

DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE DATE: 9 March 2011

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APPLICATION REF. NO:	10/00752/OUT
STATUTORY DECISION DATE:	3 January 2011
WARD/PARISH:	SADBERGE AND WHESSOE
LOCATION:	Darlington Golf Club, Houghton Grange Whinfield Road, Darlington DL1 3JD
DESCRIPTION:	Construction of new link road between Sparrow Hall Drive and the existing golf club access road (outline) (Amended Plans Received 16 December 2010)
APPLICANT:	Mr David Proud

APPLICATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Outline planning permission is sought for the construction of an access road from Sparrow Hall Drive to the existing Golf Club access road.

This application was withdrawn from the Committee Meeting on 9 February 2011 to allow for more extensive consultations to be carried out.

As required by the Regulations, the following information has been submitted with the application: details of use, amount of development, indicative layout, scale parameters and indicative access point.

The indicative plans show the access road as being some 4.8m in width plus a 2m wide pedestrian footpath (pavement) to the side. The indicative plans also show the new proposed access road as being some 32m in length. The indicative plans include tactile paving and a footpath on the opposite side of the Sparrow Hall Drive to connect the proposal with the existing footpath network. The access path would cross a large grass verge to the north of Sparrow Hall Drive to connect with the existing access path to the Golf Club.

Current direct access to the Golf Club is along Green Lane, a narrow, poorly maintained, single vehicle wide track, approximately 600m long, off Whinfield Road. There are insufficient passing points along this track, which is a concern of the current users and causes problems when traffic is crossing in opposite directions.

The proposal would take access to the Golf Club direct from Sparrow Hall Drive. This would be the only vehicular access to the Golf Club. In the Transport Statement that has been submitted it is stated that the Golf Club generates the majority of its trips during daylight hours when members are arriving to play golf or departing on completion of their round. It is also stated that

the peak day to day flow of traffic is in the region of 12 cars per hour arriving at the club and subsequently leaving. In addition to members' traffic a small quantity of delivery vehicles also visit the golf club. The current car park at the Golf Club provides for approximately 50 spaces and there is no proposal to increase this capacity (there is no intensification of the use of the Golf Club associated with this application).

PLANNING HISTORY

The site has a lengthy planning history however this is not of direct relevance to the current planning application.

A planning application for a residential development (74 dwellings) with associated roads and sewers at land at Elm Tree House (Ref: 97/00523/FUL) was refused planning permission on 29 September 1997. The main reason for refusal was that the site was not in an area where provision was made for housing development as set out in the Darlington Urban Structure Plan and the Durham County Structure Plan (which were then in force).

PLANNING POLICY BACKGROUND

The following policies of the Borough of Darlington Local Plan are relevant:

E2 (Development Limits)
E7 (Landscape Conservation)
E12 (Trees and Development)
E23 (Nature and Development)
E29 (The Setting of New Development)
T8 (Access to Main Roads)
T12 (New Development - Road Capacity)
T39 (Conditions for Pedestrians)

RESULTS OF CONSULTATION AND PUBLICITY

Initial consultation letters were sent to the occupiers of nearby residential properties and a site notice was displayed. Although the initial consultations went beyond the statutory requirements, a wider consultation exercise has been subsequently carried out (consulting 466 properties) as there has been a lot of interest in the proposal from local residents.

At the time of writing 20 objection letters have been received and the points raised are set out below. Any additional letters received will be reported verbally at the Committee Meeting. The consultation period (21 days) given on the letters sent to local residents does not expire until the 10 March 2011 which is obviously after the date of the Committee Meeting. Should the Committee resolve to approve the application, any subsequent decision notice would not be issued until after that date. Should any new material matters arise following the Committee before the decision is issued Members may wish to require the application to be referred back to the next available meeting.

Objectors' comments in relation to highways concerns:

- *I object to this application because of the increase in traffic which will occur along Sparrow Hall Drive already congested at times by on street parking.*

