



# The Planning Inspectorate

An Executive Agency in the Department of the Environment and the Welsh Office

Room 1404  
Tollgate House  
Houlton Street  
Bristol BS2 9DJ

APPEAL  
DISMISSED

Direct Line 0272-218927  
Switchboard 0272-218811  
Fax No 0272-218769  
GTN 1374

Hertford Planning Services  
98-100 Fore Street  
HERTFORD  
Herts  
SG14 1AB

Your reference  
3179  
Our reference  
T/APP/C1950/A/93/219365/P2  
Date - 5 AUG 1993

Dear Sirs

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990, SECTION 78 AND SCHEDULE 6**  
**APPEAL BY GROSVENOR GOLF LTD**  
**APPLICATION NO:- S6/1014/90/FP**

1. As you know, I have been appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment to determine the above mentioned appeal against the decision of the Welwyn Hatfield District Council to refuse planning permission for the change of use of agricultural land to a golf course, the change of use and extensions to existing agricultural buildings to form a club house and ancillary facilities, a new vehicular access and provision of car parking at Colesdale Farm, Northaw Road West, Northaw. I have considered the written representations made by you and by the Council and also those made by Hertfordshire County Council, Northaw and Cuffley Parish Council and by other interested persons. I inspected the site on 14 June 1993.

2. The principle of a golf course and club house and all the ancillary buildings were accepted by the Council when they granted planning permission for the development in July 1991 subject to a satisfactory Section 106 Agreement. One of the matters to be covered by the Agreement was concerned with off site highway works which would provide a new vehicular access to the development. At the time of the application an illustrative layout of an access for the project was submitted and the Council considered that the overall impact of a proposal of those proportions would be acceptable. That scheme consisted of a new roundabout about 16 metres in diameter together with minor deviations to the Northaw Road carriageways on either approach to the roundabout.

3. Other access proposals in other locations have been considered but for different reasons they have been discarded. That has resulted in two alternative schemes for an access from Northaw Road West in a similar location as that proposed on the original application. One of these schemes involves land not within the control of the appellant. Consequently, it is the second of these schemes which is now under consideration and which I intend to take into account in reaching my decision. With some minor alterations it has been confirmed as being acceptable with regard to highway standards and safety requirements by the highway authority. However, this proposal requires much longer deviations to the main road on both approaches to the roundabout than the scheme originally considered by the planning authority and the roundabout itself would be 30 metres in diameter.

4. The Deposited Welwyn Hatfield District Plan was operative at the time of the original application. Since then it has progressed through virtually all the stages required to gain statutory status and it has been modified during that process and the Council have resolved to adopt the modified Plan in due course. It must therefore carry significant weight in the determination of this appeal in accordance with the advice given in both Planning Policy Guidance Notes 1 and 12. Policies CR1



and CR14 of the Deposited Plan are cited by the Council in the reason for refusing permission for this development. Policy CR1 promotes the conservation and enhancement of Areas of Landscape Conservation and the appeal site lies within such an area as shown on the Proposals Map. Policy CR14 deals with the provision of golf courses and sets down criteria which must be met for a proposal to be acceptable. These policies are complemented by policies in the Approved 1991 Alterations to the Hertfordshire Structure Plan which specifically refer to proposals for leisure activities in the green belt and their impact on the landscape.

5. Consequently, the development plan clearly contains policies which are material to this proposal. The emerging local plan, which is very close to being adopted, also contains policies which are in line with the Approved Structure Plan, and which are also material to this proposal. Following the advice given in Planning Policy Guidance Note 1 at paragraph 25, Section 54A of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act requires that appeals be decided in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case, the advanced stage of the emerging local plan and the fact that it accords with the current Structure Plan affords that plan considerable weight.

6. From the above, from my inspection of the site and its surroundings and from all the written representations made to me, I consider that this appeal turns on the following main issue. The issue is whether the roadworks considered to be necessary by the highway authority to provide an adequate and safe means of access to the proposed golf club would have an unacceptable impact on the landscape and cause harm to the character and nature of the area contrary to the development plan and the emerging local plan.

