

Boldon Golf Club, Dipe Lane, East Boldon

Planning Statement

Castle Building Services

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Lichfields on behalf of the applicant, Boldon Golf Club. It accompanies a detailed planning application for a replacement clubhouse and residential development comprising 6no. four-bedroom dwellings on land at Boldon Golf Club in East Boldon.

Background

- 1.2 The site comprises the existing clubhouse of Boldon Golf Club; a popular recreational facility which has been operational since 1912 and currently has over 500 members.
- 1.3 Whilst the clubhouse has evolved over time in a somewhat piecemeal and sprawling fashion, the oldest parts of it date back over 100 years, and it is now no longer fit for purpose, and is increasingly costly to operate and maintain. Accordingly, the maintenance burden and day-to-day running costs of the clubhouse are considerable and have a significant impact upon the operational viability of the Golf Club. Moreover, the clubhouse is in need of significant repairs if it is to continue to serve its purpose effectively.
- 1.4 The existing clubhouse building is inefficient in nature both in terms of its energy use and layout and this, combined with the high maintenance and running costs referred to above, has led the golf club to consider alternative options for its future. The optimal solution is to deliver a new, more compact clubhouse, built using modern, sustainable, energy efficient materials to provide a more appropriate facility to support the operation of Boldon Golf Club into the future.
- 1.5 The demolition of the existing clubhouse and erection of a replacement facility cannot be funded, however, without some form of supporting development, and it is therefore proposed that a small amount of residential development is built alongside the new clubhouse to enable its delivery.

Purpose of the Statement

- 1.6 The purpose of this statement is to assess the application proposals against the adopted development plan for the application site, as well as other material considerations including relevant national planning policy. This Statement should be read alongside the following documents which have been prepared to accompany the planning application submission:
- Application forms and certificates, and the requisite planning application fee;
 - Application drawings, prepared by Castle Design;
 - Landscaping Plan, prepared by DPLA;
 - Arboricultural Report, prepared by Elliott Consultancy;
 - Design and Access Statement, prepared by Castle Design;
 - Flood Risk and Drainage Assessment, prepared by RWO Engineering; and
 - Transport Statement, prepared by iTransport Planning.

Structure of the Statement

1.7

The structure of the statement is as follows:

- Section 2.0 – summarises the site and surroundings;
- Section 3.0 – provides a summary of the application proposals;
- Section 4.0 – sets out relevant national and local planning policy;
- Section 5.0 – assesses the scheme against the various provisions of the statutory development plan;
- Section 6.0 – considers the ‘very special circumstances’ for the development; and
- Section 7.0 – provides conclusions on all of the above.

2.0 Site Context

Site and Surroundings

- 2.1 The site comprises the whole of the clubhouse and part of the car park of Boldon Golf Club and extends to approximately 0.2 hectares. Whilst the site forms part of the northernmost extents of the Green Belt between South Tyneside and Sunderland, it is formed primarily of hard surfacing and existing buildings; although it does include a small amount of amenity grassland along its southern and western boundaries.
- 2.2 The existing clubhouse on the site has been added to incrementally over many years across as many as nine separate extensions, with different heights and building lines; giving a disjointed and sprawling appearance.

Figure 2.1 The application site



Source: CBS

- 2.3 The part of the application site which extends into the golf club's car park comprises eight parking spaces, of the total 103 spaces within the car park as a whole.
- 2.4 The site is located within, but on the edge of, the built-up area of East Boldon and is bounded by:
- Dipe Lane to the north and residential properties beyond;
 - The Shotley Grove apartment building to the east;
 - The golf club's putting green to the south; and
 - The golf club car park to the west.

Accessibility

- 2.5 The golf club has two pre-existing access points off Dipe Lane, the easternmost of which lies within the north west corner of the application site.
- 2.6 The site is sustainably located in close proximity to local shops and community facilities in West and East Boldon on Addison Road and Western Terrace respectively. These include a post office and newsagent and a collection of pubs and restaurants.
- 2.7 Slightly further afield there are two primary schools (West Boldon Primary School and East Boldon Junior School) and a secondary school (Boldon School) within walking distance of the site.
- 2.8 Public transport services are available within the area surrounding the application site, with the closest bus stops located on Western Terrace, approximately 300m from the site.
- 2.9 East Boldon Metro station is located approximately 1.5km to the east of the site and Brockley Whins Metro station is approximately 2km to the north of the site.

