

## COMMITTEE AGENDA REFERENCE: 5A

<b>APPLICATION REF:</b>	<b>RU.23/1213</b>
<b>LOCATION</b>	Wentworth Golf Club, Wentworth Estate, Virginia Water, Surrey, GU25 4NN
<b>PROPOSAL</b>	The erection of a building for golf performance training and practice with practice game area, landscaping and associated development following demolition of existing building
<b>TYPE</b>	Full Planning Permission
<b>EXPIRY DATE</b>	18/12/2023
<b>WARD</b>	Virginia Water
<b>CASE OFFICER</b>	Catrin Davies
<b>REASON FOR COMMITTEE DETERMINATION</b>	Major application
<i>If you have questions about this report please contact Ashley Smith, Victoria Gibson or the case officer.</i>	

### 1. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION

**It is recommended the Planning Committee authorises the HoP:**

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| 1. | <b>To grant planning permission subject to conditions as detailed in section 11 of this report.</b> |
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### 2. DETAILS OF THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 The application relates to part of the Wentworth Club, which is a large private golf course within Virginia Water. The Wentworth Club comprises extensive grounds including three 18 hole golf courses and one 9 hole course, warm up driving range, grass range, main clubhouse, tennis and health club and various support facilities.
- 2.2 Within the site is an existing materials store with surrounding hard standing used to park buggies. There are currently several hardstanding pathways to enter and exit the application site.
- 2.3 Site planning constraints:
- Green Belt
  - Site of Nature Conversation Importance
  - Biodiversity Opportunity Area
  - Site of Special Scientific Interest Buffer Zone

### 3. APPLICATION DETAILS

- 3.1 The application proposed to develop the existing practice area into a new “Performance Lab” building for the Wentworth Golf Club. The building would provide a golf coaching/teaching facility to enable using golf practice area in all weathers. The facilities within the building include x3 dedicated indoor teaching bays that open out onto the golf practice area, a dedicated indoor putting facility, a workshop and small office for the teaching professionals use and an ancillary café space.
- 3.2 As part of this planning application landscaping works associated with a “short game” practice area to the west and south of the building in the form of a putting green and two short game greens with bunkers are also proposed. The proposed scheme will require the partial infilling of the northern arm of the western fish pond to form a development platform for the southern edge of the short game area and the demolition of the existing store building.

### 4. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 There is extensive planning history to the site as whole, the following history is considered relevant to this application:

Reference	Details
RU.90/0292	The laying out of a buggy track on the south golf course at Wentworth Club-Granted 14/05/1990

### 5 SUMMARY OF MAIN RELEVANT STRATEGIES AND POLICIES RELEVANT TO THE DECISION

- 5.1 National Planning Policy Framework and Guidance.
- 5.2 The Runnymede 2030 Local Plan was adopted on 16 July 2020 and the policies have to be read as a whole. Any specific key policies will be referred to in the planning considerations.
- 5.3 SPD's which might be a material consideration in determination:
- Green and Blue Infrastructure (November 2021)
  - Runnymede Design Guide
- 5.4 This site falls within the designated Virginia Water Neighbourhood Area. However, a neighbourhood Plan has not been developed yet for this area.

## 6. CONSULTATIONS CARRIED OUT

### Consultees responses

Consultee	Comments
RBC Drainage Engineer	No objection subject to conditions
Environment Agency	No response
Surrey Wildlife Trust	No objections subject to conditions
Virginia Water Neighbourhood Forum	No comment
Archaeology	No objections

### Representations and comments from interested parties

6.2 Seven neighbouring properties were consulted in addition to being advertised on the Council's website. A site notice was also displayed at the site and it was advertised within the local press. 20 letters of representation have been received. These can be summarised as:

- There is no 'existing building' as such the proposal is inappropriate in the Green Belt
- Construction impact in terms of noise and traffic
- Noise pollution from the golf course.
- Increase traffic from the new facilities
- Loss of SNCI habitats
- Impact on bats
- Loss of trees
- Flooding
- The upgraded facilities are not needed.

