

No.2	APPLICATION NO.	2018/1164/FUL
	LOCATION	Beacon Park Golf Centre Beacon Lane Dalton Wigan Lancashire WN8 7RU
	PROPOSAL	Remodeling of driving range at Beacon Park Golf Centre to create a Foot Golf course, remodeling of 1st hole green, 2nd hole tees, creation of mounding and re-profiling of ground adjacent to 1st fairway, remodeling of ground between 1st and 18th holes and associated landscaping.
	APPLICANT	SERCO Leisure Operating Limited
	WARD	Tanhouse
	PARISH	Unparished - Skelmersdale
	TARGET DATE	15th February 2019

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The application seeks approval of works to remove stockpiled fill from the former golf driving range at Beacon Park Golf Centre to form a 'foot-golf' course on the site; to retrospectively regularise earthworks carried out to form a linear series of landscape mounds on the southern fringe of the 18-hole course; and, seek minor amendments of previously approved enhancements to the southern part of the 18-hole course including land level increases. The existing and proposed works are considered acceptable in principle and detail in that they provide enhancements to the facilities to encourage outdoor sport and recreation whilst preserving the Green Belt and landscape qualities. No adverse impacts on nearby land uses or biodiversity interests in the locality are anticipated. The development is considered to be in accordance with the relevant parts of the National Planning Policy Framework and the West Lancashire Local Plan (2012-2027) Development Plan Document.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That conditional planning permission be **GRANTED**.

3.0 THE SITE

- 3.1 Beacon Park Golf Club is located between Beacon Lane to the east and Stannanought Road to the west. Immediately to the south of the golf course is Beacon Country Park. The site is located within the Green Belt and is also designated as a recreation facility and as a nature conservation site.
- 3.2 Although the application shows the full extent of the golf course and associated facilities the areas of proposed works are limited to the former driving range and land at the southern extent of the 18-hole course below the line of Footpath 106 – primarily to either side of Hole 1 fairway, the Hole 1 green area, Hole 2 tee area and landscaping between Holes 10 and 18.

4.0 THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 This application effectively seeks amendments to planning permission 2016/0040/FUL for variations in levels on the former driving range area and its alternative use as a foot-golf course; revised proposals in the areas of previously consented works on the southern part of the 18-hole golf course in terms of mounding forms and heights; and, the formation of a linear mound to the southern boundary of the course.

- 4.2 The proposals insofar as they relate to the former driving range will reduce current levels between about – 1.0 m and + 4.2 m (the majority of the area will see an average removal of about 3 metres depth of material removed) to provide a relatively level playing area for foot-golf (aside from localised mound profiling for visual interest and course enhancement). The western side of the land will see a reduced incline from the current situation with a linear mound and low fencing to limit ball run-off. Gated access to the lower part of the western slope will be provided and facilitated by 4 runs of timber steps. The site will be laid out to provide a nine hole course with tees, greens and landscaping.
- 4.3 In terms of the (existing) new mounding element to the southern side of the first fairway, this presents as a profiled linear mound generally of about 15 metres base width with variations in height substantially between 1.0 to 1.5 metres with some larger elements. The mound has been grassed over.
- 4.4 The works to the first green will see a reduction in its final level of about 1 metre in comparison with the approved scheme, however the second-hole tees will be lifted about a metre above their approved level (the slope between the two will therefore be reduced). The green formation will include an improved standard of surface and drainage. The approach fairway will be regraded from about two-thirds along its length to the new green level. In addition, two further areas of consented mounding will see slight variations in their form, although the overall heights of the mounding are very similar.

5.0 PREVIOUS RELEVANT DECISIONS

- 5.1 2018/1158/FUL PENDING Variation of Condition No. 1 of planning permission 2016/0040/FUL to vary the location, site and cross section plans submitted with the original application to regularise the as built land levels, landscaping and development layout of the nine hole short course. Replacement of plan reference 1115.11 received by the Local Planning Authority on 13th July 2011 with plan references 1115.11 Rev B and 1115.21. Replacement of plan reference 1115.15 received by the Local Planning Authority on 13th July 2011 with plan reference 1115.X6 cross sections. Approval of new plan reference 1115.27 Par 3 Landscaping. All other plans to remain as per the decision notice.
- 5.2 2016/0040/FUL GRANTED (22.02.2016) Variation of Condition No.7 imposed on planning permission 2011/0787/FUL to read: 'The development shall take place in accordance with the Coal Mining Risk Assessment Addendum Report produced by WSP dated November 2015'.
- 5.3 2013/1382/CON REFUSED (27.02.2014) Approval of details reserved by condition no. 7 on planning permission 2011/0787/FUL relating to a coal mining risk assessment.
- 5.4 2011/0787/FUL GRANTED (12.12.2011) Partial remodelling of existing golf course and driving range and creation of new nine hole short course.

