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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 June 2025

by **G Sibley MPLAN MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30 September 2025

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**Appeal Ref: APP/N0410/W/25/3358532**

**Burnham Beeches Golf Club, Green Lane, Burnham, Slough SL1 8EG**

- 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 Burnham Beeches Golf Club against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council.
  - The application Ref is PL/23/3348/FA.
  - The development is the construction of an overflow car park and associated landscaping.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the construction of an overflow car park and associated landscaping at Burnham Beeches Golf Club, Green Lane, Burnham, Slough SL1 8EG in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref PL/23/3348/FA, subject to the conditions in the attached schedule.

### Preliminary and Procedural Matters

2. The development has been carried out generally in accordance with the submitted plans and as such I have considered the appeal based upon the development that has taken place as well as the plans before me.
3. I have removed the term 'retrospective planning application for' from the description of development in the banner header and my formal decision as this is not an act of development.
4. The appellant submitted additional drainage information with the appeal. After reviewing the additional information, the Council determined that it would be willing to withdraw the third reason for refusal, subject to the imposition of a suitably worded condition. Based on the information before me I see no reason to disagree. Because the appellant submitted this information with the appeal which confirmed the materials used in the construction of the car park, interested parties would have had the opportunity to comment on the additional information. As such, they would not be prejudiced by my accepting this and subsequently I have not considered this matter as a main issue.

### Main Issues

5. The main issues relevant to this appeal are:
  - whether the development is inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and relevant development plan policies and linked to this, the effect of the development upon the openness of the Green Belt; and

- the effect of the development upon the character and appearance of the area.

## Reasons

### *Whether Inappropriate Development*

6. The appeal site is a car park used in association with the Burnham Beeches Golf Club which is within the Green Belt. The site is located next to the existing car park for the golf club with the clubhouse sited a short distance from the appeal site.
7. Policy GB1 of the South Bucks District Local Plan (LP) identifies development that could be granted within the Green Belt. This policy allows changes of use of land within the Green Belt where it would provide essential facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation or outdoor leisure and other uses of land and essential facilities for them which would not compromise the purposes of including land in the Green Belt and which would permanently retain its openness and undeveloped character. Paragraph 154b) of the Framework is similarly worded but as Policy GB1 diverges from paragraph 154b), the Framework takes precedence as it is the more recently published policy document. The Council come to a similar conclusion within its evidence.
8. Paragraph 154b) of the Framework sets out that the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use), including buildings, for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
9. It is not disputed between the parties that the scheme is an appropriate facility for outdoor sport and based on the evidence I find no reason to disagree. However, the contention relates to whether the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.
10. On the appeal site were a group of trees which have been removed to make way for the development. However, these trees were not covered by a Tree Preservation Order and as such, they could have been removed at any time. Consequently, as these trees have been removed, they no longer affect the openness of the Green Belt.
11. The appeal site, including the rest of the car park and the clubhouse is located on higher ground which then slopes away from the appeal site. However, the land beyond the appeal site undulates. The development is seen alongside the existing car park and the clubhouse, which is a substantially sized building. Additionally, due to the trees and hedges that bound the golf club, the appeal site is well screened from most public viewpoints, other than from the gated entrance to the golf club. As a result, the visual impact of the development is relatively limited to the immediate viewpoints, including nearby dwellings.
12. The development is located at ground level and as such the built form of the car park has a very limited visual impact on openness. Even if some engineering works are required to secure the proposed landscaping, the modest scale of the area for landscaping and location of it means that the visual effect of this would be limited. Given that parked vehicles would be seen in the context of the existing car

park and the clubhouse, the effect of these upon the visual aspect of the openness of the Green Belt would be very small. Additionally, the vehicles would be parked intermittently which would limit the effect they would have upon the openness of the Green Belt in this location, especially outside of the opening hours for the golf club. Nevertheless, the development affects the visual aspect of the openness of the Green Belt.