## 7. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 In the determination of this application regard must be had to the Development Plan and National policy within the NPPF. This must be considered in light of the presumption in favour of sustainable development advocated by the NPPF. The key planning matters are:
- Principle of the development in the Green Belt
  - Design consideration including landscaping and trees.
  - Ecology and biodiversity
  - Energy and sustainability
  - Flooding
  - Neighbouring amenities
  - Other matters

Principle of the development in the Green Belt

- 7.2 The NPPF advises that the construction of new development, within the Green Belt should be considered inappropriate development, which is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 149 details certain buildings can be exceptions to this, including the provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport. This is subject to the facilities preserving the openness of the Green Belt and not conflicting with the purposes of including land within it. Paragraph 150 sets out further exceptions, including certain engineering operations, however these are also subject to the above assessment concerning openness. Policy EE16 on Outdoor Sport and Recreation in the Green Belt and Policy EE18 relating to engineering operations in the Green Belt of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan are both consistent with the above national policy.
- 7.3 The existing use of the site is as a golf practice area. The proposed golf “Performance Lab” building is considered to be a building to be used in connection with the existing outdoor sport (i.e., golf) with any café area being ancillary to this use. In addition, the formation of a short game practice area to the west and south of the building is proposed in the form of a putting green and two short game greens with bunkers and other landscaping works, all of which are considered to be engineering operations. Therefore, in order for the principle of the development to be considered acceptable in the Green Belt it is necessary to consider if the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.
- 7.4 In terms of impact on openness, the key principles in relation to openness is that it is not simply about volume, visual impact is implicitly part of the concept of openness of the Green Belt and that greater floor area and/or volume does not necessarily mean that there is a greater impact. It is also necessary to consider the impact or harm, if any, wrought by the change. Case law establishes that openness of the Green Belt is not limited to the volumetric approach; the word ‘openness’ is open-textured and many factors are capable of being a material consideration. The redline for the planning application site includes part of the golf course including an existing open sided wooden store building, an area of hardstanding and open storage areas. The proposed single storey building would be located adjacent to this existing hardstanding, and as part of the proposal the wooden store building and approx. 1794 sqm of existing hardstanding is proposed to be removed as part of this planning application. It is considered that the proposed building has been designed in a suitable manner with the integration of the existing landscape and additional planting and screening proposed. The engineering operations are also considered to reflect the existing character of the golf course, and open sport/ recreational use of the area. Therefore, both

visually and spatially it is considered that the proposal would preserve the openness of the Green Belt.

- 7.5 In terms of the purposes of the Green Belt, the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence; these are set out in paragraph 138 of the NPPF (2021). Given the sites location and the development proposed it is not considered that the proposal would undermine the purposes of the Green Belt.
- 7.6 In view of the above, the proposal is considered to be appropriate development in the Green Belt and due to the reasons above is considered to preserve the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt. The proposal complies with the NPPF and policy EE16 and EE18 of the Local Plan.

#### Design consideration including landscaping and trees

- 7.7 Policy EE1 seeks attractive and resilient places that make a positive contribution to the landscape setting, paying respect to layout, form, and scale. Policy EE1 (Townscape and Landscape Quality), seeks to create high quality and inclusive design which responds to local context. Regard should also be had to the Runnymede Design Guide SPD. The NPPF further strengthens the importance of good design to create 'high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings, and places' (para. 126, NPPF).
- 7.8 The application site is an existing practice area with the southern end of the existing practice area overgrown and currently used for the storage of soil and sand including utilising an existing materials storage building. The proposed scheme is considered to be visually acceptable given the context and existing wider use of the land however it is recognised that the proposal would result in the loss of a number ecological features to facilitate the proposed development, this is discussed further below.
- 7.9 In terms of landscaping/ trees, a total of 79 trees are proposed to be removed as part of this planning application to facilitate the proposed development. 23 are category 'B'; 53 are category 'C' and 3 are category 'U'. The proposal will also result in the replanting of trees to mitigate the loss of those to be remove. The applicant's supporting Design and Access Statement states that in order to mitigate this, new planting is proposed as well as regeneration of the existing woodland. This is between the proposed building and northern edge of the site area as well as the section of grassland located north west of the application site, the regeneration and replanting area is illustrated on the landscape strategy plan. This area will be planted with whips, transplants standards and advanced nursery stock and some strategically placed semi mature trees, into an area that is currently acid grassland. Full details shall be secured by way of condition to secure suitable mitigation both in terms of quality and quantity of trees.
- 7.10 The proposal has been designed to protect the root protection areas of the trees with the building raised above ground level and fitted with screw piles by hand to minimise disturbance to the ground and the tree root systems Tree protection details can be secured by way of condition.

