



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 April 2025

by **U P Han BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7 May 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3425/W/25/3358289

Ingestre Golf Club, Ingestre Park Road, Ingestre, Stafford, Staffordshire ST18 0RE

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Geoff Matthews of Kingston Hill Golf Club t/a Ingestre Golf Club against the decision of Stafford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/38420/FUL.
 - The development proposed is 'Proposed maintenance building and yard for the golf course. Proposal overflow car park, including and entrance gate and wing walls to the existing driveway. Proposed photovoltaic solar array.'
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. Whilst I have noted the description of development given on the Application Form, I consider the description on the Council's Decision Notice, and used above, describes the works more clearly and succinctly.
3. The appeal site is within Ingestre Conservation Area (the CA) wherein I have a statutory duty under Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the PLBCAA) to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area.
4. The appellant has referred to the conduct of the Council in the determination of the planning application, including the nature and clarity of the advice given, the information required to be able to determine the application and the approach to its decision-making. These are primarily not matters for me to consider as part of this appeal. I have considered the individual merits of the appeal scheme in relation to the relevant policies and evidence before me.

Main Issues

5. The main issues in this appeal are:
 - whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA; and
 - whether sufficient information has been submitted to demonstrate that the proposed development would provide acceptable living conditions for the occupiers of neighbouring dwellings with regard to noise and artificial light.

Reasons

The CA

The significance of the CA

6. The significance of the CA derives from its notable architecture, well-preserved buildings, historic importance and landscape qualities. The CA is set within a historic parkland landscape featuring tree-lined avenues, woodlands and open green spaces. The rural setting of the CA, characterised by surrounding agricultural fields, areas of plantation and pockets of woodland, adds to its special character and appearance.
7. The planned estate village at Ingestre is a rare surviving example of a purpose-built estate settlement, laid out to serve the functional needs of the Ingestre Hall estate. The modest proportions of the cottages contrast with the grand scale of Ingestre Hall and vertical emphasis of St. Mary's church tower. The use of red brick and clay tiles as building materials predominates, as well as the frequent use of stone due to the close proximity of the estate quarries.
8. The appeal site is identified in the Ingestre Conservation Area Appraisal March 2015 (the ICAA) within an area of important green space. Such spaces form part of the visual and historic landscape character of the CA, contributing to the sense of openness and the dispersed nature of buildings in the CA. Furthermore, the ICAA identifies positive views of the CA from the junction of Ingestre Park Road and the access road to Ingestre Golf Club (the Club), looking towards the village across Donkey Paddock.

The effect of the proposed development on the significance of the CA

9. The appeal site comprises the vehicle entrance into the Club and a portion of land to the east of the access road which is lined by a mature hedgerow boundary on its eastern side. Directly opposite the site, to the west of the access road is Donkey Paddock, a wooded green space, beyond which lies the village, including small group of two storey cottages. To the east and north of the site is the golf course and to south is the existing Club house and car park.
10. The appeal site was formerly an undeveloped agricultural field but has been used as a contractor's compound for the recent expansion of the golf course. At the time of my site visit I observed the presence of metal security gates, temporary metal fencing, hardcore surfacing, spoil heaps and other construction materials.
11. I am advised by the Council that the contractors have left the site. However, it was clear from my site visit that the site has not been reinstated to its previous state. Schedule 2, Part 4, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (the GPDO) permits buildings and moveable structures required temporarily in connection with and for the duration of operations being or to be carried out on, in, under or over that land or on land adjoining that land. This is subject to the conditions that any building, structure, works, plant or machinery permitted by Class A is removed, and the land is reinstated to its condition before that development was carried out.
12. The appellant contends that the site is brownfield land. Annex 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) defines brownfield or previously development land as land which has been lawfully developed and is or was

occupied by a permanent structure and any fixed surface infrastructure associated with it. On the evidence before me, there is cause to have reasonable doubt about its current lawfulness. The site is and has not been occupied by a permanent structure. Therefore, it does not comply with the Framework's definition of brownfield land or previously developed land.

