

TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990
BICESTER HOTEL GOLF AND SPA LTD
PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT
BICESTER HOTEL GOLF AND SPA
CHESTERTON
OXFORDSHIRE
OX26 1TE

**Erection of extension to existing indoor activity hall
and formation of outdoor swimming lake**

DAVIS
PLANNING LTD

Chartered Town Planners

19 Woodlands Avenue | Wokingham | Berkshire | RG41 3HL

t – 01189 787972

e – mail@davis-planning.com

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This statement is submitted in support of a planning application for the following:

'Erection of extension to existing indoor activity hall and formation of outdoor swimming lake.'

1.2 Bicester Hotel Golf and Spa is a well established and successful leisure, hotel and recreational complex lying to the south west of Bicester town. The site has been a major success for the local area creating numerous employment opportunities for local people (full and part time), in both professional and manual areas. It caters for a wide variety of events including weddings and conferences although the main uses are predominantly recreational (i.e. golf, health & fitness and tennis). Its close proximity to a number of nationally important sporting and cultural locations such as Blenheim Palace, Oxford, the Cotswolds, Bicester Village and Silverstone, makes the site an extremely popular choice as a location to stay for tourists from the UK and abroad. The sporting facilities are also used by local people through membership of the golf and health club. Employment opportunities include green keeping staff, catering, bar staff, health and beauty, personal training and hotel staff.

1.3 The application is accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment produced by flooding and drainage consultants, Lanmor.

1.4 This application involves two principle elements which are to supplement existing sports facilities in a part of the site already used for these purposes.

- i) A single storey extension (92.31sq.m) to the front of existing indoor activity hall (built under planning ref. 14/01598/F) to accommodate a reception and viewing area;
- ii) Formation of an outdoor swimming lake (160m x 30m).

2 SITE HISTORY

2.1 Bicester Hotel Golf and Spa has been the subject of the following applications as set out below:

02/00182/F – Reapplication of a partially implemented permission CHS.344/90 to show the redesigned extension to the existing golf clubhouse including fitness gym, swimming pool, health and beauty suite, 52 bedrooms and ancillary service yard. Approved 17.05.2002.

03/01050/F – Reapplication of partially implemented permission CHS.344/90 to show redesigned extension to existing golf clubhouse inc. fitness gym, swimming pool, health and beauty suite, 52 No. bedrooms. Ancillary service yard, alterations to existing golf course and landscaping. Amendments to 02/00182/F. Approved 25.07.2003.

04/01290/F – Construction of 8No. three bed and 12No. two bed holiday two storey lodges. Refused 21.01.2005.

04/01399/F – Two storey extension to gold club and erection of stable office and golf cart store building. Approved 17.09.2004.

05/01327/F – Construction of 3No. three bed and 5No. two bed golf lodges. Refused 16.09.2005.

05/01542/F – Non-compliance with Condition 7 of planning permission 03/01050/F to allow occupation of the overnight accommodation by other than golf club members, their guests or members of visiting golf societies. Refused 16.09.2005.

09/01357/F – Removal of condition 7 of 03/01050/F. The overnight accommodation shall be occupied only by members of Bicester Golf and Country Club, their guests and members of visiting golf societies. Approved 22.12.2009.

10/01169/F – Relocation of service entrance to Bicester Golf and Country Club, erection of 1 No. dwelling and retention of existing farmhouse (amendment to 03/00609/F). Approved 01.12.2010.

10/00416/DISC – Discharge of conditions 7&8 of 10/01169/F. Approved 07.03.2011.

11/00157/F – Removal of condition 2 of 09/01357/F. Within two months of the date of this permission, a scheme for the traffic calming of nearby access routes shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The agreed works shall be undertaken within a further six months in accordance with approved details. Approved 15.04.2011.

12/00054/DISC – Discharge of Condition 1 of 09/01357/F. Approved 27.04.2012.

12/01006/F – Erection of single storey extension and provision of new lake. Approved 30.10.2012.

MW.0063/13 (Cherwell DC ref.13/00752/CM) Formation of 3m high bund – Approved 13-09-2013

13/01102/F – Two storey extension to existing hotel with roof accommodation to form 51 new bedrooms. Approved 04.10.2013.

13/01492/F – Change of use for the formation of an assault course. Approved 29.11.2013.

14/01598/F – Erection of new building to house activity hall adjacent to assault course plus 6no. covered driving bay ranges. Approved 19.12.14.

15/01068/F – Erection of two storey extension to existing hotel to form 62 bedrooms (60 net increase). Approved 12.02.16.

3 RELEVANT POLICIES

3.1 Relevant planning policy falls within Government Guidance (National Planning Policy Framework), the adopted Local Plan 1996 (saved policies) and the adopted Local Plan 2011-2031.

i) **National Planning Policy Framework**

3.2 This guidance states at paragraph 14 that at the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development which should be seen as a 'golden thread' running through both plan-making and decision-taking. This includes at paragraph 7 the three main dimensions to planning which includes the economic, social and environmental roles.

3.3 Development proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved without delay. Where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of date, planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies of the Framework as a whole, or specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted. In paragraph 17, twelve 'core planning principles' are outlined, including, *'always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings'*. Paragraph 17 also states mixed use developments should be promoted and that there should be encouragement to multiple benefits from the use of land in urban and rural areas (my emphasis).

3.4 Paragraph 28 states that planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas to create jobs and prosperity. It states that plans should support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside. This should include supporting the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities

in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres.