13. From a spatial perspective, most of the appeal site was previously undeveloped, and the scheme has resulted in the site being covered in an interlocking grid system filled with gravel. Whilst this has not resulted in a new building being erected it has resulted in new development in the Green Belt. Even if some engineering works are required to secure the proposed landscaping, given the modest scale of the area for landscaping and location of it the spatial effect of this would be limited. Given the location and modestly sized but low-level scale of the development it has a limited effect upon the spatial aspect of the openness of the Green Belt.
14. Overall, the development affects both the visual and spatial openness of the Green Belt. However, this could be said for many new 'appropriate' facilities for outdoor sport in the Green Belt.
15. The development utilises the existing vehicular access and car park and thus the associated development is limited to the interlocking grid system filled with gravel and the kerbs around the car park. Overall, the modest size of the car park, the low-level scale of the associated engineering works and the change of use of land would be appropriate for the facility while respecting the need to preserve the openness of the Green Belt. Given the type of development permitted by Framework Paragraph 154b), I find that the very small effects I have identified, do preserve the openness of the Green Belt.
16. The development does introduce new built form into the Green Belt. However, given that the development retains the centralised location of built form associated with the golf club and is modest in scale it ensures the development does not result in a level of encroachment that would conflict with the purpose of the Green Belt to safeguard the countryside from encroachment. Accordingly, the proposal would not conflict with purpose c of paragraph 143 of the Framework.
17. It is not disputed between the main parties that the development does not harm any other of the purposes of including land within the Green Belt set out in paragraph 143 of the Framework. I find no reason to reach a different conclusion on this matter, based on the evidence.
18. Therefore, the development is an appropriate facility for outdoor sport that preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it and as a result, it is not inappropriate development. Consequently, for the reasons given above it complies with paragraph 154b) of the Framework and generally accords with Policy GB1 of the South Bucks District Local Plan (LP).

### *Character and Appearance*

19. The golf club is in a rural location with sporadically sited buildings, set back from tree and hedge bound roads. The concentration of the buildings and associated development around the clubhouse set back behind the remaining belt of trees

and hedges is consistent with the areas overall rural character and appearance. As per the National Design Guide, future development should relate to this context.

20. Irrespective of the trees that have been recently removed, the wider golf club is bound by trees and hedges and, as a result, the golf club including the appeal site is relatively well screened from the roadside and further afield. Given the modest size of the car park extension and its location central to the main golf club development, the additional development does not appear prominent within the local landscape. It does not significantly urbanise the development associated with the golf club, or appear out of character with the area. As a result, the car park does not appear prominent within the local landscape. In this context, a modestly sized addition to the car park in this location does not appear out of character and does not significantly urbanise the development associated with the golf club.
21. It is proposed that additional landscaping would be secured around the car park which would partly screen views of it and the car park around the clubhouse from further afield. Whilst this would take time to become established, the proposed landscaping would further complement the rural appearance of the appeal site, softening the appearance of it. Overall, the design and siting of the car park alongside the proposed landscaping would retain the rural character and appearance of the area.
22. Therefore, the development does not harm the character or appearance of the area. Consequently, it complies with Policy EP3 of the LP. This requires that development would only be permitted, amongst other matters, where its scale, layout, siting, height, design, external materials and use are compatible with the character and amenities of the site itself, adjoining development and the locality in general.

### **Other Matters**

23. Whilst the threshold at 10b) of Schedule 2 to the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017) was not exceeded, the appeal site is located within the zone of influence of the Burnham Beeches Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the impact risk zone of the Burnham Beeches Site of Special Scientific Interest.
24. Taking into consideration the evidence before me, in light of the location, nature and limited scale of the development and the nature of the receiving environment, even when considered in combination with other developments, the proposal would not be of a scale and nature likely to result in significant adverse impacts on the identified sites.
25. Therefore, the proposal would not undermine the conservation objectives of the identified habitats sites, and an appropriate assessment is not required. As such, the proposal accords with the policies within the Framework that seek to protect areas of particular importance relating to habitats sites.
26. Reference has been made to an appeal that was dismissed for a car park in the Green Belt at Greenfields Farm. In that instance the appeal related to the retention of an area used for vehicle sales on an equestrian site whilst the scheme before me relates to an extension to an existing car park associated with a golf course. A greater number of vehicles could also be parked at the Greenfields Farm site.

Concerning the appeal referred to at Hazlehurst Road, in that instance the Inspector determined that the development would be inherently unacceptable. I have not determined that the development is inherently unacceptable or requires screening to make it acceptable. Each case must be determined on its own merits and matters such as the effect of development upon character and appearance, and the Green Belt are generally related to the site-specific circumstances. Given the evidence before me, the character of those sites differed notably to this appeal site which has larger and more permanent development around it. The site-specific circumstances of this appeal have led me to come to a different conclusion on these matters.