Planning History

- 2.10 The Boldon Golf Club was established in 1912, and the main part of the clubhouse is a converted 19th century property, originally in residential use.
- 2.11 The clubhouse has been extended incrementally over time, with the following permissions:
- Change of use to convert the two storey living space (Flat) within the golf clubhouse into an internal meeting room (1st floor) and a storage area (2nd floor) (Ref. No: ST/0321/20/FUL);
 - Proposed new roof to lounge and alterations to external elevations (Ref. No: ST/0097/96//DM);
 - Proposed conservatory, patio and new roof to billiard room (Ref. No: ST/0419/96//DM);
 - Proposed extension to male locker room (Ref. No: ST/0451/95//DM);
 - Shop and training area and extension to clubhouse (Ref. No: ST/0866/86//DM);
 - Proposed Lades Washroom (Ref. No: ST/1044/83//DM); and
 - Extension to clubhouse (Ref. No: ST/0477/81//DM).
- 2.12 Based upon a review of the above permissions, it would appear that the premises have operated primarily as a golf clubhouse (and associated ancillary uses such as retail shop) for a considerable length of time, albeit with a single residential unit present until 2020.

Pre-Application Engagement

- 2.13 Prior to the submission of this planning application, a formal pre-application enquiry was submitted to the Council on 7 March 2024 and a response was received on 12 June 2024 enquiry ref. ST/2024/ENQ/00134.

- 2.14 The pre-application enquiry introduced the emerging proposals to the Council and sought feedback on the key planning considerations that would need to be taken into account as part of an application submission, as well as the likely scope of any application.

Summary

- 2.15 The site is occupied by an existing golf clubhouse and part of the car park of Boldon Golf Club. It is formed primarily of hard surfacing and existing buildings. The site forms part of the built-up area of Boldon and forms part of the settlement edge along its southern side. It is sustainably located in close proximity to local shops and community facilities and is well-connected to public transport services.

3.0 The Proposed Development

- 3.1 The proposed development comprises the demolition of the existing clubhouse building, and the extension and refurbishment of the existing Pro Shop to create a new clubhouse and the erection of 6 no. semi-detached houses.
- 3.2 The proposed dwellings consist of a row of 6no. semi-detached houses each with four bedrooms spread across three stories, located within the eastern side of the overall application site. The houses would have enclosed gardens to the east and car parking to the west.

Figure 3.1 The proposed development



Source: CBS

- 3.3 The existing clubhouse buildings have a sprawling footprint of 848 sqm, and the development has been designed to ensure a reduction in both building footprint (to 733 sqm) and volume. The replacement clubhouse is reflective of the existing single storey pro-shop, negating the impact of any increased storey height to the south aspect of the site and

the proposed dwellings follow the form of the existing clubhouse with its pitched roof and residential fenestration.

- 3.4 The proposed development would also deliver a more uniform built form than that of the existing clubhouse, which is disjointed and sprawling in appearance and layout. The building line of the proposed development would be set back further than that of the existing clubhouse along its western frontage (facing the car park). The new golf clubhouse has been positioned to provide easy access to the existing car park and the first tee of the golf course. The development (i.e. the new clubhouse) would extend no further south than the existing built form on the site.

Figure 3.2 The illustrative appearance of the scheme's main elevation



Source: CBS

- 3.5 Vehicular access to the site would be obtained from the existing access points from Dipe Lane. One of the accesses will be entrance only for residents of the dwellings. New parking spaces will be constructed to the front of the residential dwellings, comprising 12no. residential parking bays specifically allocated for residents only. The existing car park will be reconfigured accordingly.
- 3.6 The proposals include the retention of existing trees and vegetation where possible and introduce new native tree and structure planting along Dipe Lane, providing valuable screening and soften the appearance of the site from Dipe Lane. Native hedging is also proposed around the residential parking spaces. New trees and shrub planting are also proposed throughout the site to soften the parking areas and building frontages.
- 3.7 Further details on the design and access are included within the accompanying Design and Access Statement.

4.0 Planning Policy Context

- 4.1 This section of the Planning Statement outlines the planning policy context against which the application should be assessed. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 at Section 38 (6) requires the determination of planning applications to take place in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations, such as the National Planning Policy Framework, indicate otherwise.

