

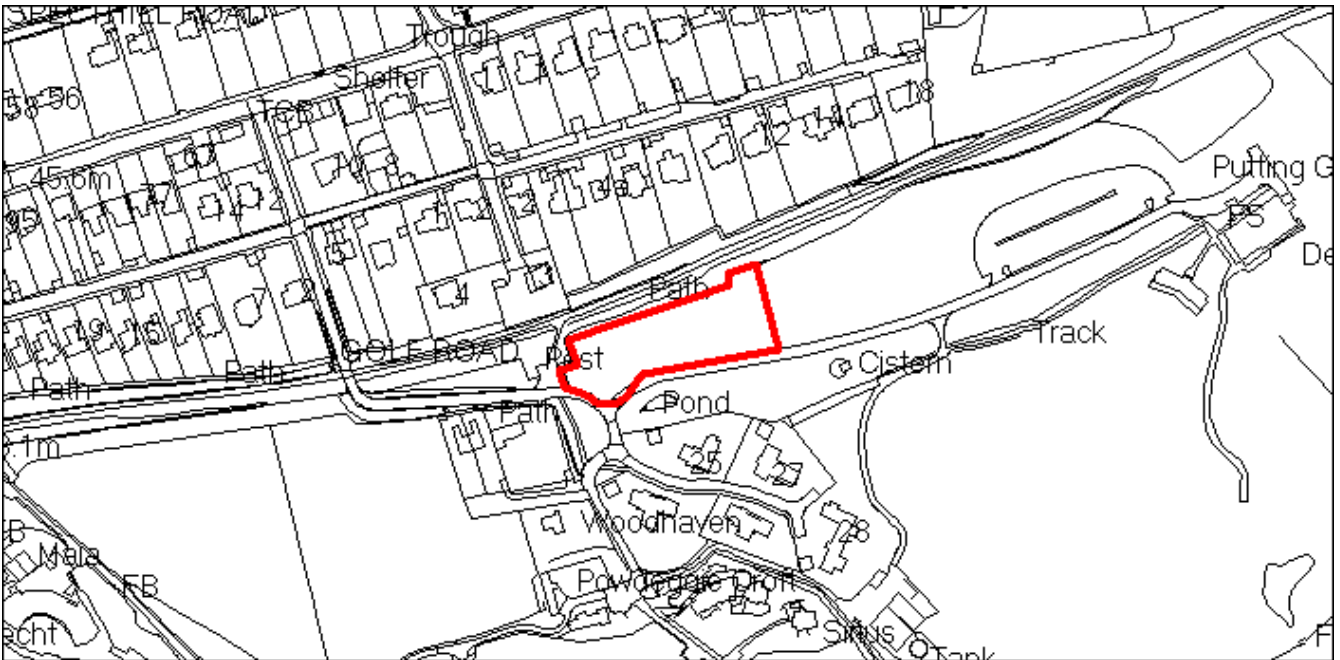
LAND AT DEESIDE GOLF CLUB, GOLF ROAD,  
BIELDSIDE

ERECTION OF RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT  
(CIRCA 3 HOUSES) AND ASSOCIATED  
WORKS ON PREVIOUSLY USED LAND

For: Deeside Golf Club

Application Type : Planning Permission in  
Principle  
Application Ref. : P120606  
Application Date: 25/04/2012  
Officer: Lucy Greene  
Ward : Lower Deeside (M Boulton/A Malone/M  
Malik)

Advert : Dev. Plan Departure  
Advertised on: 16/05/2012  
Committee Date: 18 July 2013  
Community Council : No comments



**RECOMMENDATION: Refuse**

## **DESCRIPTION**

The site comprises a grassed area of open space 0.2753 hectares in size. It averages approximately 27 - 33m in depth and approximately 90m in length. The site lies at the entrance to the Deeside Golf Course and was originally the first tee. The applicant states that the area is currently unused for golf and immediately to the east is a practise area, with the golf club car park just over 100m to the east. The golf course and club house lie further east and south east of the application site.

Bounding the south side of the site is the access road to the golf course car park, this is lined on both sides with young trees.

Further to the south, beyond an open grassed area and SUDS pond is an area containing 5 houses and residential scale development associated with Newton Dee Village.

Immediately to the north and west of the site are areas of woodland that bound the Old Deeside Railway walkway. Golf Road narrows as it bridges over the walkway. On the northern side of the railway is the predominantly residential area of Bielside.

The Old Deeside Railway walkway is designated as a Local Nature Conservation Site.

