

**4/00205/16/FUL - CHANGE OF USE OF THREE BUNGALOWS FROM RESIDENTIAL (C3) TO STORAGE (B8).
LITTLE HAY GOLF COMPLEX, BOX LANE, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD, HP3 0XT.
APPLICANT: Dacorum Sportspace.**

[Case Officer - Martin Stickley]

Summary

The application is recommended for approval.

The principle of residential development is considered acceptable. The site falls within the Green Belt whereby the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Paragraph 90, alongside Policy CS5(d) of Dacorum's adopted Core Strategy allows for the re-use of a building providing the buildings are permanent and substantial. It is felt that there would be no material harm to the openness of the Green Belt as a result of this proposal. Core Strategy Policy CS17 and saved Policy 17 of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan (DBLP) seek to protect the Borough's housing stock. However, it is felt that considering the current state of disrepair, isolated location and long term vacancy of the properties, that it would be reasonable to be flexible over the loss of the residential use. Overall, it is felt that the application is acceptable in accordance with the relevant national and local policies.

Site and Surroundings

The application site is situated within the Little Hay Golf Complex and comprises one small detached bungalow and two semi-detached bungalows, which are all presently vacant. The buildings are surrounded by dense undergrowth and tree cover and the fairway to one of the holes on the golf course. The site is located on the outskirts of the village of Bovington within the designated Green Belt.

Proposal

The application seeks planning permission to convert three currently vacant bungalows from residential (C3) to storage (B8) ancillary to the golf course.

It should be noted that a previous application (4/01053/00/FUL) granted planning permission for the change of use of one of the bungalows (No. 3) to a meeting room. However, the agent has confirmed that this permission was never implemented.

Referral to Committee

The application is referred to the Development Control Committee because Dacorum Borough Council owns the land.

Planning History

Application: 4/01053/00/FUL

Address: LITTLE HAY GOLF COMPLEX, HEMPSTEAD ROAD, BOVINGDON, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD, HERTS

Description: CHANGE OF USE OF BUNGALOW 3 FROM ACCOMMODATION TO MEETING ROOMS

Decision: Granted

Dated: 10/08/2000

Relevant Policy

National Policy Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)

Adopted Core Strategy

NP1 - Supporting Development
CS1 - Distribution of Development
CS5 - Green Belt
CS12 - Quality of Site Design
CS17 - New Housing

Saved Policies of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan

Policies 17
Appendix 5 and 7

Summary of Representations

Local Residents

No comments.

Consultees

Bovingdon Parish Council

No objection.

Strategic Planning and Regeneration

The site falls within the Green Belt wherein national (NPPF (para. 90)) and local policies (Policy CS5(d)) would allow for the re-use of a building providing the building was permanent and substantial (which does appear to be the case). Therefore, we have no objection to the basic principle of using the existing dwellings for storage. We see no material harm arising to the openness of the Green Belt as a consequence. It would make more sense to re-use rather than construct new buildings within the complex, and it appears that they are already being used informally for storage and other purposes in any event.

However, Policy CS17 and saved DBLP Policy 15 both seek the retention of dwellings as part of safeguarding the existing housing stock. The re-use of the dwellings for non-residential purposes would run counter to this approach.

We note the case made by the applicant over:

- the current suitability of the property as dwellings and the potential cost to

remedy this;

- the restricted access to the dwellings through the golf course and relatively isolated location;
- their long term vacancy (7 years); and
- their historic links to the golf course facilities.

We acknowledge that these factors do not point to the longer-term residential future of the buildings. On this basis, therefore, we feel that it would be reasonable to be flexible over the loss of the dwellings in the circumstances.

Considerations

Policy and Principle

The NPPF advises that certain forms of development may not be inappropriate in the Green Belt including the re-use of buildings providing they are of permanent and substantial construction and the new use would preserve the openness of the Green Belt and not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt. Policy CS5 of the Core Strategy reinforces this. Ordinarily, the loss of residential units would be a material planning consideration of significant weight against the grant of permission (Policy CS17 of the Core Strategy and saved Policy 15 of the DBLP). However, in the circumstances of this case the agent has provided a number of material considerations that weigh in favour of the proposal and against the retention of the residential use of the buildings. These are listed below.