The Development Plan

- 4.2 The statutory development plan for the site comprises the South Tyneside Core Strategy (adopted June 2007) and the South Tyneside Development Management Policies (adopted December 2011) Development Plan Documents. The current South Tyneside Local Plan is now one of the oldest in the country, meaning the policies it contains are significantly out of date.
- 4.3 Whilst the site functionally and visually forms part of the built-up area of East Boldon, the Core Strategy and Policies Map identify the site as lying within the Green Belt, the Great North Forest (Downhill) designation and an Area of High Landscape Value or Landscape Significance.
- 4.4 A number of Local Plan policies are considered to be of relevance to the determination of the application, as follows:
- **Policy EA1 (Local Character and Distinctiveness)** - aims to capitalise upon South Tyneside's environmental assets, and as such it requires development proposals to protect and enhance the openness of the Green Belt, to preserve the special and separate characters of the urban fringe villages including West Boldon and East Boldon, and to implement the Great North Forest's strategies including through restoring the small-scale agricultural field pattern of Downhill.
 - **Policy SC1 (Creating Sustainable Urban Areas)** - seeks to focus development within built up areas and create a strong sense of place by strengthening the distinctive historic and cultural qualities and townscape of towns and villages.
 - **Policy SC4 (Housing Needs, Mix and Affordability)** - encourages proposals for residential development that meet the identified needs and aspirations of the Borough's individual housing market areas. Within the urban fringe villages, the focus should be on the provision of 2-bed starter and 3 and 4 bed family/executive homes; detached, semi detached and terraced houses and bungalows for owner occupation.
 - **Policy ST1 (Spatial Strategy for South Tyneside)** – sets out the spatial strategy for South Tyneside including maximising the re-use of previously developed land, in built up areas.
 - **Policy DM1 (Management of Development)** – sets out what the local authority will ensure (where relevant) when determining all applications under the planning Acts;
 - **Policy DM7 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity Sites)** – seeks to protect and enhance the important environmental assets of the borough.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.5 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was revised in December 2024 and sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It is a material consideration for planning applications.
- 4.6 At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11). It also sets out at paragraph 61 the government's objective to significantly boost the supply of new homes.
- 4.7 Additionally, Chapter 11 focuses on making effective use of land and stipulates planning policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land, taking into account the identified need for development. Paragraph 124 states that planning decisions should give substantial weight to the value of using brownfield land within settlements for homes.
- 4.8 In this regard, the need for additional housing delivery generally across the Borough is stark. Recent results of the Government's Housing Delivery Test¹ showed that South Tyneside delivered only 191 net new homes over the years 2023-24, which was just 62% of its target of 309 homes. The presumption in favour of sustainable development therefore clearly applies to the residential aspect of the subject proposals.
- 4.9 In respect of Green Belt, at a national level, the NPPF states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. In relation to proposals affecting Green Belt, the NPPF provides a definition of 'inappropriate development' in the Green Belt, which should be resisted unless very special circumstances exist.
- 4.10 At paragraph 154, the NPPF states that, with some specified exceptions, the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate. The defined exceptions, include, at point g:
- 'limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land (including a material change of use to residential or mixed use including residential), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.'*
- 4.11 Notwithstanding the above, and in the context of the government's clear objective to increase housing delivery, one of the most significant changes to the December 2024 NPPF is the introduction of the concept of 'Grey Belt'.
- 4.12 Paragraph 155 of the NPPF now sets out Grey Belt policy, expanding upon paragraph 154 to introduce further exceptions by which development in the Green Belt is 'not inappropriate'. In particular, it explains that such 'Grey Belt' development should not be regarded as inappropriate where:
- a The development would utilise Grey Belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;

¹ https://www.southtyneside.gov.uk/media/8863/Authorities-Monitoring-Report-2023-to-2024/pdf/Authorities_Monitoring_Report_2023_-_2024.pdf?m=1734436488053

- b There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed;
- c The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework; and
- d Where applicable the development proposed meets the ‘Golden Rules’ requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 below.

4.13 Grey Belt is defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF as:

“...land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. ‘Grey Belt’ excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.”

4.14 The Green Belt purposes (a), (b) and (d) set out in paragraph 143 are:

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas;*
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another; and*
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.*

4.15 These criteria are assessed in further detail at Section 5.0 of this statement.

4.16 The NPPF also makes clear that access for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities (paragraph 103).

4.17 Paragraph 187 promotes decisions that contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing sites of biodiversity or geological value; recognising the intrinsic value of the countryside; minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity; and preventing development from contributing to unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability.