13. The proposal is for a single storey rectangular shaped maintenance building that would be finished in black metal cladding with a dual pitched roof. There would be a maintenance yard surfaced largely in concrete and enclosed by chain link fencing. The yard would include two covered storage areas and two wash pads with a new hard surfaced path from the yard to the golf course. Near the vehicular entrance into the site, new entrance gates between two new pillars and boundary walls are proposed. In addition, the scheme includes a new car park for 73 cars for staff and as an overflow visitor car park.
14. While the current condition of the site has diminished its contribution to the CA, its undeveloped and open nature nonetheless maintains views out of and into the CA and contributes to its spacious character. The proposed scheme would erode the openness of the site by the introduction of expansive built form and extensive hard surfacing, thereby harming the existing and historic landscape character of the CA. The effect of the proposal on the CA would be exacerbated by the site's prominent location near Ingestre Park Road where the proposed maintenance building would visually dominate the site and the surrounding area by virtue of its significant height and bulk, harming the positive views of the CA identified in the ICAA.
15. The appellant has submitted a Heritage Statement¹ (the HS) which assesses the significance of designated and non-designated heritage assets which may be affected by the proposal. The HS concludes that the proposal would not be of such a scale and conspicuous nature, due to the mitigation offered by the proposed planting scheme², to detract from the significance of the CA.
16. I recognise that the visual impacts of the proposal could, to some extent, be mitigated through additional planting. However, this would hold the potential to further erode the openness and sense of space that the site contributes to the open rural character of the area given the scale of planting that would be required to screen the development from public views. Furthermore, the proposed planting will take time to mature while the building would be highly visible. Additionally, the planting cannot be relied upon to provide a permanent buffer to views. This is not least because screening provided by the proposed trees would be seasonal in nature.
17. The proposed maintenance building would be constructed using dark coloured contemporary materials where brick and stone dominate in the area. Therefore, the colour and external materials of the building would be visually intrusive and incongruous with the prevailing materials palette of the CA. The appellant contends that the design and colour of the proposed maintenance building references the historic and modern agricultural buildings common to the area. However, I do not have the full details of the examples provided so I cannot be certain that they represent a direct parallel to the appeal proposal. In any case, I have determined the appeal on its own merits.

¹ Ref. HS/ingestreparkclubhouse/AH966/22/3/24V2, March 2024.

² Ref. G982 MB 902 PLANTING PLAN Rev. A.

18. While the HS states that the proposed vehicular entrance gates, piers and walls have been designed to be in keeping with traditional gateways in the area, they would nevertheless, combined with the proposed chain link fencing around the maintenance yard, have an enclosing and visually intrusive effect on the open rural character of the site and the surrounding area, which would be exacerbated by the site's prominent location near Ingestre Park Road.
19. I acknowledge that the landscape surrounding the CA has changed since it was first designated, notably through the reconfiguration of the golf course due to High Speed Rail 2. The agricultural fields on the north east side of Ingestre Park Road and part of the land to the east of the access drive now form part of the golf course. However, these areas nevertheless retain their sense of openness and contribute to the parkland setting of the CA.
20. The appellant has pointed to the erection of a large barn to the east north east of the appeal site and a modern residential dwelling which is purported to have changed the setting of the CA. However, I do not have the locations of those schemes and I have not been provided with their details, so I do not know if they are indeed within the setting of the CA, and if they are, I cannot be certain that the circumstances that led to planning permission being granted are the same as the appeal proposal. In any case, the appeal site is within the CA itself and would therefore have a more direct effect on its significance.
21. The appellant argues that the proposed maintenance building has been sited as close as possible to the built-up area in order to minimise any harm to heritage assets and avoid visual impact on the open countryside. However, the proposal fails to respect the positive views and vistas in the CA and the site's location within an area of important green space identified in the ICAA.
22. Taking into consideration the above, I judge the harm to the CA would be less than substantial in the terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Paragraph 215 of the Framework establishes that where a proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset (in this case the CA), this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
23. The appellant has referred to paragraph 214 of the Framework, but this only applies where proposed development would lead to substantial harm to a designated heritage asset.
24. The appellant has also referred to paragraph 219 of the Framework. However, this paragraph relates to proposals which would enhance or better reveal the significance of Conservation Areas, World Heritage Sites and heritage assets. To the contrary, the proposal would harm the significance of the CA.