- *I object to this application on the grounds that there will be a big increase in traffic from people trying to avoid the traffic lights at Asda during busy periods. There are already problems with off road motorbikes and, since the pedestrian link was put in, cars have tried to use this new footpath/cycleway.*
- *Making this a through road will increase traffic, danger to pedestrians and will inevitably lead to more noise and disturbance for residents in what is a relatively quiet area.*
- *I must oppose this as an oversized cycle path has just been constructed, the traffic already on Sparrow Hall Drive is extremely busy as there are many roads off it, not to mention the hold ups from the constant stream of learner drivers. This is already an accident waiting to happen, so to construct another line of traffic will compound to the already congestion. Surely not.*
- *We strongly object to this application being granted. Congestion due to continuous parking on the southern side of Sparrow Hall Drive. Children crossing between parked cars to play area on north side of road. Additional parking on northern side of road at junction with Whinfield Road, forcing vehicles to face traffic entering Sparrow Hall Drive having faced this problem personally in both directions. It is strongly felt locally that the granting of this application is a far greater inconvenience to residents to not granting it to the applicants.*
- *Sparrow Hall Drive provides more than adequate access into and out of 'The Elms' estate on which I have lived with my children for 18 years. The construction of a new link road will do nothing other than increase the volume of traffic significantly which is both unnecessary and serves no purpose or benefit to the residents.*
- *I genuinely believe it will be seen as a quick option to get to get to Winbush Way to avoid the traffic lights near Adsa at the Whinbush Way / Springfield Road junction. I have absolutely no doubt it will become a speed track and this creates the obvious fear of accidents or worse.*
- *All the people living around here are very much aware of the dangers on that road already. There is already joy riding up and down that road, the residents have constantly complained of speeding traffic and parking problems and traffic calming measures have been denied*
- *There will be severe congestion in Sparrow Hall Drive particularly when open days are run at the Golf Club. Parking facilities at the Club are inadequate for the 'big day' and there will be a parking overspill into Sparrow Hall Drive and other adjacent roads.*
- *There will be an accumulation of drivers that will take advantage of this situation to use this route as a short-cut onto Whinfield Road by-passing Whinbush Way. A serious congestion problem will be caused by people accessing the main road from the Golf Road junction. In the original development of the 'Fairways' site this route was prohibited.*
- *Sparrow Hall Drive is the only access road I and other residents can use to get to our houses; it is already busy with traffic to the doctor's surgery and is also used regularly by driving schools for 3 point turn practice. In the Echo article it says no more than 12 cars an hour, this might be an average but early morning sees a lot more traffic than that, has an official survey been carried out?*
- *Apparently it has been determined that traffic will only be increase by 12 cars per hour along Sparrow Hall Drive, without mention of the times the Golf Club is most likely to be used, i.e. early Saturday and Sunday mornings. Also the clubhouse has social functions that end midnight / 1 a.m. so will all club users be told to stagger their leaving times over the course of the evening or will they all leave in one procession at closing time?*

- *At present only approximately 300 houses use Sparrow Hall Drive for access. If a new access road is built linking it to the Golf Club and the adjoining farm I am sure this will be used to instigate a new planning application for a housing development, which will in turn roughly double the volume of traffic to 600 plus households along a Drive which is relatively peaceful for the 40 households that reside here.*
- *When we have bad weather Sparrow Hall Drive is not gritted but that appears not to have been taken into account when a previous planning application was approved (without informing residents who would be affected) that changed access to Oban Court from Whinbrush Way, to access via Sparrow Hall Drive and Killin Road.*
- *As this is a residential area neither of these roads are gritted but are now used almost daily by goods vehicles delivering to Oban Court, as well as staff, visitors and emergency services. The junction of Sparrow Hall Drive and Killin Road is now an accident waiting to happen, which will only be exacerbated by increasing the volume of traffic.*
- *Lots of children use the playing field at the top of Balmoral Road to play football, games etc and need to cross this road.*
- *We do not feel a new road is necessary. There is a perfectly good access road from Whinfield Road to the Golf Club.*
- *The application will lead to an increased number of cars using the Golf Club lane as a short cut onto whinfield Estate when coming from the North Road area.*
- *This link road will open up Sparrow Hall Drive and Green Lane as a rat run for those who want to short cut the traffic lights at the junction of Whinfield Road and Whinbush Way. This is already a problem with some motorcyclists.*
- *Wont creating this road make a short cut for people to take coming from Whinfield Road via Green Lane - We could end up with half of Whinfield residents using this short cut to miss out traffic lights at Whinbush way/Whinfield road junction? Has this been thought about?*
- *The actual road up to the golf course from Whinfield Road is too narrow and when it is used as a short cut to miss the traffic lights, there are going to be accidents!*
- *Neither the Golf Club lane nor Sparrow Hall Drive are suitable for increased volumes of traffic.*
- *Surely it's better to develop green lane to accommodate the Golf Club's needs and maybe have traffic lights on Green Lane.*
- *Sparrow Hall Drive is a residential estate road and is not suitable for the extra traffic that would use the road should the planning application be successful. The road is not wide enough to take the delivery lorries that would have to use it as there are always parked cars at the side of the road. There are also safety issues to consider as this road is used by children walking to school and Asda. I feel using this road as an access road would spoil the area with the extra noise and traffic. A better option would be to develop Green Lane. If the link to Green Lane could be permanently sealed off then, provided that the extra volume of traffic could be accurately predicted, it would be worth reconsidering.*
- *There is already adequate access along Green Lane, the Golf Club should be resurfacing this road instead of building a new one, I believe they are only going for the cheaper option.*
- *Is this the first time Darlington Council is wanting to help the motorist. In my view the council has lately made traffic come to a standstill, i.e. the throughabout, bus stops that protrude from the footpaths .So why is this proposal for a new link road in Sparrow Hall Drive being considered due to the detrimental effect of local residents . Motorists, Families with young children etc. Has the consideration of the number of cars parked in Sparrow hall drive, Parents and Grandparents taking young children walking to the*