Summary

4.18 Whilst the site functionally and visually forms part of the built-up area of East Boldon, the development plan identifies the site as lying within the Green Belt, the Great North Forest (Downhill) designation and an Area of High Landscape Value or Landscape Significance. However, the current South Tyneside Local Plan is now one of the oldest in the country, meaning the policies it contains are significantly out of date, and the need for additional housing delivery generally across the Borough is stark.

4.19 In this context, the NPPF was updated in December 2024 to introduce the concept of ‘Grey Belt; comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that does not strongly contribute to certain purposes of the Green Belt.

4.20 The Government has set a clear national objective to “significantly boost” the supply of homes. Land that is within the Green Belt can be suitable for housing development and the introduction of “Grey Belt” policy is one of the recent steps taken by Government to bring forward housing development in the Green Belt, on land that makes less of a contribution to the function and purposes of the Green Belt.

- 4.21 A Green Belt policy assessment is included in Section 5.0 of this statement to consider the performance of the scheme against these matters. First, consideration is given as to whether the site represents Grey Belt land for the purposes of the proposed residential development.

5.0 Compliance with the Development Plan

5.1 In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the determination of the application must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The statutory development plan for the site comprises the South Tyneside Core Strategy (adopted June 2007) and the South Tyneside Development Management Policies (adopted December 2011) Development Plan Documents. However, the current South Tyneside Local Plan is now one of the oldest in the country, meaning the policies it contains are significantly out of date.

5.2 This section nevertheless assesses the proposal against relevant issues of the statutory development plan, namely:

- Green Belt;
- Principle of Development;
- Design and Appearance;
- Amenity;
- Transport and Highways; and
- Ecology and Arboriculture.

5.3 The following commentary addresses the principle of the development in this context.

Green Belt

5.4 Policy EA1 requires development proposals to protect and enhance the openness of the Green Belt, to preserve the special and separate characters of the urban fringe villages including West Boldon and East Boldon.

5.5 The South Tyneside Core Strategy (adopted June 2007) and the South Tyneside Development Management Policies (adopted December 2011) Development Plan Documents pre-date the most recent (December 2024) version of the NPPF, however, which introduces policy for the consideration of 'Grey Belt.'

5.6 The following commentary first considers whether the site constitutes Grey Belt, against the tests of Paragraph 155 of the NPPF and the definition of Grey Belt in the Annex 2 of the NPPF. Should it be concluded that the site is indeed Grey Belt for the purpose of the proposed development, it is then not necessary to demonstrate 'Very Special Circumstances' to outweigh any notional harm to the Green Belt.

'Grey Belt' Assessment

5.7 Paragraph 155 of the NPPF states that the development of homes and other development in the Green Belt should **not** be regarded as inappropriate where:

- a *"The development would utilise Grey Belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan.*
- b *There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed.*

- c *The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework; and*
- d *Where applicable the development proposed meets the ‘Golden Rules’ requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 below”*

5.8 The Grey Belt is defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF as:

*“...land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not **strongly** contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. ‘Grey Belt’ excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a **strong** reason for refusing or restricting development.”*

(Lichfields emphasis in bold)

5.9 As a first step, it is therefore necessary to assess whether the site strongly contributes to Green Belt purposes (a), (b), or (d) in NPPF paragraph 143. These purposes being:

- “a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.*
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.*
- c)*
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
- e) ...”*

5.10 Whilst South Tyneside Council prepared a detailed Green Belt Study in 2023 in support of its emerging local plan, the application site itself was not specifically assessed and was instead grouped within a larger parcel of land to the south. As such, and in addition to the fact the Study predates the introduction of grey belt land, the assessment which follows is based largely upon the latest Planning Practice Guidance:

Purpose (a) – to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas

5.11 The NPPF does not contain a definition of what might constitute sprawl. However, Planning Practice Guidance has recently been updated² to state that this purpose of the Green Belt relates to the sprawl of large built-up areas and that villages should not be considered large built up areas.

5.12 East Boldon is a village and, therefore, this purpose of the Green Belt does not apply to the application site. Notwithstanding this, the proposals comprise the redevelopment of previously developed land within the existing built-up area of East Boldon and, therefore, would clearly not contribute to the sprawl of a built up area.

5.13 “Sprawl” is, by definition, a group or mass of something that has spread out in an untidy or irregular way. The proposals remain within the built footprint of the buildings that current exist on the site; they would not extend further west or further south and certainly would not extend beyond the existing previously developed land. In no way could the scheme be described as resulting in sprawl.