Public benefits and conclusion on the first main issue

25. The proposal would provide enhanced maintenance facilities for the existing golf course which could in turn attract more members, participants and visitors, support local businesses and contribute to the local economy. In this respect the proposal is supported by paragraph 88 of the Framework insofar as it promotes sustainable growth and expansion of business in rural areas, and the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses.

26. A better maintained course as a result of the proposal could lead to increased usage, encourage more people to engage in regular outdoor exercise, benefiting long term physical and mental health. The proposal could also contribute to the Club's aims of increasing the number of junior members, women players, disabled players and players from ethnic minorities, supporting social inclusion and cohesion.
27. A well-equipped maintenance building with good staff facilities would support the maintenance and enhancement of the visual quality and ecological function of the golf course landscape. The maintenance building would be more centrally located within the course, thereby minimising travel times and reducing energy consumption. In addition, the building itself has been designed to be energy efficient and incorporates solar photovoltaic panels, contributing to combatting climate change.
28. Relocating the existing maintenance facility away from the lime tree avenue which provides an important setting to the listed Ingestre Hall could potentially enhance its setting. However, the existing maintenance facility is visually discreet due to its limited size and screening by mature vegetation.
29. The above are all positive public benefits of the scheme which, in combination, carry significant weight.
30. Compliance with the development plan in relation to archaeology, drainage, trees, ecology, highways, and criterion a, b, c, f, and h of Policy E2 of the Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 (June 2014) (the PSB) are expectations for all development so weigh neither for nor against the proposal and is considered neutral.
31. The appellant argues that without a maintenance building, the golf course could not be maintained and would have to close, which would be disastrous to the local economy, community groups who use the facility and to the next generation of golfers in the area. I have no basis to question that an enhanced maintenance building is reasonably required due to the deficiencies of the existing one, such as the lack of staff changing facilities and storage areas for equipment. I also accept that it would be more ideal if the maintenance building were more centrally located in the golf course to reduce journey times for maintenance purposes. However, the evidence before me does not show that dismissing the appeal would necessarily result in the closure of the golf course given its current existence and operation. I therefore attach little weight to the argument that the golf course would inevitably have to close if the appeal were dismissed.
32. The appellant contends that the proposed scheme has been sited in the only possible land within the appellant's ownership, following a sequential review undertaken by International Design Group (IDG) of possible sites within the reconfigured land ownership boundary. While I do not have a copy of IDG's sequential review before me, the appellant's statement indicates that the only areas found to have the potential to accommodate the maintenance facility, yard and car park were: 1) the existing maintenance facility site, 2) the driving range and 3) the appeal site.
33. The existing maintenance facility site was discounted for a number of reasons including excessive impact upon the historic lime tree avenue and the presence of Great Crested Newts in the adjacent pond. While I do not doubt such constraints

exist, since I do not have IDG's full sequential review, there is little detailed or robust evidence before me to support the appellant's statement.

34. The driving range was discounted because the appellant indicates that it is essential to ensuring the Club operates as a 'community asset' and is needed for teaching and practice. The precise boundary and size of the existing driving range has not been clearly defined. While I accept that relocating the driving range to the appeal site could potentially have a more harmful effect on the CA than the proposal due to the need for 20 metre high safety netting around the range, it has not been sufficiently demonstrated that the maintenance building, yard and car park could not be accommodated together with a sufficiently sized driving range on land to the north west of the club house that currently includes the existing driving range.
35. I note that the Council also suggested the land to the north west of the Club house as an alternative option and considers that there is no clear or convincing justification that the appeal site is the only viable option. I find the analysis by the appellant not to be sufficiently comprehensive to eliminate alternative options. I therefore attach little weight to the argument that the appeal site is the only reasonably possible site.
36. I have identified that the proposal would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the CA. Paragraph 212 of the Framework advises that great weight should be given to the asset's conservation, irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance. The stated public benefits of the proposal carry significant weight. However, they would not be sufficient to outweigh the harm identified to the CA, which carries great weight.
37. For the reasons given, the proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA, and so would cause less than substantial harm to its significance and thereby fail to satisfy the requirements of the PLBCAA. Accordingly, the proposal conflicts with Policies E2, N1, N8, N9 of the PSB insofar as they require development to respect and protect landscape character, the built vernacular character of the area and designated heritage assets.

