounding area. As such the proposal is contrary to Policies G2, G4, G6, C1, and D1 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011, Policy G2 of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2016 and guidance contained within the South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2000 and Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development.**
- 6. The development fails to provide an appropriate scheme of works or on and off-site mitigation measures to accommodate the impact of the development on local infrastructure, services, or amenities. The proposal is therefore contrary to government advice, Policies D11, T1, T2, and T3 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011, and Policies G3**

and T8 of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2016.

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