

Item 8	08/01252/OUT	Refusal of Outline Planning Permission
Case Officer	Caron Taylor	
Ward	Heath Charnock And Rivington	
Proposal	Erection of proposed country house hotel (outline application)	
Location	Rivington Village Club Horrobin Lane Rivington HorwichBolton	
Applicant	Rivington Village Bowling Club	
	The application has been brought to the Chairman's Briefing, as letters of support and objection have been received.	
	Consultation expiry: 13th January 2009	
	Application expiry: 5th March 2009	
Proposal	<p>The application is for the erection of a proposed country house hotel. The application is made in outline only including access, layout and scale. The principle of the development and these three matters only are for consideration by this application. The appearance and landscaping of the scheme are not to be considered. It is proposed to increase the size of the existing access in order to accommodate passing vehicles.</p>	
Summary	<p>The site is in the Green Belt where development is strictly controlled. The proposal is not a form of appropriate development and there must therefore be very special circumstances sufficient to outweigh Green Belt policy if it is to be permitted.</p> <p>A case for very special circumstances has been put forward in the Design and Access Statement accompanying the application, however it is not considered that the argument put forward is sufficient to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. No details have been given of alternatives that have been explored to secure the maintenance of the grounds and to boost membership numbers before the current application was submitted. In addition, a significant protected tree will need to be felled to widen the access and although the position of the building on the site is considered acceptable a layout more closely reflecting footprint of the public house that was demolished in 1903 would be more appropriate. The scale of the proposal is considered unacceptable with the mass of the building when viewed from the front being too great particularly the large dormer window and the unacceptably large front roof slope.</p>	
Policies	<p>Planning Policy Guidance note 2: Green Belts Regional Spatial Strategy policy RDF4: Green Belts Chorley Borough Local Plan policies DC1, EP9, HT7 and LT14</p>	
Planning History	<p>There is no recent site history relevant to the application.</p>	
Background	<p>The existing bowling club building is a 'modern' construction and will be removed as part of the proposal. The site is in the Green Belt and also within Rivington Conservation Area. The trees of</p>	

the site are covered by Tree Preservation Order 18 (Rivington) 1991. The bowling green itself is covered by Policy LT14 (Public, Private, Educational and Institutional Playing Fields, Parks and other Recreational Open Space), but the site of the proposed building is outside this allocation.

Consultations

Chorley's Conservation Officer

States that from a conservation perspective they consider the access acceptable. In terms of the layout, although the location of the building within the plot is acceptable, a better solution would be to use more of the footprint of the original building on the site (Black A Moors Head Hotel) that was demolished in 1903.

The Conservation Officer considers the scale of the proposal to be unacceptable. The mass of the building when viewing the principle elevation (front) is too great. The large dormer window is unacceptable in design terms (related to scale), as is the vast expanse of roof that will be clearly visible from public viewpoints within Rivington Conservation Area. A better solution would be to more closely follow the plan form of the original building - a 'H' plan. It may also be better to consider two separate buildings - the 'hotel' element at the front with a separate clubhouse at the rear. This would remove the requirement to accommodate the differing site levels within one building, and therefore remove the need for the unacceptably large, front roof slope.

Chorley's Sport, Play & Physical Activity Manager

Was consulted on the application in relation to what steps club's such as this that are struggling financially could do to try to improve their situation. It was advised that there were a number of things the club could try:

Club Development: The club can if they produce a development plan identify various methods to increase 1) Participation 2) Volunteers 3) Coaches and Qualified people 4) In future support to facility improvement;

The above do usually have a cost implication, but this can be applied for via several community support funds such as Awards for All, Grassroots Grants for Lancashire, Co-operative Trust etc to name but three (and the Council can usually help with advice here)

School Club Link programmes: Clubs now have the opportunity to increase participation with local schools and assist in delivery, after school clubs, coaching, and festivals. Usually this link can be created with the local authority sports development unit, but more recently via support of there School Sport Co-ordinator assigned to the local schools. This programme is managed by the School Sport Partnership (contacts available);

Clubmark: Clubmark is a national accreditation (similar to British standards or quest etc) that not only identify well run clubs and those that are safe and effective, but also provides a superb club management tool kit that is recognised by National Governing Body and schools / parents etc. Again support locally can be accessed. In Chorley we also have the first Crown Green Bowling Club Coppull JBC, who recently gained this award. Contacts are available for people who could provide support in this area;

Coach Education etc: The National Governing Body is now running coach education courses both at Level One and Two again and the Council can help signpost to these awards;

Local high schools and He and FE colleges are a good source of volunteers and young leaders who may be able to assist, again the Council can provide the links there.

To summarise, there are several ways to assist clubs and other practical ways would be for the club to do a self assessment or a club and organisational needs assessment of what they have and what they wish to achieve and the Council have many of the templates and expertise to guide and support this process.