park, Driving Instructors taking learner drivers for lessons doing 3 point turns etc. being taken into account during discussions on this proposal. P.S I think drivers with sat nav being misdirected are the instigators of this proposal

- *The golf club claim only 12 cars per hour will use the new road. Why would the club go to such expenditure to service 12 cars. The reality is that around 30 players per hour tee off during peak periods. Most golfers travel alone meaning 60 cars per hour to/ from the club plus service vehicles and staff travelling to/ from work.*
- *The statement of 10 vehicles of an hour is on the cautious side, was the audit done in the winter, as a lot more vehicles use the lane in the summer time. Was the audit done by an independent source?*
- *Late night traffic will also increase on Sparrow Hall Drive due to people leaving social functions at the golf club.*
- *HGV traffic would also increase on Sparrow Hall Drive - brewery vehicles etc. Currently all of this traffic is restricted to green lane with minimal impact on residents.*
- *Event days where they will be extra traffic. Night time disturbance when the bar closes Taxis coming and going picking people up in unsociable hours.*
- *Also because of the proximity of the play area.*
- *Large numbers of pedestrians use this area, particularly small children travelling to and from the school near Asda and people accessing Green Lane to exercise dogs. The end of Sparrowhall Drive is also used for parking by people playing football on Springfield Park etc.*
- *The increased traffic will also make it a more dangerous place for the vast number of children who live on the estate and use the adjacent field and play area for recreational purposes*

Objectors' comments in relation to amenity concerns:

- *It will also significantly increase the noise levels on the estate creating noise pollution and will totally destroy the harmony of the estate.*
- *We do not want any green space that is there now to be taken away.*
- *If a new road is built the section of Green Lane now used will quickly become a bigger eyesore than it already is. At the moment it is disgraceful, the ditches on either side are full of rubbish and water with the potential of flooding to the adjacent houses. If the new road is built who will be responsible for the upkeep of the current road as it appears that no-one at the moment takes any responsibility for it*
- *I object to this application of grounds of health and safety, pollution and noise.*

Other points raised by objectors:

- *I genuinely believe it could also increase the potential of extra crime in the area because it will give greater access to house burglars and car thieves.*
- *Overall the construction of the new road will have absolutely no benefit to the residents and as the council is there to look after its residents then I strongly urge that you do not proceed with the plan.*
- *I am quite annoyed with the Council over this. I made enquiries months ago after hearing about it through the people in Sparrow hall and at the Golf Club. I was told in no uncertain terms that it was a preposterous idea and would not even be considered. I promptly went away and put everyone's mind at rest...another lesson learned.*
- *I can't see how it can now have gone to the stage of consultation.*

- *What is wrong with the road they already have? It is direct access to the club and I would say a much easier way to get there. I'm assuming that it's to cut the journey time of members coming from Haughton road way but it's only a few minutes on the journey to get to the existing road. I would suggest that, because it's in a bit of disrepair, a few people are afraid of ruining the suspension on their brand new jags!*
- *Whereas I can see the benefits to Darlington Golf Club members I believe that there are too many hidden problems to be faced by local residents.*
- *The extra traffic will affect everyone using Sparrow Hall Drive. When my estate was built in 1992 Yuill's had applied to build houses on the strip of land to the north of Sparrow Hall Drive (where they had their site compound) but it was turned down as it was green belt land, so how can a road be driven through it? Also at the time when Sparrow Hall Drive was extended for the new estate the end of the road virtually met Green Lane and traffic did start driving over the curb across the short strip of land to access Green Lane. DBC then reduced the end of Sparrow Hall Drive by about 10ft and put boulders in place to prevent this.*
- *The golf club seem to have managed for the past 103 years and the fact that their lane is in a bad state of repair is not a Darlington tax payer's problem especially in the current economic climate.*
- *A much more important issue raised by allowing this access road is the previous planning application for a housing development of approximately 300 houses on Elm Tree House Farm, adjacent to the Golf Club and Sparrow Hall Drive. That application included a new access Road that would have linked Sparrow Hall Drive to Winfield Road to create access to the farmland. There were numerous objections to that application due to the expected increase in traffic and pressures on local services.*