#### Ecology and biodiversity

- 7.11 Policies SD7 and EE9 of the Local Plan sets out that development should protect existing biodiversity and include opportunities to achieve biodiversity net gain. Policy EE11 states that the Council will seek development to contribute towards the delivery of a high quality multi-functional Green Infrastructure network by requiring proposals to provide and make enhancements to onsite Green Infrastructure assets with Policy EE12 requiring the delivery

of a high quality multi-functional blue Infrastructure network by expecting Blue Infrastructure assets to be provided, protected, maintained and enhanced to deliver multiple benefits and services for biodiversity, recreation and landscape.

- 7.12 The submission by the applicants includes an Ecology Appraisal and a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) metric.
- 7.13 In terms of mitigation the Ecology Report establishes that the important ecological features include bats, Fish Ponds SNCI and Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland. Some of the trees proposed to be removed/ affected as part of this planning application were found to have the suitability to support roosting bats, the applicant underwent a further study on these trees to establish their roost potential which has confirmed that that no trees with moderate or high roosting potential are proposed to be removed to facilitate the development. Surrey Wildlife Trust who provides the Council's ecology advice has reviewed this information and has confirmed these assessment are credible and raises no objections, subject to conditions. SWT has highlighted that the supporting information submitted by the Applicants has not stated if the Veteran (T76) tree is to be protected. This can be secured by way of condition.
- 7.14 In addition, the proposal would through the proposed landscaping works result in the loss of 0.05 ha of SNCI habitat – otherwise known as the fish ponds to the south of the application site (circa 19% of the total SNCI area). 03 ha of Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland also being lost within the wider site. In terms of the fish ponds, the proposal involves the infilling of the northern arm of the western pond to accommodate the proposed short game area. It is proposed that the loss of open water will be compensated by the removal of 0.05 ha of Mixed Scrub habitat that has developed along and outwards from the western bank of this pond, which will result in the restoration of 0.05 ha of standing open water.
- 7.15 In terms of the loss of woodland the application proposes that the habitat losses will be compensated by the enhancement of habitats within the wider golf course through the creation of new habitats. These are proposed to the south of the application site as shown on Map A.2 in the ecology report. It is also proposed that ongoing positive nature conservation management of all new and retained/enhanced habitats will be undertaken. This habitat enhancement, creation and management can be achieved by condition and a Landscape Environmental Management Plan.
- 7.16 In addition, the ecology report has identified mitigation and enhancement measures including:
- Inclusion of a green roof on the proposed building
  - Provision of wildlife boxes for birds, bats and invertebrates; and

Creation of habitats for invertebrates and reptiles within the woodland/woodland edge habitats, such as the construction of a stag beetle loggery and reptile hibernacula/brash enhancements. Based on the DEFRA biodiversity metric, which provides a quantitative means of assessing habitat losses against gains, before and after the proposed development, the proposed development has assessed that, despite the loss of SNCI and Section 41 Priority Habitat, that additional net gains can be achieved of 34%.

- 7.17 In addition, and given the presence of ecological receptors on site, there is a risk of causing ecological harm resulting from construction activities. Therefore, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be required.

#### Energy and Sustainability

- 7.18 Policy SD8 of the RLP requires major development proposals to submit an energy statement demonstrating how the 'Be Lean, Be Clean, Be Green' energy hierarchy has been applied. An energy report by Senergy Building Services has been submitted in support of this planning application. This goes through the energy hierarchy and sets out the thermal efficiencies of the building, the use of air source heat pumps and Photo Voltaic Solar panels to meet the requirements of the Hierarchy.
- 7.19 Overall, the accompanying Energy Statement demonstrates that the proposed development will reduce energy consumption by the use of solar panel and hear pumps when compared to Part L of the Building Regulations by 17%. The proposed development therefore complies with Policy SD8.

#### Flooding

- 7.20 The NPPF at paragraph 94 requires that local authorities take full account of flood risk. Moreover, policy EE13 of the Local Plan requires that planning application submit a Flood Risk Assessment where appropriate, and that developments incorporating basements will need to demonstrate that the impact on ground water has been considered
- 7.21 The area of the pond that is proposed to be infilled as part of this proposal lies within flood zone 1 and compensatory storage is proposed as a result of the loss. It is understood that the proposed infill proposal provides an opportunity to restore the original perimeter of the pond, reclaiming the scrub area and providing compensatory storage equal to the storage removed, this will be on a level for level, volume for volume basis and is considered acceptable for the scheme proposed.
- 7.22 The Council's Drainage officer has been consulted and raised no objection subjection to suitable conditions regarding suds. With these conditions it is considered the proposal complies with EE13.