LCC Ecology

The County Ecologist has commented on the proximity of Biological Heritage Sites, bat roosts, breeding birds and the need for tree protection during construction and suggests appropriate conditions and informative notes that can be applied

Chorley's Arboricultural Officer

The trees on the site are covered by Tree Preservation Order 18 (Rivington) 1991. The Arboricultural Officer states the trees appear in very good condition, with no obvious major defects or fungal bodies evident.

All the trees are mature, with the slightly drawn look typical of woodland trees. They stand between 13 and 18 metres high and the canopies are intermingled. The two Beech trees either side of the entrance have a heavy covering of ivy on the trunks and are certainly the specimens of the group.

One of the Beech trees would be removed by the entrance widening and the other would probably suffer root damage during the works. At the top of the ramp, erection of the new building would necessitate the removal of a further two Sycamores and a Holly. The two beech trees at the entrance are both big, imposing trees and are visible from most of the length of Horrobin Lane as one approaches. It would be a real loss to remove one or both of these trees plus the others on site when there is no arboricultural reason to do so and they would object to the application being approved because of this.

LCC Highways

Have no highway objections

- Rivington Parish Council
- Make the following comments:
- Access is of grave concern; the entrance would be on a sharp bend;
- Rivington Foundation Primary School - children being dropped off and picked up already create great congestion. A hotel would add to this.
- More congestion would inhibit 2-way traffic;
- It has been suggested that other avenues be explored to make the Bowling Club a viable business without building a new hotel;

- The Councillors and the inhabitants of Rivington Village do not want to see a large development that is not in keeping with the conservation area; therefore, if it were to go ahead, the building must fit in with the area;
- Rivington Church would lose the arrangement the parishioners have for the parking of their cars on Sunday mornings when they attend morning worship and for evening events;
- No one wants to see the hotel become a venue for the congregation of motor bikers or outside drinkers;
- Everyone is reserving full comments until they have seen the full plans (the case officer);
- 3 out of the 5 Parish Councillors are not against the Outline Planning Application and 1 Councillor will not comment until the Full Planning Application has been seen (the case officer has made the Parish Council aware that the application is outline and if they are against the principle they must comment at this stage);
- None of the people of Rivington Village appear to be against the Bowling Club being turned into a Hotel if it is in keeping with the conservation area. All would like a clause stipulating that the hotel remains privately owned and cannot be sold to a chain at some future date (the case officer has advised that the Council would have no control over the ownership of the building).

Representations

Six letters of objection have been received. These can be summarised as:

- Highway safety, the site is on a narrow bend in an area that is already very congested. The proposal will result in traffic, parking and safety issues, especially on Horrobin Lane where parking is already a problem;
- The scheme will not benefit the local residents;
- Rivington will lose its unique appeal;
- The building will dominate the new of the approach to Rivington as it is an elevated spot. It would transform the character of the village and destroy the rural tranquillity.
- It is inappropriate to have a licensed premises so close to a primary school where there are so few other surrounding buildings;
- Trees will be removed impacting on wildlife;
- Although the scheme has architectural merit and would seem to be fitting providing a desirable feature in the village that will attract passing trade, they are concerned that the parking provision is inadequate and overflow parking will adversely detract from the development and safety will be reduced. The site is close to a school and a Parish church that require vehicular access. Being rural setting pupils at the school are largely dropped off and picked up from the school. Roadside parking narrows the road.

A letter has been received stating that the proposal will retain an existing facility in the village with the addition of a potentially sensitive building. They believe that some kind of development

should be permitted on the site otherwise it may become derelict and a high quality small country house hotel and restaurant would seem appropriate.

A further letter has been received stating that although they have no objection in principle they are concerned that any development should not exceed the size of the building requested by the application in relation to both the size of the hotel and the number of bedrooms. They are also concerned that the rural nature of the area is maintained and in particular that yellow lines be avoided.

Applicant's Case

Rivington Village Bowling Club has been long established providing a valuable amenity for the local community. However, due to several factors, the membership of the Bowling Club has declined significantly over the recent years and although the members presently undertake the general maintenance tasks the actual cost of running the club is becoming increasingly onerous and is such that without some form of initiative the club will inevitably and close.

In order to avoid closure and the loss of a valuable social amenity it was decided that some form of method of saving the club must be identified and the fact that there was once a Public House located on the site provided inspiration for the proposal. As it is a Green Belt location it was recognised that there must be very special circumstances to be acceptable in planning terms. The loss of an historic and valuable amenity was seen as justification for this initiative and that it is leisure led project that contributes to the history of Rivington Village especially by the re-introduction and construction in its original form.

However it was decided that just a public house would not be viable or attractive within the location and therefore a small hotel and country restaurant with public areas would be a satisfactory solution, constructed to be similar to the demolished public house and not exceeding the footprint of the former building. The roof space would be utilised to provide living quarters. It would have 8 rooms as it was considered less that this would not succeed as a project.