27. I note that a previous application for an area of car parking associated with the Burnham Beeches Golf Club was withdrawn which included the appeal site. Based on the information before me this related to a much larger area of car parking than that included with this development. Given the differences between the scale of the two schemes and because that application was not determined there are limited comparisons or conclusions that can be drawn between them.
28. Whilst trees and vegetation were removed prior to the submission of the application, those that were removed were included as part of the biodiversity net gain assessment and as such, the biodiversity value of them was considered.
29. Issues were identified with earlier versions of the net gain calculation, however based on the information before me, discussions took place between the main parties to determine that this development would provide a biodiversity net gain which was confirmed by the Council's Ecology Officer. Whilst concerns were raised regarding the ground conditions, a condition has been suggested to determine a scheme of engineering works that may be required to implement the proposed planting. The Appraisal found no protected species, and the Ecology Officer did not dispute this. Based on the evidence before me and subject to a suitably worded condition the development would not harm protected species and would provide a biodiversity net gain.
30. The appeal site and wider area are identified to be at risk from ground water flooding to surface and subsurface assets. However, as set out within the Preliminary and Procedural Matters of this decision, the Council determined that, subject to a suitably worded condition, an appropriate surface water drainage scheme would be incorporated into the development. This was based upon confirmation that porous materials had been used in the construction of the car park, which allows for water to infiltrate the ground. The use of porous materials and subject to a suitably worded condition to confirm the details of a surface water scheme, the development would not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere from any source of flooding.
31. The development provides an additional 15 parking spaces which is a modest increase in the number of spaces that are already available at the golf club. The Highway Authority determined that the net additional traffic generation, access arrangements and parking provision would not have a material impact on the safety and operation of the adjoining public highway. Based on the evidence before me and the modest scale of the development, I find no reason to conclude otherwise.

32. While the development may not necessarily support alternative transport options for those visiting the golf club, the proposal relates to an existing use, and not doing so would not warrant withholding planning permission, in this instance.
33. Given the distance between the development and nearby properties and because it relates to an extension to an existing car park associated with the golf club, the development would not significantly harm the outlook from nearby dwellings.
34. The tests in the Framework for development such as this within the Green Belt does not set out that the cumulative effect of this and other developments necessarily needs to be taken into account when determining individual cases.
35. It may well be possible to redesign the existing car park. Nevertheless, that is not the proposal before me which, regardless of its retrospective nature, must be determined on its own individual merits. Individual private interests, such as the value of land and property, have little to do with these.

### **Conditions**

36. As the development has already taken place it is not necessary to include the standard statutory commencement condition.
37. Condition 1 is necessary to secure the soft landscaping works in the interests of the character and appearance of the area.
38. Policy CP:9 of the CS identifies that developments within the Biodiversity Opportunity Area, like the appeal site, should seek to provide a net gain in local biodiversity resources. Whilst not suggested by the Council, the Council's Ecologist identified that a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan would be necessary. The submitted evidence identifies that a net gain in biodiversity can be achieved, and this condition 2 would support the delivery of that to comply with this policy. I have revised this condition to remove reference to a Biodiversity Gain Plan as based on the information before me; one has not been prepared to which the condition could relate to.
39. Condition 3 is necessary in the interests of ensuring the development would not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere.
40. Condition 4 is necessary in the interests of certainty. I have removed reference to the

### **Conclusion**

41. The development complies with the development plan, and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be determined other than in accordance with it. Therefore, for the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

*G Sibley*

INSPECTOR

### Schedule of Conditions

1. The car park hereby permitted shall be deconstructed and all the resultant hardstanding materials be removed within 6 months of the date of failure to meet any one of the requirements set out in (i) to (iv) below:-

- i. Within 3 months of the date of this decision a scheme of engineering works to facilitate the soft landscape works including:
  - Earthworks showing existing and proposed finished levels or contours and retaining structures;
  - A full specification of all proposed tree planting including the quantity, size, species, and positions or density of all trees to be planted;
  - Planting and protection measures; and
  - The proposed schedule timescale for implementation of these details

shall have been submitted for the written approval of the local planning authority.