Enforcement (former golf driving range)

- 5.5 E/2015/0223/BCN Breach of planning condition no 1 imposed on planning permission 2016/0040/FUL (Depositing of waste material.)

6.0 OBSERVATIONS OF CONSULTEES

- 6.1 Environment Agency (22.11.18) – no objections (outside remit); advisory requested.
- 6.2 Natural England (03.12.18) – no comments

6.3 The Coal Authority (10.12.18) – no objections subject to imposition of a planning condition to implement the proposed precautionary investigations and works to address any risk arising from the former Daltons Shaft.

7.0 OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

7.1 None received.

8.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

8.1 The following information is submitted in support of the application:

Flood Risk Assessment
Arboricultural Survey
Biodiversity survey and report
Landscaping details
Planning Statement
Design and Access Statement
Coal Mining Risk Assessment
Landscape and Visual Assessment
Letter of Support from Head Greenkeeper

9.0 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

9.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG); the West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027 DPD (WLLP); and, the Lancashire Site Allocation and Development Management Policies Local Plan provide the policy framework against which the development proposals will be assessed. The site is allocated as within the Green Belt, is a Nature Conservation Site, area of Landscape History Importance of county significance, an established countryside recreation site and a Mineral Safeguarding Area in the WLLP. The following policies are relevant in the determination of this planning application:

9.2 National Planning Policy Framework

Achieving well-designed places
Protecting Green Belt land
Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

9.3 West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027 DPD

GN1 – Settlement Boundaries
GN3 – Criteria for Sustainable Development
EN2 – Preserving and Enhancing West Lancashire's Natural Environment
EN3 – Provision of Green Infrastructure and Open Recreation Spaces

9.4 Supplementary Planning Document – Design Guide (Jan 2008)
Supplementary Planning Guidance – Natural Areas and Areas of Landscape History Importance (updated Aug 2007)

9.5 **Lancashire Site Allocation and Development Management Policies Local Plan**
Policy M2 Minerals Safeguarding

10.0 OBSERVATIONS OF DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION

Background

- 10.1 Works commenced on the Beacon Park site following the initial grant of planning permission for remodelling of parts of the golf course and adjacent land, including the importation of significant amounts of inert material. In addition to works to form a 9-hole short course (see previous agenda item), stockpiling took place on the former driving range site. Works subsequently ceased on site without the works to the 18-hole course being completed. Due to local landscape and visual amenity impacts the retained stockpiled area was subsequently made subject of a Breach of Condition Notice (BCN) requiring the land to be levelled in accordance with the terms of the 2016 permission. The proposals submitted here are revisions to the consented scheme to seek to address the identified planning harm arising from the stockpile subject of the BCN and amendment of the profiling levels on the southern part of the course to achieve the originally anticipated improvements to this part of the course in design and drainage management terms.

Principle of Development

- 10.2 The extant 2016 permission establishes the acceptability of the general principle of development on the site in terms of Green Belt and enhancement of the existing recreational facilities. In Green Belt terms the works constitute engineering operations that are acceptable in principle if they protect the openness of the Green Belt and avoid conflict with the purposes of including land within it. As with the initial assessment, the retention of additional material on the sub-sites and alternative mounding levels will not conflict with either test – ultimately appearing as part of the managed and landscaped facilities. The variations on the golf course will present as common golf course features and be finished with landscaping to assimilate it into its landscape setting.
- 10.3 The introduction of supporting infrastructure in terms of stepped access, short path lengths and new fencing will give rise to some loss of openness, as will drainage works to a lesser extent. In the setting of the recreational provision these will not conflict with the reasons for including land in the Green Belt. The limited harm to the openness must be considered in the context of the general support for improved access and encouragement for opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation (NPPF para 141) and Policy EN3 in the WLLP. Given the limited areas of hard landscaping elements and managed countryside park/golf course setting I consider the proposals are acceptable in principle in the Green Belt.