- The buildings have not been occupied for residential purposes for over eight years
- The buildings are not currently fit for human habitation (damp ripe in the structure and some leaks in the roof)
- Over the years the buildings have become damp and difficult to maintain
- The buildings have been the subject of trespass and vandalism
- The scale of works to reinstate the residential use of the buildings is currently prohibitive
- The buildings are not accessible other than via the golf course
- Access to the buildings is only by foot generally and there are no direct footpaths to serve the buildings
- The route to the buildings does not benefit from any lighting and the buildings are remote from all other buildings and roads within the golf course complex
- The buildings are reliant on the golf course for services and access
- The operator of the golf course does not require the buildings for residential purposes

The bungalows were originally used for staff members ancillary to Little Hay Golf Complex. The applicant was approached for further information regarding the loss of the workers dwellings. It was explained that in 2007, Dacorum Sports Trust took over the operational management of the complex and the employees were TUPE'd (transfer of undertakings) over and as part of these arrangements, Dacorum Borough Council decided to re-house the residents in properties off-site. TUPE means that the staff members are transferred to another company (i.e. Dacorum Sports Trust) with at least the same terms, if not better, than the original company they worked for. However, as explained previously, the decision was made that it would be too costly to bring the bungalows up to modern living standards. The bungalows required significant

investment and there was no funding for such works. Therefore, over a period of time the bungalows simply fell vacant as occupiers were not replaced. Staff now travel to the site from surrounding town and villages on a daily basis.

Impact on Streetscene

No adverse impact.

The proposal would not change the appearance of the bungalows. Further to this, the buildings are located within an area on the golf course that is shrouded by mature vegetation. The properties are also a considerable distance from public vantage points. For these reasons, the application is deemed acceptable in accordance with Policies CS11 and CS12 of the Core Strategy.

Impact on Neighbouring Properties

No adverse impact.

There are no residential properties near to the bungalows. Considering this and considering that there would be no change in the physical form of the buildings, the application is not felt to impact any neighbouring properties in accordance with Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy and saved Appendix 7 of the DBLP.

Impact on Access and Parking

No adverse impact.

The proposal would not increase demand for vehicles to access the site. The storage of equipment would be transferred from the clubhouse using on-site vehicles. Therefore, the proposal would not hinder the surrounding road network in any way in accordance with saved Appendix 5 and saved Policy 58 of the Local Plan.

Summary and Conclusion

Given no one has occupied the buildings for over eight years it is not felt that the proposal would lead to the loss of any existing residential accommodation. Considering this and considering the issues raised above regarding the negative issues surrounding the re-use of the buildings for residential purposes, it is felt that it would be reasonable to allow the buildings to be used for ancillary storage for the Golf Complex. With respect to the Green Belt, streetscene, neighbouring properties and access/parking, the potential impacts are considered extremely minimal and the proposal will assist in supporting this important outdoor recreational use. Overall, the application complies with the NPPF, Policies CS5, CS11 and CS12 of the Core Strategy and saved Appendix 5 and 7 of the DBLP.

RECOMMENDATION - That planning permission be **GRANTED** for the reasons referred to above and subject to the following conditions:

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.**

Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 (1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 (1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 2 **The buildings subject to this application shall only be used for storage purposes ancillary to the use of the Golf complex.**

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure the use is compatible to its green belt setting, supports the rural economy and to accord with Policy CS5 and CS12.

- 3 **The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans/documents:**

site location plan
floor plans

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

Article 35

Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. Discussion with the applicant to seek an acceptable solution was not necessary in this instance. The Council has therefore acted pro-actively in line with the requirements of the Framework (paragraphs 186 and 187) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2015.