By obtaining planning consent it would enable the bowling club to stay on site and a meeting room facility within the proposed building would be provided solely for the use of the members based on a peppercorn rent. Visitors would be allowed to enjoy these facilities including use of the bowling green.

Assessment

Green Belt

The site is in the Green Belt where development is strictly controlled. Planning Policy Guidance note 2: Green Belts (PPG2) and Local Plan Policy DC1 state that the construction of new buildings is inappropriate unless it is for specified purposes and the proposal would not fall within one of the categories to be appropriate development.

As the building is inappropriate development in the Green Belt it is therefore harmful by definition in relation to national Planning Policy Guidance Note 2: Green Belts (PPG2) and Local Plan Policy DC1 and unacceptable in principle.

Very Special Circumstances / Applicant's Case

If inappropriate development is to be permitted in the Green Belt, there must be very special circumstances to permit it. Very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development will not exist unless the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. Even if a case for very special circumstances is argued, that argument must carry such weight that is sufficient to outweigh the harm caused to the Green Belt.

A case for very special circumstances has been put forward in the Design and Access Statement accompanying the application (see applicant's case), however it is not considered that the argument put forward is sufficient to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. No details have been given of alternatives that have been explored to secure the maintenance of the grounds and to boost membership numbers before the current application was submitted. As can be seen from the comments of the Council's Sport, Play & Physical Activity Manager there are several steps that Club can take to try and boost membership with which the Council's can provide assistance. If the main aim of the Bowling Club is to maintain the bowling and continue as a club such alternatives should have been exhausted first and detailed information on the efforts made included with the application, which has not been done.

There was previously a public house on the site, however this was demolished in 1903 and has little, if any weight towards being very special circumstances.

Overall, it is not considered that the current scheme would constitute very special circumstances sufficient to outweigh Green Belt policy, the application is therefore unacceptable in principle. The Club should try other means of boosting club membership to secure the future of the club.

Visual Amenity/Landscape Impact

It is considered that the vast expanse of roof that will be clearly visible from public viewpoints within the area especially from Horrobin Lane as the site is approached from the southwest will have an unacceptable impact on the visual amenity and landscape of the area.

Access, Layout and Scale and Trees

Although the principle of the development is considered unacceptable, the access layout and scale have been applied for and must be considered as part of the application:

The access is considered acceptable in terms of highways, however the loss of one of the Beech trees by the entrance is seen as unacceptable. This protected tree is highly visible along the length of Horrobin Lane and makes a significant contribution to the amenity of the area. The application is therefore considered contrary to policy EP9 of the Local Plan that states proposals that would result in the loss of trees that make a valuable contribution to the character of the landscape, a building or settlement will not be permitted. The scheme would also result in the loss of two protected Sycamores and a Holly at the top of the ramp. These trees are viewed more in the context of the woodland than the more isolated Beech trees at the access and Policy EP9 does allow replanting where the loss of trees is outweighed by the

benefit of the development. It is considered that achieving a historically appropriate position for the building on the site must carry substantial weight and replanting could be justified in the case of these trees.

In terms of layout the position of the building on the site is considered acceptable, however a layout more closely reflecting footprint of the public house that was demolished in 1903 would be more appropriate. The parking layout proposes 22 spaces, which exceeds the requirement in the Interim Draft RSS policy for Parking Standards, however given the popularity of the area and the on-street parking on Horrobin Lane it is considered that this number of parking spaces is justified.

The scale of the proposal is considered unacceptable with the mass of the building when viewed from the front being too great particularly the large dormer window and the unacceptably large front roof slope. The layout and scale is therefore considered contrary to Policy HT7.

Recommendation Refuse

Recommendation: Refusal of Outline Planning Permission

Reasons

1. The proposed development would be located within the Green Belt as defined by the North West Regional Spatial Strategy Policy RDF4 and the Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review. The proposed development is contrary to Policy DC1 of the Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review and PPG2: Green Belts as in the Green Belt there is a presumption against inappropriate development, which this would be. It is not considered that the arguments put forward in support of the application are sufficient very special circumstances to outweigh the presumption against it in the Green Belt.

2. Although the position of the building on the site is acceptable, it is considered a layout more closely reflecting the footprint of the public house that originally stood on the site would be more appropriate. The scale of the proposal is considered unacceptable in terms of its mass (particularly when viewed from the front), being too great, particularly the large dormer window and the unacceptably large front roof slope. The layout and scale is therefore considered contrary to Policy HT7 of the Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review.

3. The proposal would result in the felling of a significant protected tree to enable the access to be widened. The application is therefore contrary to Policy EP9 of the Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review which states that proposals which would result in the loss of trees which make a valuable contribution to the character of the landscape or a building or settlement or its setting will not be permitted.