At the time of writing, one 'representation' letter was received and the points made are set out below:

- *I am very much in favour of the new proposal, it is the most sensible way forward for a number of reasons.*
- *Green Lane is now in a bad state of repair and is too narrow to safely take the traffic to the Golf Club.*
- *Green Lane access and exit to Winfield Road should be closed to vehicular traffic with bollards and be pedestrian only.*
- *Speeding Golf Club traffic along the narrow Green Lane is a major road safety hazard to pedestrians, particularly children, when crossing the playing fields.*
- *The proposed alternative traffic route (Sparrow Hall Drive) is a well surfaced main thoroughfare quite capable of taking the increase in traffic. Access to Winfield Road is good and will be further improved when work on the traffic light junction is complete.*
- *Living close to Green Lane I think that 12 cars an hour is a reasonable figure as an average throughout daylight hours. There are of course peaks above this e.g. Saturday morning in the summer.*

An objection was received from **Councillor Copeland** and the points raised are set out below:

- *I regret that we were not consulted earlier as this application will have a significant impact on traffic movements and traffic congestion on Whinbush Way which is the main route into Haughton North Ward. Now that word has got out about this application residents are expressing their concerns and Winfield Residents' Association is taking an active role in canvassing views. They will be writing to you on behalf of residents once*

their views are clear. The main concerns are about an increase in volume of traffic, increased risk of accidents as this is a major route taken by children going to school and also has a doctor's surgery and two complexes serving the elderly not to mention the supermarket which serves a large population.

The **Highways Officer** has commented that there is sufficient capacity within the local highway network to accommodate the traffic associated with the proposal. The Highways Officer has also stated that a condition to secure a link to the footpath network and for details of provision of interceptor drains (for surface water) would be required.

The **Arboricultural Officer** has raised no objections to the proposal but has commented that there is an early mature Ash tree (in poor form and reasonable condition) located within the hedge row which may need to be removed to facilitate the development. The Arboricultural Officer has also commented that a condition should be attached to any planning permission for three trees (Oak, Lime and Hornbeam) to be planted as part of a tree planting scheme.

PLANNING ISSUES

The main planning issues to be taken into account are:

- Planning Policy
- Visual Amenity
- Residential Amenity
- Highways Matters
- Landscape and Ecology

Planning Policy

The site is located outside of the Development Limits set out in the Borough of Darlington Local Plan (November 1997). Policy E2 (Development Limits) of the Local Plan states that development for countryside related sports or recreation activities will be permitted outside the development limits provided that unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the rural area is avoided.

The proposed link road is required to provide better access to Darlington Golf Club which is an existing recreational facility in the countryside (outside the development limits). The proposal is acceptable in principle subject to other matters of development control which includes consideration of the impact on the character and appearance of the area and highway matters.

Visual Amenity

Sparrow Hall Drive is a relatively wide road and is bounded by the sides of properties in Carnoustie Grove. There are currently three roads which take direct access to the south from Sparrow Hall Drive. Whilst the proposed new link road to the Golf Club would be to the north of Sparrow Hall Drive, it would be in keeping with the character of the road network in this area.

The proposed new link road would cross an existing grass verge and result in the loss of a section of hedge to the north of the verge. Notwithstanding this the proposed new link road would not be a prominent feature and would be in keeping with its setting in the area. A

condition requiring tree planting would be appropriate to mitigate against the impacts of the proposal.

Residential Amenity

The properties on Carnoustie Grove opposite the location of the proposed new access road do not have any windows on their side elevations which reduces the impacts of the proposal in relation to residential amenity.

The proposal would not generate significant amounts of traffic to the extent that it would result in any specific issues of noise and disturbance to occupiers of nearby residential properties.

Highways Matters

Many of the objection letters have included comments regarding the possibility of cars using the proposed access road to get access to Sparrow Hall Drive via Green Lane (the existing access to the Golf Club off Whinfield Road) as a means of avoiding the traffic lights on the junction of Whinfield Road and Whinbush Way. The existing Green Lane access (which is narrow and in a poor state of repair) is not in the ownership of the Golf Club or the Council. Although it would be possible for vehicles to access Sparrow Hall Drive direct via Green Lane and the proposed link Road, this is not the purpose of the proposal which is only intended to be used to access the existing Golf Club.

