

Parish: LEAVENHEATH

Location: Former Hostel Site, Plough Lane

Proposal: Erection of 15no. chalets and communal building. Alterations to existing vehicular access

Applicant: Boxford Suffolk Holding Ltd

Case Officer: Chris Tivey

Date for Determination: 15.04.08

This application is being reported to Development Committee at the request of a local Member. A panel of Members inspected the site on 12 March 2008.

SITE

1. The application site comprises 0.9 hectares of land formerly used as a Land Army Hostel Site during the Second World War. The site is roughly rectangular in shape and is currently accessed via Plough Lane which runs in an east to west direction from the A134 Colchester Road.
2. The site contains a number of dilapidated brick built buildings, which with the exception of the existing water tower would be demolished.
3. The site is bounded to its north, east and western sides by the Stoke-by-Nayland Golf Club and is sited centrally within it, when taking into account a proposed 9 hole golf course extension at the western end of the club.
4. As set out within the introduction to the Design and Access Statement submitted with the planning application, the Stoke-by-Nayland Club Ltd was opened in 1972 as a single golf course and was centred around the four irrigation lakes that Boxford (Suffolk) Farms had constructed between the late 1950s to the late 1960s. A second golf course was completed in 1979 and throughout the development of the Golf Club various additions have been made to the Golf Club complex. The further nine holes as referred to above are to be incorporated alongside the existing two courses and it is intended will give the Club a complete training course for its Sports Academy.
5. The site is on high ground and commands views in an easterly direction over the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

PROPOSAL

6. Planning permission is sought to erect 15no. chalets and a communal building on the hostel site and associated access works and landscaping.
7. The proposal would give rise to a total of 3,386m² of floorspace and would comprise timber framed and clad buildings of a contemporary style.
8. The application has been submitted with a wide range of plans in addition to a Contaminated Land Report, Lighting Report, a Transport Assessment and Travel Plan Considerations Report, an Ecological Survey and a Sustainability and Energy Appraisal.

- 9 Within the preface to the Design and Access Statement is an Economic Appraisal of the Club and the applicant's agent in their covering letter draw a number of points to the attention of the local planning authority:
- The Club currently has 200 different suppliers and spends £1.8 million annually, most of which is spent locally. It is anticipated that the chalets would add a 20% increase to the current total spend;
 - The Club currently pays business rates of £99,900 annually and it is anticipated that the chalets would increase rates by £20,000;
 - The Club currently employs 160 people of whom 95% live within a 10 mile radius of the Club. It is anticipated that the chalets would increase employment by 15 people, both full and part-time.
 - In order to maintain their position as a major local employer and user of local suppliers, the Club has to maintain its market position by improving facilities to attract major national and international events. The chalet scheme plays a major role in ensuring that position for the future.
10. The Golf Club has two championship courses and extensive driving range facilities which has now become the home of the Sports Academy. This has been set up in conjunction with the Redbridge College to teach 16 to 19 year olds over a period of two years, 35 weeks per year, to learn about golf, sport and all aspects of it to the equivalent of HND level. There are over 40 students on the site who are travelling from various locations where they are either renting or staying at different properties. At the same time, the professionals are developing a well renowned base of tuition at the Club which has top-class juniors coming through reaching international status. The junior team were British Champions last year and Stoke is the foremost club in both Suffolk and East Anglia.
11. Furthermore, the Club has hosted the PGA Senior's Championship in conjunction with the European PGA Senior's Tour. Both are currently wishing to return on the basis that there is suitable accommodation for their golfers to come and stay on site. An application is being made as a pre-qualifier for the Open which brings about a need to house international golfers from around the world for periods of time. In addition to this, due to the strength of the teaching, the Club is looking to run golfing schools for the public to come and stay for 1 or 2 weeks to learn about all aspects of golf and be taught the game on an accommodation package.
12. The Club has identified a need for accommodation for their customers which allows groups of friends and families to have interlinked rooms with a sitting room and dining/kitchen facility to allow limited self catering, whilst being linked to the main facilities of the Club House for the majority of meals and services. This accommodation would normally be for people on long stays, often a week or more. They state that it was also recognised that there were groups staying who wanted to be in one area, often with greater privacy than the main hotel could offer, another principle user would be the Sports Academy who need supervision, in addition to visiting football teams. The use of the chalets would be linked principally to golf, but equally members of a group could use the other facilities such as the health and fitness centre.
13. The design of the chalets has been one of standardising a two storey structure which allows limited variation in internal planning as shown on the proposed layout drawings. Minor variations with balconies and fenestration provide visual interest and take advantage of the characteristics of individual sites. It is the intention to manufacture the standardised units in timber frame construction off-site and to bring the panels to site in a pre-fabricated form which would be quicker to erect than conventional construction and therefore minimise time on site and the use of Plough Lane for construction access. The intention is that the buildings will sit lightly on the ground with a simple pad and beam or pile foundation, lightweight construction to the walls would be followed through with a lightweight natural roof cladding of Cedar shingles.