7. Although you do not accept that the increased scale of the highway works described in paragraphs 2 and 3 above are necessary in order to provide an acceptable access at your client's preferred location you have not supported that view with any evidence. This change in scale has caused the LPA to take the view that the environmental impact of the required works on the area would be unacceptable. The extent of the roadworks associated with the County's preferred solution stretches for over 200 metres along Northaw Road West. That road would be diverted from its presently straight alignment into your client's land, so that a large 30 metre diameter roundabout can be introduced, roughly at the mid way point of the diversion, without encroaching onto land outside your client's control.

8. Although Northaw Road has a straight horizontal alignment at the proposed location of the access its vertical alignment undulates. The position of the proposed roundabout virtually coincides with a high point along the road's alignment. Almost all of the new roundabout construction would be within a field which is open to views from parts of the existing highway and from vantage points to the north. The western arm of the proposed diversion of Northaw Road West would also encroach into open land and although it would be less visually intrusive it would have a detrimental impact on this rural area. The eastern arm of the diversion would be mostly screened by the line of trees on the north side of this part of Northaw Road West. However, the road diversion would require the removal of about 6 or 7 trees at the western extremity of the line of trees which are protected for their group value by a tree preservation order. Although I do not consider that this loss of these trees would be crucial to the decision in this case it would add to the harmful effect that the scale of these proposals would have on the landscape in this area. Over and above this effect the access drive into the golf course area from the proposed roundabout would further encroach into open countryside to the detriment of the landscape.

9. In order to ameliorate the harmful effects of these proposals your client has offered to implement an extensive landscaping scheme. This would aim to re-create the existing landscape by a variety of grasses, wild flowers, herbs, hedge planting and tree planting. This would include the introduction of some larger trees to

replace those that would be lost and to give an immediate impact. I accept that landscaping can mitigate the adverse effects of construction schemes and in some cases can enhance the particular surroundings of a development. However, it is my view that the scale of the proposed highway diversion, the roundabout and the access road into the golf club would have such a dramatic impact on these surroundings that a landscaping scheme could not sufficiently offset the adverse effects so as to make the project acceptable. Consequently, the scheme before me would result in harm to the green belt aim of preserving the open countryside. It would have a detrimental effect on a special landscape. Therefore it would cause harm to interests of acknowledged importance since it would be contrary to the policies of the development plan and the emerging local plan.

10. From the above I have come to the conclusion that the highway works required in order to provide an access to the proposed golf club on the appeal site which conforms with the advice in TA 42/84 would have an unacceptable impact in this landscape which lies within the green belt and which is also designated as a special landscape area in the emerging local plan. The length of the required roadworks and the extent of the intrusion of the roundabout and access road into open land would result in an extensive area of road construction being imposed into this rural landscape. The junction would be located at the brow of a hill and would be prominent to views from both near and far even though you have offered to ameliorate the impact with substantial planting of trees and hedges together with other landscaping.

11. The Council do not dispute that the appeal site is suitable for development as a golf course. However, they consider that the means of access in accordance with a scheme which would satisfy the Highway Authority's requirements make this proposal unacceptable. In your statement on your client's behalf you contend that the original roundabout proposal should be acceptable to accommodate the traffic generated by this proposal. I have been unable to make any assessment of the need on traffic and safety grounds for the extensive roadworks suggested as being necessary by the highway authority because of the lack of traffic evidence before me. My conclusions in this case are drawn from the evidence on the environmental impact of what is before me. With regard to the Council's suggestion that an alternative access to the site from Northaw Road East could be acceptable, again, I cannot comment in traffic terms but the significantly different layout proposed for a junction at that location would appear to reduce the overall impact on the surrounding area.

12. I have taken account of all other representations made to me but I find nothing so cogent as those matters on which I have based my decision.

13. For the above reasons, and in exercise of the powers transferred to me I hereby dismiss this appeal.

Yours faithfully



P.M. BRANNAN BSc CEng MICE MIHT MBIM  
Inspector