Design and Appearance

- 10.4 The proposed development lies within areas classified as a landscape of historic importance of county significance because of the characteristics of ancient countryside coupled with significant industrial heritage. Policy GN3 states that proposals for development should maintain or enhance the distinctive character and visual quality of any Landscape Character Areas in which they are located. The principle of mounding works in this locality is previously established and, as above, the revised works will assimilate into their context through landscaping. Views of the works areas are substantially limited to those from close quarters with the existing high level of tree screening ensuring that distant views will not be affected and therefore the general landscape character retained.
- 10.5 Although material is to be removed from the former driving range the levels on this area will be retained above that of the previous facility. However, the formation of tees and greens with intervening landscaping will add visual interest in comparison to the previous 'levelled field' appearance and therefore not appear out of context in this locality. The most artificial element of this area will be the western slope, however, views are substantially limited due to established tree screening on three sides and therefore only visible from on

the site itself. Given the above, I am satisfied the development accords with Policy GN3 in the WLLP.

Ecology and Trees

- 10.6 The ecology assessment concludes that the recently disrupted and managed areas of the driving range and golf course have little value in biodiversity terms. Some isolated individual trees and a stand of young elder to the north of the first green will be removed (as per the previous permission) but, due to their young age, exposure and isolation in a heavily-managed area of the golf course they are not considered suitable features for roosting bats or of significant amenity value from outside the site. Mature established trees are to be retained. Proposed landscaping to the foot-golf area will offset any tree removal losses and improve visual amenity. The presence of an invasive plant species in the south-western part of the site close to the proposed works may require management to avoid conflict with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended); a condition requiring suitable management will be imposed to this end. In terms of ecology and trees the requirements of Policies EN2 and GN3 are considered to be met.

Highways Implications

- 10.7 The proposed re-working of the identified areas does not require the importation of further subsoil to form the basis of the works – in the main this will be achieved by removing fill from the stockpiled volume on the former driving range. Some importation of top soil will be required during the final stages of the works to support final dressing and establishment of vegetation on the new green and fairway, estimated at 400 large loads. Previous works were facilitated by the creation of a new temporary access from Stannanought Road to the west where up to some 23,400 estimated deliveries were anticipated. This route was agreed to avoid the sensitive locations and width restrictions at either end of Beacon Lane/Mill Lane. It is currently proposed to access the site from Beacon Lane. The views of the highway authority are awaited at the time of writing and therefore routing of vehicles will be reserved to planning condition. It is not anticipated that the proposals will adversely impact highway capacity in the locality and, given the limited number of anticipated loads, highway safety is unlikely to be prejudiced subject to avoidance of key times.

Flood Risk and Drainage

- 10.8 A Flood Risk Assessment accompanies the application and concludes that subject to suitable drainage measures to address any potential for higher surface water discharge from the site arising from the increased land levels, inclines and anticipated lower permeability of the imported material, the level of flood risk in the locality or elsewhere will not be elevated by the proposed development. As existing outlets for surface water are present on site final detail of holding swales and discharge flows will be reserved for planning conditions. Subject to no increases in surface water flow leaving the site the development will accord with the requirements of Policy GN3 in the WLLP.

Risk from Former Mine Workings

- 10.9 A former mine shaft known as Daltons Shaft is known to exist on the driving range site; a risk assessment has been carried out and subject to precautionary remedial works it is considered that any residual risk can be suitably managed through these measures. The Coal Authority has indicated that it considers the measures appropriate to deliver a safe form of development.

Other Matters

10.10 Notwithstanding that an extant permission is in place for significant works to the golf course, I am aware of concerns that the proposals may result in lengthy disruptions to course users with implications for competitive golf and handicaps. The proposed works will inevitably result in disruption during an interim halt to use of the first fairway, green and second tees to users as the works take place. The use of temporary tees and greens, and reconfiguration of some of the remaining holes will ensure that the Council of National Golf Unions standards will be met for course length and par thereby ensuring continuous eligibility to host competitions and maintain handicaps.