#### Neighbouring amenities

- 7.23 Due to the site location the proposal would not affect neighbouring properties in terms of loss of light and/or overbearing impact. The application site is an existing practice area associated with the wider established gold course. The proposal is not considered to result in a significant intensification of the use to the wider golf club use which would materially affect the amenity of residents in terms of noise and disturbance. The proposal complies with EE1.

#### Other matters

- 7.24 Regarding the letters received many concerns have been discussed above. In relation to several letters stating the existing structure is not a "building", the proposal has been assessed against the relevant policy considerations. Issues regarding traffic/noise in relation to the construction of the development is dealt with under separate Environmental Health Legislation.

## **8. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL)**

- 8.1 The application proposes is not liable for CIL.

## 9. EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

9.1 Consideration has been given to Articles 1 and 8 of the First Protocol of the European Convention on Human Rights. It is not considered that the decision would result in a violation of any person's rights under the Convention.

Consideration has been given to s149 of the Equality Act 2010 (as amended), which has imposed a public sector equality duty that requires a public authority in the exercise of its functions to have due regard to the need to:

- (a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act
- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- (c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

It is considered that the decision would have regard to this duty.

## 10. CONCLUSIONS

10.2 The development has been assessed against the following Development Plan policies – EE1, EE9, EE11 EE18 SD4 and SD7 of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan, the policies of the NPPF, guidance in the PPG, and other material considerations including third party representations. It has been concluded that the development would not result in any harm that would justify refusal in the public interest. The decision has been taken in compliance with the requirement of the NPPF to foster the delivery of sustainable development in a positive and proactive manner.

## 11. FORMAL OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

***The HoP be authorised to grant planning permission subject the subject to the following planning conditions:***

	Recommendation conditions
1.	<u>Standard three-year time limit</u> The development for which planning permission is hereby granted must be commenced no later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of



	<p>this permission.</p> <p>Reason: To comply with Section 51 of Part 4 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.</p>
2.	<p><u>Approved Plan</u></p> <p>The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out except in complete accordance with the approved the drawings as set out in the submitted schedule of approved plans. This includes finish floor levels.</p> <p>Reason: To ensure high quality design and to comply with Policy EE1 of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan and guidance in the NPPF.</p>
3.	<p><u>Materials</u></p> <p>The development hereby permitted shall be constructed entirely of the materials as stated in the Design and Access stated prepared by Mador architects dated July 2023</p> <p>Reason: To ensure high quality design and to comply with Policy EE1 of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan and guidance within the NPPF.</p>
4.	<p><u>Energy and sustainability</u></p> <p>The development hereby approved shall be undertaken in accordance with the energy efficiency and sustainable development report.</p> <p>Reason: To ensure the provision of suitable energy efficiency and suitability in accordance with Policy SD9 of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan and guidance within the NPPF.</p>
5.	<p><u>Ecology and biodiversity</u></p> <p>The development hereby approved shall be undertaken in accordance mitigation/compensation/enhancement measures as set out in the Ecological Impact Assessment prepared by Ecological Planning &amp; Research Ltd (EPR) dated 29<sup>th</sup> august 2023. Development shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved details for the construction of the development and the mitigation proposed within the above reports shall be undertaken prior to occupation of the development hereby approved.</p> <p>Reason: To ensure the provision of suitable mitigation for bats in accordance with Policy EE9 of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan and guidance within the NPPF.</p>
6.	<p><u>Tree protection</u></p> <p>The works shall be carried out in accordance with the Arboricultural Impact Assessment, Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan prepared by Merewood dated 16/11/2023. The protective measures shall remain in place until all works are complete and all machinery and materials have finally left site. Nothing shall be stored or placed in any area fenced in accordance with this condition, nor shall any fires be started, no tipping, refuelling, disposal of solvents or cement mixing carried out and ground levels within those areas shall not be altered, nor shall any excavation or vehicular access, other than that detailed within the approved plans, be made without the written consent of the LPA.</p>