## **RELEVANT HISTORY**

On the site to the south, planning permission (ref. A6/0264) was granted in 2006 for the development of five houses; one of these was a steading conversion, two houses were replacement houses, and two were new houses. The report on the application states that these constitute a departure from the development plan, but they are justified on the basis that they were on the site of a redundant car park, that most of the trees would be retained, that the houses would be grouped with other buildings and that traffic calming would be installed and footpaths links would benefit the wider community.

This permission has been implemented and the houses are occupied.

## **PROPOSAL**

The application seeks planning permission in principle for residential development on the site. An indicative layout has been submitted with the application. This shows 3no. detached 5 bedroom houses, each with a driveway directly off the golf club access road, frontages facing south and rear gardens to the north side of the houses.

The many larger trees along the railway walkway reach around 20m in height, no tree survey has been submitted with the application.

## **Supporting Documents**

All drawings and the supporting documents listed below relating to this

application can be viewed on the Council's website at -  
<http://planning.aberdeencity.gov.uk/PlanningDetail.asp?120606>

On accepting the disclaimer enter the application reference quoted on the first page of this report.

Planning Support Statement on behalf of Deeside Golf Club:

This describes the site and the proposal, contains aerial photograph of the site; states that the size of houses would reflect those in the area; the statement contains an assessment of the proposal in terms of policy in the Scottish Planning Policy, Structure Plan and Aberdeen Local Development Plan; describes the planning permission granted for the houses to the south and the comments of the Reporter in the report on unresolved objections to the Aberdeen Local Development Plan. The statement concludes that the proposed development is acceptable as the site does not contribute to the objectives of the green belt and greenspace network; it would fit well with surrounding dwelling houses and landscape; and would help secure the long term future of the Golf Club, enhancing its recreational use and reputation. The statement explains that proceeds from the development would be used to provide on-course toilet facilities, a buggy and trolley store and landscaping and environmental improvements. It is also proposed that some funding would go towards the footpath improvements around the golf course, including an improved crossing over the burn that runs through the golf course on its way to the River Dee. The golf club is also a Community Amateur Sports Club and is a valuable resource for the local community.

Letter from Halliday Fraser Munro dated 4 April 2013:

This notes the applicant's acceptance of conditions relating to visibility splays and submission of a drainage assessment and improvements to access. It is noted that the applicant would be happy to provide a tree survey as part of a condition; the only trees affected would be those along the access road.

The letter also makes comment on the impact on the Deeside line footpath; that bats would not be impacted; and, that the proposed houses would be no more than one and half storeys and would not affect views or daylighting to existing houses.

### **REASON FOR REFERRAL TO SUB-COMMITTEE**

The application has been referred to the Sub-committee because there have been 13 letters of objection. Accordingly, the application falls outwith the scope of the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

### **CONSULTATIONS**

**Roads Project Team** – Satisfied that sufficient parking could be provided; would request conditions relating to visibility splays and SUDS; notes that there is no segregated footway and considers that this arrangement presents a road safety concern. It is stated that no contribution would be sought to the Strategic Transport Fund as the development falls below the threshold.

**Environmental Health** – no comments

**Enterprise, Planning & Infrastructure (Flooding)** - no comments

**Community Council** – no comments

## **REPRESENTATIONS**

13 number of letters of objection have been received. The objections raised relate to the following matters –

- The site is on land zoned, in the local plan, as greenbelt and green space network;
- There is no residential development immediately to the south of the railway line in this location and if approved, this could set a precedent;
- The applicant claims that this is enabling development, however no economic justification has been made;
- Access road is very narrow, with no footpaths and increasing the traffic would make it more dangerous;
- The site is located outwith the acceptable distance from public transport and as such would encourage the use of the private car;
- The site is small, meaning that the large houses would be very close to the well used Old Deeside Railway line. This is area of natural beauty with wildlife including bats and erection of residential buildings would negatively impact on the current amenity and destroy the sense of place; The trees are worthy of protection by Tree Protection Order.
- The size of site means that the houses would have very small rear gardens
- The restricted space to the front of houses means that residents would have to reverse either into, or out of, driveways;
- There is no requirement for additional houses in the area, indeed the local school is full to capacity;
- Development would change the character of the area at the entrance to the Deeside Golf Club;
- Other development on former Golf Club land should not be a precedent
- 11 no.trees along the edge of the access road would need to be removed;
- The site has a function in terms of recreation, it is part of the short game practise area. One of the bunkers in the practise area is only 10m from the edge of the development; stray golf balls would be a safety issue;
- Since the new golf club was built there has been a huge increase in play, with the result that the car park is too small. At times of tournaments and every Saturday, the access road is lined with parked cars sometimes reaching past where the development is proposed. The car park needs to be extended and practise area moved up to the development site;
- Drainage issues on Golfview Road which cause problems for the residents, including flooding of gardens with water and sewage - infrastructure cannot cope;
- Views and daylight of residents on Golfview Road would be destroyed;
- Although the application states the land has been previously used, it has never had buildings on it, is currently part of the golf course and is an important buffer area, enhancing the beauty of the neighbourhood;