14. The chalets are planned around a central open area with a communal building, attached to the retained, but altered water tower to provide a viewing platform. This communal building would have cloakrooms and stores at ground floor level and a communal function room, small bar area at first floor level.
15. The chalets are quite evenly spaced around the central communal lawns and proposed putting green. The main principle behind the proposed layout is to create a landscape dominant development which blends into the landscape. Spaces around the chalets need only cater for the movement of buggies which avoids the driveway and turning width associated with car usage. Natural permeable tracks would ensure a low-key informal landscape.
16. There are three types of chalets proposed; an executive lodge (2 in number), a twin lodge (10 in number) and a double lodge (3 in number).
17. On site parking is deliberately limited to disabled guests only which is screened within the site and linked to one of the existing Plough Lane accesses, this would be used for maintenance and limited deliveries with the main car park adjacent to the Club House and Hotel providing parking for general occupiers of the chalets. It is the Club's intention to purchase more substantial golfing buggies than they currently operate that would enable luggage to be transported from the main car park to the chalets by staying guests. External lighting would be minimal with lighting levels sufficient only to allow safe navigation within the site after dusk via low level, downward lighting bollards illuminating pathways and controlled via timed dusk-till-dawn sensors.
18. Issues of sustainability have been addressed within the proposal and in addition to the sustainable forms of construction, with the proposed golf lodges essentially linear in form, and predominantly orientated east/west offers the opportunity to gain maximum benefit from natural lighting levels throughout the day. In order to maximise natural light, but minimise overheating a series of solar shading devices are proposed. These include the introduction of horizontal "light shelves" to individual lodges, to promote deep penetration of indirect light into predominantly living/dining spaces, whilst cutting out direct sunlight.
19. With respect to water conservation, efficiency and re-use various measures will be put in place to reduce water consumption per occupant. These include the specification of efficient WC's, a selection of optimised bath shapes and sizes, spray tap and shower head design and the fitting of water flow regulators. Communal rainwater collection system for potential WC flushing and direct re-use with out treatment of communal gardens and site landscape irrigation is also proposed.

RELEVANT HISTORY

22. There is an extensive history to both this former hostel site as well as the wider golf course. The most pertinent and relevant decision relates to the following:
 - B/06/02132 – erection of 22 chalets and communal buildings and construction of new vehicular access – Withdrawn 30.04.07

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

23. **PPS1** - Delivering Sustainable Development
PPS7 - Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
PPS9 - Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
PPG13 - Transport
PPG17 - Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation

PLANNING POLICIES

24. The following Development Plan Policies are applicable to this proposal:

Suffolk Structure Plan 2001

- **ECON14** – Tourism
- **T14** – Control of Development

Babergh Local Plan Alteration Number 2 (2006)

- **EN03** – Protected Species
- **EN09** – Conservation of Energy
- **EN13** – Water Conservation
- **EN22** – Light Pollution – Outdoor Lighting
- **CR01** – Landscaping Quality
- **CR02** – AONB Landscape
- **CR07** – Landscaping Schemes
- **CN01** – Design Standards
- **CN02** – Facilities for the Disabled
- **RE06** – Small and Medium – Scale Recreation
- **TP15** – Parking Standards – New Development

This report only includes policy references. For further details please see Page 4.