	<p>There shall be no burning within six metres of the canopy of any retained tree(s). Where the approved protective measures and methods are not employed or are inadequately employed or any other requirements of this condition are not adhered to, remediation measures, to a specification agreed in writing by the LPA, shall take place prior to first occupation of the development, unless the LPA gives written consent to any variation.</p> <p>Reason: To protect the trees to be retained, enhance the appearance and biodiversity of the surrounding area and to comply with Policies EE1, EE9 and EE11 of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan and guidance within the NPPF.</p>
7.	<p><u>Surface water drainage system</u></p> <p>Prior to works above ground level, details of the proposed surface water drainage system shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The submitted details must provide the following:</p> <p>a) The results of detailed infiltration testing completed in accordance with BRE DG Digest: 365 and confirmation of groundwater levels.</p> <p>b) Detailed drainage design drawings and calculations to include: a finalised drainage layout detailing the location of drainage elements, pipe diameters, levels, and long and cross sections of each element including details of any flow restrictions and maintenance/risk reducing features (silt traps, inspection chambers etc.);</p> <p>c) A plan showing exceedance flows (i.e. during rainfall greater than design events or during blockage) and how property on and off site will be protected;</p> <p>d) Details of drainage management responsibilities and maintenance regimes;</p> <p>e) Details of how the drainage system will be protected during construction and how runoff (including any pollutants) from the development site will be managed before the drainage system is operational.</p> <p>2. No building shall be in use until demonstration (such as as-built drawings and/or photographic evidence) of the as-built surface water drainage system has been carried out by a suitably qualified person and written confirmation submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.</p> <p>Reason: To provide sustainable development, prevent an increased risk of flooding and to accord with policies SD7, EE12 and EE13 of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan and NPPF.</p>
8.	<p><u>Landscaping</u></p> <p>Notwithstanding the approved plans or any indication given otherwise, prior to any works above ground level full details of hard and soft landscaping scheme (including full details of replacement tree planting as shown on the landscape strategy plan and the proposed green roof of the building) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority</p> <p>This shall include a 'schedule of undertaking' the proposed works and samples of all hard surfacing.</p> <p>All approved landscaping details shall be undertaken and completed in</p>

	<p>accordance with the approved 'schedule of undertaking.'</p> <p>All approved landscaping works shall be retained in accordance with the approved details. If within a period of five years from the date of planting of any tree or shrub shown on the approved landscaping plan, that tree or shrub, or any tree or shrub planted in replacement for it, is removed, uprooted or destroyed or dies, or becomes seriously damaged or defective, another tree or shrub of the same species and size as that originally planted shall be planted in the immediate vicinity, unless the Local Planning Authority gives its prior written permission to any variation.</p> <p>Reason: To ensure the development is adequately landscaped and to comply with Policy EE9, EE11 and EE12 of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan and guidance within the NPPF.</p>
9.	<p><u>Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)</u></p> <p>Prior to the commencement of the development (including demolition) a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The submitted details must provide the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Map showing the location of all of the ecological features.</li> <li>b) Risk assessment of the potentially damaging construction activities</li> <li>c) Practical measures to avoid and reduce impacts during construction.</li> <li>d) Location and timing of works to avoid harm to biodiversity features.</li> <li>e) Responsible persons and lines of communication</li> <li>f) Use of protected fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs</li> <li>g) Details of the 'Soft Fell' method to all trees which will be felled, even if they have been assessed as having negligible suitability to support a bat roost.</li> <li>h) Details confirming that all trees having high or moderate suitability are protected from the proposed development and retained</li> </ul> <p>The development shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved details for construction of the development.</p> <p>Reason: In the interest of protecting potential ecological value and species in the site as required by Policies EE9, EE11 and EE12 of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan and guidance within the NPPF.</p>
10.	<p><u>Landscape Environmental Management Plan</u></p> <p>Prior to the commencement of the development including demolition, a <u>Landscape Environmental Management Plan</u> shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The management plan needs to secure the retention and enhancement of habitats within the Site and selected elements within the wider SNCI, by the creation of new habitats within the blue line, and the ongoing positive nature conservation management of all new and retained/enhanced habitats. These shall includes measures within the biodiversity net gain strategy and non-metric enhancements, as well as a ecological sensitive</p>

	<p>light management plan. The development shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved details.</p> <p>Reason: In the interest of protecting potential ecological value and species in the site as required by Policies EE9, EE11 and EE12 of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan and guidance within the NPPF.</p>
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