² <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/green-belt#assessing-green-belt-to-identify-grey-belt-land>

Purpose (b) – to prevent neighbouring towns merging

5.14 As set out in Planning Practice Guidance, this purpose relates to the merging of towns, not villages. The development plan for the application site describes East Boldon as a ‘fringe village’. The nearest town in the Borough is either Jarrow or South Shields, both over 5km from the application site.

5.15 The site is, therefore, not physically or visually associated with a town and is located within a village. In addition, the site currently forms part of the built-up area of East Boldon, and makes no material contribution to the perceived or actual separation of South Tyneside from Sunderland to the south. As such, the site does not contribute to the purpose of preventing neighbouring towns from merging into one another.

Purpose (d) – to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

5.16 Again, Planning Practice Guidance is clear this purpose relates to historic towns; not villages.

5.17 The application site is not located within close proximity to any registered parks and gardens or historic towns. East Boldon is a village and although the village contains a Conservation Area, it is approximately 500m north east of the site and has no visual or physical association with the application site at Boldon Golf Club.

5.18 In any case, the application site is located within a village, and therefore it is not necessary to provide detailed assessments against this purpose and it is evident that the site does not contribute to purpose (d) in any event.

Footnote 7 tests

5.19 The definition of Grey Belt states that it excludes land where the application of the policies relating to areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a ‘strong reason’ for refusing or restricting development. Footnote 7 states:

“The policies referred to are those in this Framework (rather than those in development plans) relating to: habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 189) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, a National Landscape, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 75); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.”

5.20 The NPPF definition of Grey Belt establishes that, for the purposes of decision making in the context of Grey Belt, Green Belt is excluded as a footnote 7 asset.

5.21 The application site is not a habitat site or designated Site of Scientific Interest, nor is the site a Local Green Space, or National Landscape, or National Park or defined as Heritage Coast. It is also not an irreplaceable habitat, or a site at risk of flooding or coastal change. In respect of heritage assets, the site does not form part of a conservation area and nor does it contain any archaeological interest. No listed buildings are situated within the site.

- 5.22 In light of the above, there are no Footnote 7 considerations that would provide a reason for refusing or restricting the proposed development and certainly not one that would provide a *strong* reason.

Development regarded as ‘Not Inappropriate’

- 5.23 In this context and having demonstrated the proposed development satisfies the NPPF’s definition of ‘Grey Belt’, it is next necessary to consider whether such development should not be regarded as ‘inappropriate’, according to the provisions of paragraph 155 of the NPPF.

Paragraph 155 (a) - The development would utilise Grey Belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan

- 5.24 The proposed development would not fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining allocated Green Belt land across the area of the Plan. At just 0.2ha in size, the site is a negligible extent of the overall Green Belt associated with the South Tyneside area, which covers approximately 2,352 ha of land³. Indeed, it represents just 0.008% of the South Tyneside Green Belt. In addition, the proposed development comprises the redevelopment of previously developed land. The proposals are contained within existing areas of hard standing and do not encroach upon areas of new land.
- 5.25 The development proposals would not result in encroachment as they would not extend the built settlement edge along its southern side. Indeed, the proposals contribute positively to Green Belt purpose e) by resulting in the re-use (or “the recycling”) of urban land for a viable, long term beneficial purpose.

Paragraph 155 (b) - Demonstrable unmet need

- 5.26 The NPPF explains at Footnote 56 that ‘demonstrable unmet need’ in the case of applications involving the provision of housing, means either the lack of a five year supply of deliverable housing sites, including the relevant buffer where applicable, or where the Housing Delivery Tests was below 75% of the housing requirement over the previous three years.
- 5.27 The need for additional housing delivery generally across South Tyneside is stark. Recent results of the Housing Delivery Test for 2023 showed that the Borough delivered only 191 net new homes over the years 2023-24, which was just 62% of its target of 309 homes. Over the relevant three year period, the Government’s own figures suggest a Housing Delivery Test result of just 60%.⁴
- 5.28 The presumption in favour of sustainable development therefore applies to the residential aspect of the subject proposal and there is also clearly a demonstrable unmet need for housing provision within the Borough, which the proposal will contribute towards.

³ The Countryside Charity, Interactive Map of England’s Green Belt land <https://www.cpre.org.uk/interactive-map-of-englands-green-belt-land/>

⁴ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6759ccfbad4694c785b0eddb/Housing_Delivery_Test_2023_measurement.ods

5.29 A modern and sustainable golf clubhouse itself is also a critical element of infrastructure required to facilitate the ongoing operation of Boldon Golf Club, without which the Club would struggle to continue to remain financially viable.