OBSERVATIONS

25. Leavenheath Parish Council – Object on the grounds of potential increase in traffic along Plough Lane and an increase in the number of bed spaces from 84 to 92 compared with the previous proposal. They believe that the proposed development is too significant for the location and the noise and light pollution anticipated would not be consistent for an AONB, they are not satisfied with the proposals to lessen the impact on the environment which is exemplified by the lack of cohesive plans to collect and re-use rainwater.
26. Stoke by Nayland Parish Council – Object as they consider that the projected number of 20 vehicles using Plough Lane for access to the site too high and the plans showing an internal access from the main Club building which is sufficiently wide to accommodate service vehicles could also be used for a small number of cars transporting disabled visitors. The Parish Council would therefore wish for no post-construction traffic to access the site from Plough Lane. Whilst the plans show four designated parking spaces for disabled visitors, they do not indicate any rooms designed to accommodate them. The proposed screening would take many years to take effect, consideration should be given to creating an embankment on which to plant more mature trees, with all trees shown in the application being deciduous screening in the winter would be minimal and some evergreen but indigenous specimens strategically placed would add year round screening. They feel that the Club is developing its business and site in a piecemeal fashion and should produce a 5 or 10 year plan so that proper consideration can be given to each application within the context of the development an amount of car parking required in the future.
27. Polstead Parish Council – Have reservations in relation to Policy CN08 (Development in or near Conservation Areas) and are concerned that trees would take time to establish, therefore, would not be of an appropriate scale, form and detailed design to harmonise within its setting. [Officer Note – the site does not fall within a designated Conservation Area].
28. LHA – No objection to the proposal subject to conditions being imposed which restricts access from Plough Lane solely to maintenance/delivery vehicles and to any guests registered as disabled. Furthermore, they require two passing bays to be laid out and

constructed in Plough Lane prior to the commencement of development and which shall be retained thereafter in the approved form. [Officer Note – as acknowledged by the applicant's highway consultant this could be dealt with by way of a Grampian planning condition].

29. Environment Agency – No response received at time of writing report, however, they raised no objection to the previous application subject to details of surface and foul drainage being submitted prior to the commencement of development.
30. Natural England – Raise no objection to the proposal.
31. Suffolk Wildlife Trust – They agree with the recommendations as set out within the Ecology Report and also support the recommendation to encourage birds and bats to the development with the use of suitable nesting and roosting boxes. They strongly recommend that the Reptile Survey mentioned is conducted.
32. Babergh District Council Economic Development – No objection to the development.

REPRESENTATIONS

33. Letters of representation have been received from the Suffolk Preservation Society, Nayland with Wissington Conservation Society, and the Dedham Vale Society, in addition to three local residents. The letters make the following points:
 - Despite the reduced no. of chalets the development will be dominant upon the AONB.
 - Design and materials are inappropriate and layout is still cramped.
 - Vernacular style design with appropriate local materials should be employed.
 - It would be many years before vegetation would conceal the structure.
 - The site is agricultural not brownfield land and should not be converted into intensive residential use.
 - The site is ill suited to any level of intensive residential use given its poor access to transport and narrow lanes already impacted by golf related traffic.
 - Development could give rise to noise and disturbance from parties, music, firework displays etc.
 - Inclusion of a communal area and bar for entertaining is a particular concern.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

34. The application site is situated within the open countryside and just outside of the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which is situated to the south and east of the application site. Whilst this application is not for residential development, the Government's definition of previously developed land as set out within PPS3 is relevant. Notwithstanding the fact that Annex B of PPS3 states that previously developed land is that which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land and any associated fixed surface infrastructure, that definition specifically excludes land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings. Due to the previous uses of the site originally as Land Army Hostel accommodation and latterly the housing of animals there is no presumption in favour of this site on this basis alone.
35. The presence of the existing structures however which include both whole, dilapidated and collapsed/demolished buildings is a material consideration that can be taken into account in the determination of the planning application and the visual presence of the site as it currently stands is of a developed nature. The site currently detracts from the character of its immediate surroundings, including the adjoining AONB, this is partly due to third party fly-tipping and a lack of maintenance by the applicants.
36. Policy CR01 of the Babergh Local Plan Alteration No. 2 states that the landscape quality and character of the countryside will be protected by restricting development to that which is essential for the efficient operation of agriculture, forestry and horticulture and for appropriate

outdoor recreation. It goes on to state that where development is allowed in the countryside it must, inter alia: Be of a scale compatible with its surroundings and have due regard to the landscape characteristics and cultural heritage of the locality; be sensitively designed with high standards of landscaping, layout and careful choice of materials to minimise impact; consider measures that will maximise the potential for wildlife on the site and adjacent areas; not introduce a proliferation of buildings and structures; and be well related to the highway network, including where possible, pedestrian links, cycle routes and public transport, and be acceptable in terms of road safety.