Whether sufficient information regarding noise and light

38. The proposed maintenance building would face the rear of dwellings located in the village, although intervened by the access drive to the Club house and Donkey Paddock. The maintenance yard would be on the west side of the proposed maintenance building so the appellant's argument that the positioning of the building and yard would shield any arising noise and light pollution is not supported by the submitted plans. Furthermore, contrary to the appellant's assertion that there are no proposed windows on the west elevation of the maintenance building, the Proposed Elevations show that there would be windows, doors and large openings with roller shutters on the west elevation of the proposed building.
39. The Council's Environmental Health officer requested the submission of a noise impact assessment to include an assessment of all noise impacts arising from the proposed development and any proposed mitigation measures to control noise emanating from the site. Given the potential for the proposal to involve noisy activity such as vehicle movements, the start-up of machinery, the use of power tools and washers, the loading and unloading of bulk materials and staff activity,

particularly in the early hours of the morning relatively close to residential properties, I agree with the Council's Environmental Health officer that it is critical that the potential noise impacts of the proposed development are comprehensively and adequately assessed. On the evidence before me, no noise impact assessment has been submitted.

40. The Council's Environmental Health officer also requested the submission of a lighting plan detailing the proposed lighting scheme. However, no lighting plan has been provided. While the Design and Access Statement (DAS) suggests that the lighting would comprise 500 watt equivalent LED floodlights, the locations of these have not been shown. Similarly, although the appellant indicates that the yard would only be illuminated over the access doors to the building when there is darkness during the working hours of the Club, the submitted plans do not show any external lighting. While a condition could be imposed requiring a lighting plan, if the appeal were allowed, to secure an appropriate lighting plan, it would not overcome or alter my concerns regarding the potential noise impacts of the scheme and my finding on the other main issue.
41. The appellant advises that during the two-year period while the appeal site was used as a construction compound, the building contractors received no complaints regarding noise or light pollution. However, I am informed that the site was the subject of noise monitoring which would have helped to mitigate any potential noise effects.
42. In the absence of a noise impact assessment and lighting plan, insufficient information has been submitted to demonstrate that the proposed development would provide acceptable living conditions for the occupiers of neighbouring dwellings with regard to noise and artificial light. Consequently, the proposal conflicts with Policy N1 of the PSB insofar as it requires development to take account of the noise and light implications of development and the amenity of nearby residents.

Other Matters

43. The appeal site is situated in the wider setting of grade II* Ingestre Hall, grade I St. Mary's Church and other listed building within the golf course and within the surrounding area. While not related to a reason for refusal, I must, in light of my duties under section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation areas) Act 1990 (as amended) have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
44. The listed buildings are mainly in a cluster to the north east of the appeal site. The Church of St. Mary is grade I listed and of exceptional heritage value, believed to be the only church designed by Sir Christopher Wren outside of London. Ingestre Hall is a grade II* listed 17th century Jacobean mansion and a key component in understanding the area's evolution. The Farm Buildings and Home Farm are grade II listed buildings of Flemish bond red brick, the house being designed in Regency form. The Old Stables and the Stables at Ingestre Hall are grade II listed buildings in brick with stone quoins and of high architectural and historic value. The Orangery is a grade II listed designed by Samuel and Joseph Wyatt using brick with limestone ashlar cladding. The Pavilion in Ingestre Park is a grade II listed of

mid 18th century in stone and rusticated masonry. The K6 Telephone Kiosk, in the village, was designed in 1935 by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott and is grade II listed.

45. Given the separation distance of the aforementioned listed buildings from the appeal site, the lack of intervisibility between them and the appeal site, and the presence of intervening woodland, the proposal would preserve the setting of the above listed buildings, the significance of which would not be harmed.
46. The site is also proximate to non-designated heritage assets, predominantly relating to multi-period sites ranging from Iron Age/ Romano-British pit alignments and enclosures to extensive field systems identified in Staffordshire's Historic Environment Record. Paragraph 209 of Framework indicates that the effect on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account. The HS indicates that the likelihood of buried archaeological remains of any substance of significance being present in the site to be negligible. The County archaeologist raised no objection to the proposal and the Council raised no concerns regarding the effect upon significance by virtue of development within the settings of any non-designated heritage assets. Based on the evidence and my own observations, I have no grounds to find otherwise.

Conclusion

47. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with development plan. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

U P Han

INSPECTOR