- ii. If within 11 months of the date of this decision the local planning authority refuses to approve the scheme or fails to give a decision within the prescribed period, an appeal shall have been made to, and accepted as validly made by, the Secretary of State.
- iii. If an appeal is made in pursuance of (ii) above, that appeal shall have been finally determined and the submitted scheme shall have been approved by the secretary of State.
- iv. The approved scheme shall have been carried out and completed in accordance with the approved timetable.

Upon implementation of the approved engineering works scheme, that scheme of engineering works shall thereafter be retained.

Any trees, hedgerows or shrubs of the approved planting, which within a period of five years from the first use or substantial completion of the development, whichever is the later, die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species.

In the event of a legal challenge to this decision, or to a decision made in pursuant to the procedure set out in this condition, the operation of the time limits specified in this condition will be suspended until that legal challenge has been finally determined.

2. The car park hereby permitted shall be deconstructed and all the resultant hardstanding materials be removed within 6 months of the date of failure to meet any of the requirements set out in (i) to (iv) below:-

- i. Within 3 months of the date of this decision a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) for the site including:-
  - Description and evaluation of features to be managed, including bird and bat boxes;
  - Ecological trends and constraints on site that might influence management;
  - Aims and objectives of management which will (without limitation) include the provision of biodiversity net gain within the site;
  - Appropriate management options for achieving aims and objectives;
  - Prescriptions for management actions;
  - Preparation of a work schedule (including an annual work plan capable of being rolled forward over a five-year period);
  - Details of the body or organization responsible for implementation of the plan; and
  - Ongoing monitoring and remedial measures

shall have been submitted for the written approval of the local planning authority and the LEMP shall include a timetable for its implementation.

The LEMP shall also include details of the legal and funding mechanism(s) by which the long-term implementation of the plan will be secured by the development with the management body(ies) responsible for its delivery. The plan shall be for no less than 30 years. The plan shall also set out (where the results from monitoring show that conservation aims and objectives of the LEMP are not being met) how contingencies and/or remedial action will be identified, agreed and implemented so that the development still delivers the fully functioning biodiversity objectives of the originally approved scheme. The approved plan will be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

- ii. If within 11 months of the date of this decision the local planning authority refuses to approve the LEMP or fails to give a decision within the prescribed period, an appeal shall have been made to, and accepted as validly made by, the Secretary of State.
- iii. If an appeal is made in pursuance of (ii) above, that appeal shall have been finally determined and the submitted LEMP shall have been approved by the secretary of State.
- iv. The approved LEMP shall have been carried out and completed in accordance with the approved timetable.

In the event of a legal challenge to this decision, or to a decision made in pursuant to the procedure set out in this condition, the operation of the time limits specified in this condition will be suspended until that legal challenge has been finally determined.

3. The car park hereby permitted shall be deconstructed and all the resultant hardstanding materials be removed within 6 months of the date of failure to meet any of the requirements set out in (i) to (iv) below:-

- i. Within 3 months of the date of this decision a surface water scheme for the site, based on the Appeal Statement (January 2025, Solve Planning), including:
  - Water quality assessment demonstrating that the total pollution mitigation index equals or exceeds the pollution hazard index; priority should be given to above ground SuDS components;
  - Drainage layout detailing the connectivity between the proposed development and the drainage components;
  - Details of how and when the full drainage system will be maintained, this should also include details of who will be responsible for the maintenance; and
  - Details of proposed overland flood flow routes in the event of system exceedance or failure, within demonstration of flow direction

shall have been submitted for the written approval of the local planning authority and the scheme shall include a timetable for its implementation.

- ii. If within 11 months of the date of this decision the local planning authority refuses to approve the scheme or fails to give a decision within the prescribed period, an appeal shall have been made to, and accepted as validly made by the Secretary of State.
- iii. If an appeal is made in pursuance of (ii) above, that appeal shall have been finally determined, and the submitted scheme shall have been approved by the Secretary of State.
- iv. The approved scheme shall have been carried out and completed in accordance with the approved timetable.

Upon implementation of the approved surface water scheme specified in this condition, that surface water scheme shall thereafter be maintained.

In the event of a legal challenge to this decision, or to a decision made in pursuant to the procedure set out in this condition, the operation of the time limits specified in this condition will be suspended until that legal challenge has been finally determined.

4. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved drawing: P23-1980\_EN\_0001\_B\_0001.

End of Schedule