5.30 On the basis of the above, it is evident that there is an unmet need for the proposed development, and therefore the proposed development is aligned with this aspect of the Grey Belt requirement.

Paragraph 155 (c) Sustainable Location

5.31 As set out at Section 2 above and in the accompanying Transport Statement, the site is accessible by walking, cycling and public transport and is therefore a sustainable location for access by non-car modes of travel.

5.32 The site is located in close proximity to local shops and community facilities in West and East Boldon on Addison Road and Western Terrace respectively. These include a post office and newsagent and a collection of pubs and restaurants. Slightly further afield there are two primary schools (West Boldon Primary School and East Boldon Junior School) and a secondary school (Boldon School) within an acceptable walking distance of the site.

5.33 Public transport services are available within the area surrounding the application site, with the closest bus stops located on Western Terrace, approximately 300m from the site. East Boldon Metro station is located approximately 1.5km to the east of the site and Brockley Whins Metro station is approximately 2km to the north of the site.

5.34 The application documents have demonstrated that the proposed development can be safely accessed from Dipe Lane.

5.35 In this context, the site is considered a sustainable location for the development proposed.

Paragraph 155 (d) Green Belt ‘Golden Rules’

5.36 The proposed development includes 6no. semi-detached houses and a replacement clubhouse. The ‘Golden Rules’ relate to major housing development and are, therefore, not relevant or applicable to the subject planning application.

Conclusion on Grey Belt

5.37 In the context of the above analysis, the site can, therefore, be considered as ‘Grey Belt’. The site does not contribute to the Green Belt purposes a), b) and d) and, even if any contribution were found to exist, it would not “strongly contribute” as is required by the NPPF definition of Grey Belt.

5.38 Having also considered the relevant criteria of paragraph 155, the application proposal is also not considered inappropriate and it is not, therefore, necessary to weigh any harm against other considerations (i.e. benefits) in order to seek to demonstrate ‘very special circumstances’.

5.39 Notwithstanding this, Section 6 clearly demonstrates that very special circumstances do exist sufficient to outweigh any perceived or actual harm to the Green Belt.

The Principle of Development

- 5.40 Aside from Green Belt, the site is not identified in the Development Plan as being the subject of any specific development allocations. However, Policy ST1 of the adopted development plan sets out the spatial strategy for South Tyneside including maximising the re-use of previously developed land in built-up areas.
- 5.41 Separately, Policy SC4 encourages proposals for residential development that meet the identified needs and aspirations of the Borough's individual housing market. Within the urban fringe villages, the focus should be on the provision of 2-bed starter and 3 and 4 bed family/executive homes; detached, semi-detached and terraced houses and bungalows for owner occupation.
- 5.42 As set out above, the need for additional housing delivery generally across South Tyneside is acute, as demonstrated by recent Housing Delivery Test results and the current presumption in favour of sustainable development across the Borough.
- 5.43 The application site consists of existing hardstanding and a number of existing buildings, and the proposals therefore comprise the redevelopment of previously developed land. The proposed development provides an opportunity to enhance an existing sporting facility whilst ensuring it's long-term viability with the development of 6no. semi-detached houses townhouses which in turn supports the Borough's housing delivery. The presumption in favour of sustainable development therefore clearly applies to the residential aspect of the subject proposals.
- 5.44 In this context, it is considered that the proposals comply with adopted policies ST1 and SC4.

Design and Conservation

- 5.45 Policy SC1 seeks to focus development within built up areas and create a strong sense of place.
- 5.46 The existing clubhouse buildings, which would be demolished, have a sprawling footprint of 848 sqm, and the development has been designed to ensure a reduction in both building footprint to just 733 sqm. The replacement clubhouse is reflective of the existing single storey pro-shop, negating the impact of any increased storey height to the south aspect of the site and the proposed dwellings follow the form of the existing clubhouse with its pitched roof and residential fenestration.
- 5.47 The proposed development would deliver a more uniform built form than that of the existing clubhouse, which is disjointed and sprawling in appearance and layout. The building line of the proposed development would be set back further than that of the existing clubhouse along its western frontage (facing the car park). The proposed materials for the clubhouse and houses will be in keeping with the surrounding character of East Boldon. The front façade of the housing will be ashlar type stone with the remaining facades finished in a weathered buff brick, the windows will be sash style with white frames.
- 5.48 Whilst the Golf Club does not either contain or adjoin any listed buildings or conservation area, the wider site is identified on South Tyneside's Local List, primarily in relation to the presence of ridge and for earthworks on the course itself.