## **PLANNING POLICY**

### **National Policy and Guidance**

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) states in its core principles, that the system

should be genuinely plan-led. SPP describes the function and purpose of the greenbelt. Paragraph 163 considers proposals not normally consistent with green belt policy and the circumstances in which these may still be acceptable. The reasons cited relate to national priorities and meeting established need where no other site is available. This paragraph also states that the cumulative erosion of the green belt's integrity through the granting of individual permissions should be avoided.

The Transport section, (in paragraph 165) states that the planning system should support a pattern of development that reduces the need to travel and facilitates travel by public transport.

### **Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan**

In relation to Accessibility, the structure plan's objective is to ensure that all new development contributes towards reducing the need to travel and encouraging people to walk, cycle or use public transport.

### **Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2012 (LDP)**

#### **Policy NE2 - Green Belt:**

No development to be permitted other than in connection with certain purposes deemed to be essential, such as agriculture, woodland forestry. There are various exceptions to this, none are relevant in this instance.

#### **Policy NE1 - Green Space Network:**

Protection should be given to the wildlife, access, recreation and landscape value of the network. Proposals that would destroy or erode the character or function of the network will not be permitted.

#### **Policy NE5 - Trees and Woodlands:**

Presumption against development that leads to loss of established trees.

#### **Policy D6 - Landscape**

Development will not be acceptable if: it significantly adversely affects landscape character and sense of place; obstructs important views from publicly accessible vantage points such as pathways; disturbance to important recreation, wildlife or woodland resources or links between them; sprawling onto important / necessary green spaces or buffers between places or communities with individual identities. Development should avoid significant adverse impact on landscape elements.

#### **Policy D3 – Sustainable and Active Travel:**

New development to be designed to minimise travel by private car.

#### **Policy D1 – Architecture and Placemaking**

#### **Policy D2 – Design and Amenity**

### **Other Relevant Material Considerations**

#### **Supplementary Guidance: Transport and Accessibility**

The ability to access key services and facilities directly affects quality of life and is a major contributor to social inclusion. New and existing communities should be able to access services, facilities and jobs by walking, cycling and public transport.

Trip sources within 800m should be accessible via attractive pedestrian links.

Public transport should be available within 400m.

### **EVALUATION**

Sections 25 and 37(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as

amended) require that where, in making any determination under the planning acts, regard is to be had to the provisions of the development plan and that determination shall be made in accordance with the plan, so far as material to the application, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

### **Green Belt**

The proposal does not comply with green belt policy in either the SPP or the LDP, as it does not fall within any of the categories of development described as exceptions to the presumption against development.

### **Green Space Network**

The proposal would not result in the breaking of linkages in the green space network. Access and links for wildlife are not dependent on this particular area of grass. In terms of the green space network, the impact of the proposed development would be the resultant increased presence of development close to the wooded areas around the Deeside walkway and the considerable narrowing of the green wedge that currently exists between Bielside and the houses on the site of the old club house and Newton Dee Village. The quality of the landscape and recreational value of the green space network in this location would be eroded.

In terms of the landscape and function of the green belt, the existing separation between the settlement and existing houses in the green belt, would effectively be lost as a result of this development. It is considered contrary to the LDP in respect of policies NE1 and NE2, Green Space Network and Green Belt respectively.

### **Landscape impact**

The proposed development would be relatively close to the Deeside walkway and on the south side, where there is no development along this stretch of the walkway. Outside the summer months, when trees are not in leaf, the houses would be visible from the walkway. Although there would be houses in the more distant view at present, the proposed development would result in a greater impact on views from this well used recreational footpath. It is considered that the proposal would impact adversely on the character of the walkway and there are tensions with Policy D6 – Landscape, although probably not sufficient on its own to justify refusal.