Summary

10.11 A significant proportion of the works are relatively small amendments to the previously approved schemes. The new linear string of mounds to the southern extent of the 18 hole course assimilate well and help define this limit of the course. The construction of the 9-hole foot golf course on the former driving range will provide a new facility aimed at introducing young and older users alike into a relatively new recreational activity whilst complimenting the existing facilities. The proposals are in general compliance with the WLLP and NPPF and therefore planning permission should be granted.

11.0 **RECOMMEDATION**

11.1 Planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

Conditions

1. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with details shown on the following plans:-
Plan references 1115.16, 1115.X2, 1115.X3, 1115.X5, 1115.15B, 1115.17, 1115.20, 1115.22, 1115.23, 1115.24, 1115.25 and 1115.26 received by the Local Planning Authority on 5 November 2018.
2. Within one month of the date of this permission details of the date of commencement and schedule for completion of the works shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval. The works shall take place in accordance with the agreed schedule unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.
3. Prior to the deposit of subsoil on any part of the site the existing topsoil in those areas shown on the approved plans shall be stripped and stored on site for redressing of the same area on completion of subsoil works. Any work to strip and/or move the topsoil shall only be carried out in dry conditions. Topsoil and subsoil shall be stripped, moved and stored separately and shall not be mixed together at any time.
No topsoil shall be removed from the site during or after the carrying out of the proposed development.
Any additional imported top soil to achieve the minimum stated 175 mm depth shall meet BS3882:2015 standard.
4. No soils or aggregates shall be imported from outside the site until full details of the number and type of vehicle movements and proposed routing of those vehicles has been submitted to and approved in writing with the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter traffic delivering to the site shall only use the agreed route.
5. The hard and soft landscaping areas shall be provided as an integral part of the development and completed within the first planting season on completion of the groundworks. Unless otherwise specified all trees and shrubs planted shall comply with BS. 3936 (Specification of Nursery Stock) and shall be planted in accordance with BS. 4428 (General Landscape Operations). All planting shall be maintained and dead or dying material shall be replaced for a period of seven years from the agreed date of planting.

6. Prior to first use of the development hereby approved full details of the calculations demonstrating pre-development surface run-off rates, proposed swales and mechanisms to restrict surface water flow from the site (including their maintenance) to a level not exceeding the pre-development greenfield rate shall be submitted to and approved in writing with the Local Planning Authority; the approved surface water management drainage scheme shall be implemented in full in accordance with the approved details prior to first use of the first green and foot-golf course and be retained in working order for the duration of the development.
7. The recommendations of WSP Coal Mining Risk Review report, received by the Local Planning Authority on 16 November 2018, shall be implemented in full as an integral part of the development.

Reasons

1. For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure compliance with the provisions of Policy GN3 in the adopted West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027 Development Plan Document.
2. To ensure the timely delivery of the works and address the planning harm arising from the retained stockpile on the former driving range.
3. In order to protect the soil asset of the site and comply with the requirements of Policies GN3 and EN2 in the West Lancashire Local Plan (2012-2027) Development Plan Document.
4. To safeguard the safety and interests of the users of the highway and local amenity and to ensure that the development complies with the provisions of Policy GN3 in the adopted West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027 Development Plan Document.
5. To assimilate the proposed development into its surroundings and to ensure that the development complies with the provisions of Policy EN2 in the adopted West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027 Development Plan Document.
6. To ensure that the site is properly drained in the interest of local amenity and that the development, therefore, complies with the provisions of Policies GN3 & IF3 in the adopted West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027 Development Plan Document.
7. In order to comply with the requirements of Policy GN3 in the West Lancashire Local Plan (2012-2027) Development Plan Document.

Reason for Approval

1. The Local Planning Authority has considered the proposed development in the context of the Development Plan including, in particular, the following Policy/Policies in the adopted West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027 Development Plan Document:

GN1 - Settlement Boundaries

GN3 - Criteria for Sustainable Development

EN2 - Preserving and Enhancing West Lancashire's Natural Environment

EN3 - Provision of Green Infrastructure and Open Recreation Spaces

together with Supplementary Planning Guidance and all relevant material considerations. The Local Planning Authority considers that the proposal complies with the relevant Policy criteria and is acceptable in the context of all relevant material considerations as set out in the Officer's Report. This report can be viewed or a copy provided on request to the Local Planning Authority.