5.49 Notwithstanding this, following pre-application discussions, a sympathetic approach has been taken to the site's historic context and the local vernacular, and the proposed design has been revised from a row of terraced houses to three individual townhouses comprising 6 no. semi-detached houses, making the proposed development more visually attractive.

5.50 The replacement clubhouse is modern with a pavilion style design. The building will comprise a high quality palette of dark grey cladding and dark grey framed fenestration, with a feature of stone referencing the residential properties. Whilst the clubhouse and proposed residential dwellings are distinct in appearance, the materiality has been selected to complement each other.

5.51 In this context, it is considered that the proposals comply with adopted development plan policies EA1 and SC1.

Amenity

5.52 Policy DM1 of the adopted development plan requires development to consider any impact upon residential amenity.

5.53 The proposed development has taken into consideration the context of the surrounding area. Following pre-application discussions, the design of the proposed development has evolved to omit a balcony from the proposed clubhouse design and remove the proposed catering kitchen, and instead replicate the current basic catering provision provided at the golf club.

5.54 The proposed development has been designed to ensure there is no overlooking of neighbouring properties.

5.55 In addition, the proposed landscaping scheme seeks to soften the visual appearance of the proposed development by introducing substantial trees along the boundary with Dipe Lane, introducing a natural screening of the proposals and thereby reducing the visual impact and improving the amenity of residents to the north of Dipe Lane.

5.56 In the context of the above, it is considered the proposed development would not result in any adverse impacts upon neighbouring properties, and therefore the development complies with adopted development policy DM1 in terms of amenity.

Transport and Highways

5.57 Policy DM1 explains, where relevant, that the Local Authority when determining applications will consider the impact of new development on highway capacity and safety.

5.58 The site is accessible by walking, cycling and public transport and is therefore a sustainable location for access by non-car modes of travel.

5.59 A Transport Statement prepared by iTransport Planning considers the impact of the proposed development upon the local highway network. It concludes that the proposed development would not result in an unacceptable impact upon highway safety or the road network.

5.60 The proposed development will utilise the existing access arrangement from Dipe Lane, although the accesses will be widened to allow for the safe access and egress to the site. The

accompanying visibility splays demonstrate the access can be safely used. One of the accesses will be entrance-only for residents, with the other access for golf club users.

5.61 The proposed development includes a total of 12 no. parking spaces to be used by residents of the dwellings. Car parking for the residential dwellings is located immediately opposite the dwellings and is separated by proposed planting. The remaining car parking within the application site will be reconfigured for golf club users and segregated from the residential scheme.

5.62 In the context of the above, it is considered that the proposals accord with the provisions of adopted development plan DM1.

Flood Risk and Drainage

5.63 The site is in Flood Zone 1, meaning the risk of flooding for the development is low.

5.64 In order to ensure that the risk to third party land flooding is not increased, however, the proposed drainage system will be designed in accordance with the requirements of Ofwat and shall demonstrate that:

- No surcharge of pipes occurs in the 1 in 2-year rainfall event.
- No surface flooding occurs in 1 in 30-year rainfall event.
- No flooding to buildings and adjacent properties occurs in 1 in 100-year rainfall event with a 45% allowance for climate change.

5.65 Any flooding for the 100-year event with climate change will be stored on site to protect third party land from potential overland flows.

5.66 As surface water discharge from the site will be restricted, on site surface water attenuation is required. In addition, source control of pollutants to manage water quality have been included within the scheme, and private parking areas will be constructed with permeable paving ensuring water quality is managed.

Ecology and Arboriculture

5.67 The application site currently comprises the existing Golf Club House and areas of hardstanding. There is limited ecological value within the site given it is primarily hard standing and existing buildings, however, there are some trees within the site and along its boundary.

5.68 The proposed development has sought to retain existing trees and vegetation where possible. A Tree Survey prepared by Elliott Consultancy accompanies this application. The Survey identifies the loss of 3no. trees to allow for construction of the proposed development. The Survey recommends the implementation of tree protection measures to ensure damage to trees is minimised during construction.

5.69 A soft landscaping scheme prepared by DPLA forms part of the application proposals. The proposals include the retention of existing trees and vegetation to the west of the site, around the existing car park although, as explained above, three trees will be removed for arboricultural reasons. The landscaping proposals include new native tree and structure

planting along Dipe Lane which will provide valuable screening and soften the appearance of the site from Dipe Lane.