### **Traffic and Transport**

The LDP, Structure Plan and SPP all encourage development to take place within sustainable locations where public transport, walking and cycling are viable modes of transport. Although the distance to walk to North Deeside Road is not unreasonable (less than 400m), the nature of the route, which is convoluted and involves stretches of road with no footway, including the bridge over the railway, would discourage people from walking and encourage them to drive. The route would be likely to feel unsafe especially to those walking with children, or anyone less mobile. The Roads Project Team have expressed concern about the road safety issues in relation to the lack of footways. There are no works envisaged that could easily resolve the issue of the lack of footway.

The proposal would not comply with the SPP, structure plan, LDP Policy D3 – Sustainable and Active Travel or the Transport and Accessibility Supplementary Guidance, as approving development in this location would act contrary to the aim minimising travel by private car.

### **Drainage**

Site drainage is an issue that could be dealt with adequately by appropriate engineering and Sustainable Urban Drainage. These matters could be conditioned.

### **Amenity and views**

In terms of residential amenity, the proposed development would be sufficiently distant from existing properties that there would be no adverse impact in terms of daylighting. The fact that the development would be visible in views from private properties is not a material planning consideration.

### **Enabling development**

The planning statement explains that the golf club would use funds generated by the development to improve facilities with on-course toilets, trolley store and footpaths within the golf course. This is not considered sufficient justification for contravening green belt policy.

### **Trees and Wildlife**

Although there has been no tree survey submitted, the trees to the north of the site are not part of the application site. It is considered that some form of residential development could take place without compromising trees adjacent to the walkway. These would also be to the north of the properties and would not impact on sunlight. The trees along the access road are relatively young and small and it is considered that replacement planting could adequately mitigate for any loss.

Wildlife links have been dealt with above. It is acknowledged that bats would be likely to use the trees around the walkway for foraging, roosting and commuting, however, these would be unaffected by the proposals.

### **Design**

Policies D1 and D2 relate to the design of development in relation to its context and design and layout of residential development so as to provide for the amenity of residents. There would be no reason to suspect that with the attachment of adequate conditions, the requirements of these policies could not be met.

### **Reporter's Report on the Local Development Plan**

The conclusion of this report into unresolved objections to the LDP was that the site remains within the green belt. The proposal is clearly contrary to green belt policy. The site does not constitute a previously developed site that might be acceptable as an exception to the policy, with high quality design, as a development within the green belt. The particular nature of the site and its contribution to the green belt have been outlined above. The Reporter's report in itself holds little weight in terms of a material planning consideration. It should be

noted that SPP states as one of its core principles, that the planning system should be plan-led. In this instance, there is no justification for determining other than in accordance with the development plan.

### **Other issues raised by representations**

Most of the matters raised by objectors have been dealt with above.

The application site area would not appear to function in association with the golf course. If there were an issue with the adjacent practice area, this could be solved by the erection of fences, or other measures, similarly if the car park needs to be extended, there is sufficient space to do so. Neither issue would be sufficient to warrant refusal of the application.

If Members resolve to approve the application, this should be withheld pending consultation with the Developer Obligations Team, for advice as to whether developer contributions would be relevant; approval should be subject to conditions including relating to the submission of further applications for Matters Specified in Conditions. The conditions should include restricting the houses to three in number and one and a half storeys in height; and, requiring tree survey, details of the design and massing of the houses, their siting, including levels, materials, drainage, landscaping and visibility splays and access improvements.

### **RECOMMENDATION: Refuse**

#### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

That the site lies within the green belt where there is a general presumption against development, it does not fall within any of the categories of exceptions in either the Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2012 (LDP), or those mentioned in the Scottish Planning Policy (SPP). The proposal is contrary to Policy NE2 Green Belt and its approval would seriously erode the function of the green belt in this localised area.

The presence of development in this location would have an adverse landscape impact within the locality, impacting upon views from the well used Old Deeside Railway walkway. The tensions with both Policy NE1 – Green Space Network and Policy D6 – Landscape add to the reasons for the proposal being considered unacceptable.

The proposal would not contribute towards the aim of all new development encouraging walking, cycling, and use of public transport rather than the private car, due to the difficulties of access along a narrow road with no footways. The proposal is therefore considered contrary to Policy D3 – Sustainable and Active Travel, the Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Structure Plan objective in terms of Accessibility, the SPP on Transport and the Supplementary Guidance: Transport and Accessibility

**Dr Margaret Bochel**

Head of Planning and Sustainable Development.