37. In terms of the criteria as set out within Policy CR01, it is considered that whilst of a contemporary design, the chalets as proposed, with their relatively low pitched roofs and natural materials, are of a scale and design which is compatible with its surroundings, notwithstanding the fact that they do not follow the traditional Suffolk vernacular. Good design in itself does not have to be simply a repetition of past architectural styles and combined with the sustainable design and construction proposed, would minimise impact, particularly when combined with the extensive landscaping scheme proposed which is the result of a number of consultations with the District Council's Landscape Officer. It is noted that use of the existing access to the site via Plough Lane would be unacceptable, however, with the proposal to utilise the existing main car park at the Club House and the access of the chalets by the majority of guests and staff by golf buggies, the impact on the surrounding highway network would be minimal, particularly when taking into account the applicant's comments that the proposal should reduce daily trips to and from the site when persons are enrolled on week long courses and have to stay elsewhere.
38. Furthermore, one of the few Structure Plan Policies that have been saved, Policy ECON14 states that the development of tourist accommodation in the countryside in cabins, chalets, caravans and camping sites may be acceptable where there is no material conflict with policies for transport or protection of the environment. It does state amongst other locations that it will not be appropriate within the Dedham Vale AONB, however, as the site falls outside, the proposal complies with this policy and Policy CR02 of the Babergh Local Plan does not apply.
39. It is acknowledged that the proposal would have an impact upon the landscape, however, this would be limited and would be outweighed by the potential economic benefits that would flow from the proposal eg. with the Golf Club's connections with the international golfing circuit and the Sports Academy which provides youngsters with two years of training to be able to develop their golfing expertise and secure an academic qualification.
40. Reference has been made within some of the representations received with that there would be an increase in the number of bed spaces proposed, when compared to the previous planning application for 22no. chalets. The current proposal proposes a total of 92 bed spaces (assuming full occupation of each double bed) compared to 140 bed spaces in the previous proposal.
41. Whilst other concerns with respect to traffic generation, in particular on Plough Lane are noted there is no objection from the Local Highway Authority subject to planning conditions being imposed. However, it is acknowledged that the specific use of these chalets is fundamental in ensuring that there is no pressure in the future to revert to the main access being directly off Plough Lane, particularly if the units were leased/sold off. Therefore, it is considered prudent to require an obligation through a Section 106 Agreement that the use of the chalets shall be in conjunction with the day-to-day operation of the Stoke-by-Nayland Golf Club and that they should not be let or sold off separately.
42. Furthermore, it is also recommended in that a peripheral landscape scheme shall be implemented within the first available planting season following the grant of planning permission to enable an effective screen to develop as early as possible. The applicant has agreed to these Heads of Terms. A condition would also be imposed which requires an internal traffic management plan to specify in detail the internal circulation/access arrangements to the chalets once guests have arrived at the Club.

REASON FOR APPROVAL

43. It is considered that the proposed development for the erection of 15 no. chalets on the former Land Army Hostel Site would protect the character of the countryside whilst providing for an enhanced golfing facility, to the benefit of the local economy and the wider community. The proposal would be compliant with Policy ECON14 of the Suffolk Structure Plan and Policies CR01 and CN01 of the Babergh Local Plan Alteration Number 2 (2006).

RECOMMENDATION

44. (1) That, the Solicitor to the Council be authorised to secure a planning obligation agreement under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1990, to ensure:
- The use of chalets to be used in conjunction with the day-to-day operation of Stoke-by-Nayland Golf Club.
 - A peripheral landscape scheme to be implemented within the first available planting season following the grant of permission.
- (2) That, subject to the completion of the planning obligation in Resolution (1) above being secured the Chief Planning Control Officer be authorised to grant planning permission subject to the following conditions:
- Standard Time limit
 - Material samples to be submitted.
 - Landscaping.
 - Lighting details to be submitted.
 - Travel Plan for internal and external vehicular movement.
 - As recommended by LHA.
 - Sustainability details to be provided on energy and water efficiency and renewable energy generation.
 - Recommendations of Ecology Report to be implemented.
 - Restrictions of amplified music so that music is inaudible from the application site boundaries.
 - Surface and foul drainage details to be submitted.
- (3) That, in the event of the planning obligation referred to in Resolution (2) above not being secured, the Chief Planning Control Officer be authorised to refuse planning permission for the following reason:
- Inappropriate development in the countryside contrary to structure plan policy ECON14 and local plan policy CRO1 and CNO1.