The proposal would not result in a significant increases in traffic levels in the area (Sparrow Hall Drive) to the extent that the proposal would be harmful to Highway Safety. In the Transport Statement submitted with the application it is stated that the peak day to day flow of traffic is in the region of 12 cars per hour. The Highways Officer has commented that there is sufficient capacity within the local highway network to accommodate the altered traffic flow generated by the proposal.

Landscape and Ecology

The development would result in the loss of part of a hedge on the grass verge to the north of Sparrow Hall Drive. The hedgerow is over 20m in length and is adjacent to land used for agriculture. This therefore falls within the scope of the Hedgerows Regulations 1997 where a notification would normally be required to remove part of the hedge.

As a section of the hedge is proposed to be removed as part of a scheme for which a planning application has been submitted, a separate notification for the removal of the hedge is not required.

The hedge does not appear to be important as defined in the Hedgerow Regulations however ecological investigations have not been carried out. A condition would therefore be required for ecological investigations to be carried out and for these details to be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

The hedge includes a mature Ash tree which would need to be removed to facilitate the development. As part of mitigation measures against the loss of this tree and the hedgerow in general, a condition would be required for a scheme for replacement tree planting to be submitted and approved.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect

CONCLUSION

The proposal would not result in any significant detrimental impacts in terms of visual or residential amenity. As the proposal would result in the loss of a section of hedge row, conditions are required for tree planting to mitigate the impacts. In addition an ecological survey is required, so that any issues regarding the impact of the proposal on ecology can be addressed. The proposal will not generate an increase in traffic beyond that which the existing road network can cope with and does not raise any specific issues in relation to highways safety.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS:

1. A1 Outline (Reserved Matters)
2. A2 Outline (Implementation of Time)
3. No development shall commence until an Ecological Assessment of the site including the existing hedgerow has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The submitted details shall include details of any mitigation measures that may be necessary. The development shall not be carried out other than in accordance with the approved details.

REASON – The proposal would result in the removal of part of a hedgerow which may have an importance with regard to ecology. An ecological assessment is required to ensure that the development will not cause any significant or unacceptable harm to ecology, in accordance with Policy E23 (Nature and Development) of the Borough Local Plan 1997.

4. No development shall commence until details of a tree planting scheme to include 1 No. Oak (*Quercus robur*), 1No. Lime (*Tilia cordata*) and 1 No. Hornbeam (*Carpinus Betula*) have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the development shall not take place other than in accordance with the approved tree planting scheme.

REASON – The proposal would result in the removal of part of a hedgerow and a tree planting scheme is required to mitigate against this loss, in accordance with Policy E12 (Trees and Development) of the Borough of Darlington Local Plan 1997.

5. No development shall commence until details of the provisions made for access by pedestrians including dropped crossings/tactile paving, and a short section of footway within the highway verge to the south of Sparrow Hall Drive, have been submitted to and

approved by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the development shall not take place other than in accordance with the approved tree planting scheme.

REASON– The new access would attract use by pedestrians which should be adequately accommodated in accordance with Policy T39 (Conditions for Pedestrians) of the Borough of Darlington Local Plan 1997.

6. No development shall commence until details of the provisions made for ensuring that surface water does not discharge onto the public highway, have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the development shall not take place other than in accordance with the approved tree planting scheme.

REASON– To ensure that surface water does not discharge onto the public highway in the interests of highways safety.

Suggested summary of reasons for granting planning permission

This outline planning application involves the construction of new link road to Darlington Golf Club from Sparrow Hall Drive. The proposed development is considered acceptable and will not cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the area. The proposal has no significant impacts in terms of residential amenity. The proposal does not adversely impact on highway safety. No issues are raised in relation to crime prevention. The proposal is considered acceptable in light of the following Policies of the Borough of Darlington Local Plan 1997:

E2 (Development Limits)
E7 (Landscape Conservation)
E12 (Trees and Development)
E23 (Nature and Development)
E29 (The Setting of New Development)
T8 (Access to Main Roads)
T12 (New Development - Road Capacity)
T39 (Conditions for Pedestrians)

INFORMATIVES

The applicant is advised that works are required within the public highway on Sparrow Hall Drive and contact must be made with the Assistant Director : Highways and Engineering (contact Mr.A.Ward 01325 388743) to arrange for the works to be carried out or to obtain authority under Sec.184 of the Highways Act 1980 to execute the works.