- 3.5 Chapter 1 states that the Government is committed to securing economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity. It goes on to state *“planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth. Therefore significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system.”* Local planning authorities should plan ‘proactively’ and meet the development needs of business.
- 3.6 Paragraph 56 concerns good design. It states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people. Paragraph 58 states that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:
- Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
 - Establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit;
 - Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development;
 - Respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation;
 - Create safe and accessible environments;
 - Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.
- 3.7 Paragraph 60 confirms that planning policies and decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain

development forms or styles. It is, however, proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness.

- 3.8 Chapter 8 is concerned with promoting healthy communities. Paragraph 70 states as follows:

“To deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and serve the community needs, planning policies should:

- *Plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments.”*

ii) **Cherwell Local Plan 1996 (Saved policies)**

- 3.9 Relevant policies include: C7 and C9.

- 3.10 Policy C7 is concerned with landscape conservation. The policy states that **‘...development will not normally be permitted if it would cause demonstrable harm to the topography and character of the landscape’**.

- 3.11 Policy C9 deals with development beyond the planned limits of Banbury and Bicester. The policy states that development should not be of a **‘...type, size or scale that is incompatible with a rural location...’**

iii) **Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031**

- 3.12 Policy PSD1 states that the Council will take a proactive approach to reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The Council state that they will always work proactively with applicants to jointly find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.

- 3.13 Policy SLE 3 states that tourism growth will be supported as it has an important role on the local economy. The support is due in part due to the loss in revenue from

overnight stays. Currently tourism is worth over £300 million in Cherwell District and makes a significant contribution towards the development of a sustainable rural economy. The policy states as follows:

'The Council will support proposals for new or improved tourist facilities in sustainable locations, where they accord with other policies in the plan, to increase overnight stays and visitor numbers within the District'

- 3.14 Policy BSC10 encourages the provision of open space, sport and recreation provision through enhancing existing provision, improving access to existing facilities or securing new provision
- 3.15 Policy BSC12 states that the Council will encourage the provision of new facilities by the following means:
- Protecting and enhancing the quality of existing facilities;
 - Improving access to existing facilities;
 - ensuring that development proposals contribute towards the provision of new or improved facilities where the development would generate a need for sport, recreation and community facilities.
- 3.16 The Hotel, Golf and Sport complex is also defined more generally within the document as an '**outdoor sports facilities**' and a '**visitor attraction**'.

4 THE PROPOSAL

4.1 The application proposal comprises of two elements:

- A single storey extension to the front of the existing indoor activity hall (built under planning ref.14/01598/F) to accommodate a reception and viewing area;
- Formation of an outdoor swimming lake (160m x 30m).

4.2 The new covered activity hall is already implemented and provides for a total of 549m² of covered space on a single floor with ancillary changing facilities and a small assembly area. The activity centre is located next to the fitness zone and provides activities such as wall bars, ropes and weight exercises designed to complement the existing facilities. The extension to the activity hall is for a small lean-to to the front of the building to provide a small additional area to be used as reception and viewing area. The facility will clearly be incidental to the use of the activity hall. It provide a facility for visitors to view the activities taking place outdoors such as within the proposed swimming lake. The lean-to will be fully integrated into the design of the existing and approved structure and will be of a low scale and bulk. The proposal is considered to be in full compliance with Government policy (NPPF). This would not be a 'stand alone' facility but would add additional and improved recreational space to promote enjoyment of the current and proposed facilities.

4.3 The proposed new swimming lake will also be for the use of hotel guests and health club users. The swimming lake will be adjacent to the outdoor activity area (which will be reduced in size to accommodate the lake) where there is already a series of outdoor fitness equipment in place. It is expected that the outdoor equipment and lake will be largely used as one outdoor recreational facility and it is not expected to generate any additional activity above that already generated by the current outdoor activity area. The lake will have finished dimensions of 160m x 30m with an overall

depth of 3m. There will be no internal lining to the lake with water levels being maintained by the naturally high water table.

- 4.4 In conclusion, the two elements to the proposal are to improve the range of facilities available. Both elements to the proposal will promote health and well being in accordance with the Framework. They are related to existing facilities that have already been consented.

5 DESIGN AND ACCESS

- 5.1 Use: The application proposal for recreational facilities maintains the existing uses on the site. The facility would be used by existing Bicester HGS members and visitors to the hotel.
- 5.2 Amount: The extension to the activity centre will amount to an additional floor area of 92.31m². The swimming lake will be open air with a total coverage of 0.48Ha.
- 5.3 Layout: The proposal would not result in tree removal or a requirement for additional parking facilities. The extension is to the front of the indoor activity centre. The swimming lake is immediately adjacent and to the outdoor activity area.
- 5.4 Scale: The extension will have a subservient relationship to the hall with a lean-to roof.
- 5.5 Landscaping: The proposal would not result in tree removal. Space will be retained around the extension and the lake for new planting.
- 5.6 Appearance: The elevation provides details of appearance.
- 5.7 Access: Vehicular access to the site will be identical to that which currently exists for the main establishment (i.e. via the main entrance from Akeman Street).

6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The application should be supported for the following reasons:

- i) The application proposal for the extension to the activity hall and the swimming lake will complement the existing outdoor and indoor facilities and will be used by the same users comprising primarily of Bicester HGS members and hotel guests. In addition, it is also anticipated that they would be used by local groups seeking high levels of fitness. There is no other such facility in the local area.
- ii) The new facility is not considered to conflict with the NPPF. Economic development and facilities for sport and recreational development are strongly supported by the Framework and it is expected that the proposal could generate some limited additional employment opportunities. The proposal is not a 'main town centre use' and there would not be a requirement for a sequential test under the NPPF.
- iv) The proposal is designed and laid out to respect the existing site. The lake is sited on an area that was already approved as part of the outdoor activity area..
- v) The proposal will not generate significant additional vehicular movements as it will be used primarily by existing members.