5.70 Native hedging is proposed around the residential parking spaces. This creates a degree of separation as well as providing nesting opportunities for birds. New trees and shrub planting are also proposed throughout the site to soften the parking areas and building frontages.

5.71 Overall, the assessment's demonstrate compliance with Local Plan Policy DM7 relating to biodiversity.

Summary

5.72 Overall, the application proposals are considered to accord with the relevant policies within the adopted development plan when read as a whole (with particular consideration given to Green Belt policy). The application site itself clearly comprises Grey Belt, and the delivery of new residential dwellings will make a small but important contribution to the Borough's dire housing need in accordance with the Government's objectives and the direction of the latest NPPF.

5.73 In the context of Policies ST1, SC4, DM1, EA1, SC1 and DM7, it is considered that the principle of the proposed development is acceptable given the sites current use as a Golf Club and the surrounding residential character, alongside the range of socio-economic benefits the scheme would deliver, and the absence of any other significant technical, amenity or policy conflicts.

6.0 **Very Special Circumstances**

- 6.1 As set out in Section 5 above, the site comprises Grey Belt land for the purposes of this application. It is not, therefore, inappropriate development in the Green Belt requiring the demonstration of ‘very special circumstances’ to balance against and outweigh any harm caused.
- 6.2 Notwithstanding this, very special circumstances are also considered to exist in respect of the proposed development, which should be taken into account by the Council should it conclude that the site is not Grey Belt land.
- 6.3 The scheme delivers net benefits in terms of the provision of a new, more modern and energy efficient clubhouse as well as six new homes in a more rational form of built development which would not give rise to any ‘harmful’ effects in terms of openness. Indeed, the proposed development would have no greater impact than the existing built form.

Securing the Viability of Boldon Golf Club

- 6.4 As set out above, Boldon Golf Club is an historic and much used community facility in South Tyneside, with over 500 members. However escalating maintenance and servicing costs, together with the general pressures of the wider economic situation in terms of rises in the cost of living and inflation, are increasingly jeopardising the ongoing viability and future of the Club.
- 6.5 Much of the Club’s current liabilities and costs relate to the existing clubhouse facilities. As described above, these facilities have grown incrementally over the past 100 years and simply do not meet current operational or environmental standards. More importantly, however, they also impose a huge ongoing maintenance burden upon the Golf Club, which it is no longer able to sustain.
- 6.6 In particular, the Club currently invests its entire profits back into the ongoing maintenance of its facilities. Whilst this has meant the Club has been able to continue operating over recent years, it has now reached a critical point where the extent of works required cannot be funded and the future of the Club itself is therefore under threat. This can be evidenced as follows:
- Over the last four years costs for temporary roof repairs have totalled £34,000, but these repairs are themselves now failing. A recent estimate to reroof the entire clubhouse facility equated to around £155,000;
 - The existing heating system is over 20 years old and is unable to heat the clubhouse due the extent of single glazing and the poor performance of the building fabric. A new heating system is now required at an estimated cost of £28,000;
 - For health and safety reasons, upgrades are required to the fire alarm system costing around £5000;
 - Electrical systems are required to be upgraded to meet current health and safety standards, with costs estimated at £55,000;

- CCTV is required in response to consistent vandalism across the premises, at a cost of around £19,000; and
- The existing kitchen in the clubhouse is now over 20 years old, and requires replacement at a cost of £120,000.

- 6.7 With no available cash reserves the building is now beyond repair for the Golf Club, with likely costs to undertake the essential work outlined above totalling over £550,000. Together with the ongoing uneconomical running costs, dilapidation and constant maintenance requirements, the Club finds itself in a position whereby the generation of new funding through the proposed development is the only means of securing its future as a valued community asset.
- 6.8 The NPPF recognises the important role that access to sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities. The redevelopment of the golf clubhouse site is considered a sustainable and appropriate means of providing a modern clubhouse facility for golfers, which will attract and increase visitor numbers to the golf club. The revenue from the proposed residential development will feed directly into the Golf Club and help to sustain its ongoing viability.
- 6.9 It is clear from the above that the proposed development, and particularly the proposed residential dwellings, would support and safeguard the long term viability of the golf club. It is considered that the loss of such a facility would constitute ‘very special circumstances’ which outweighs any harm to the Green Belt.

Summary

- 6.10 As set out in Section 7 above, the site comprises Grey Belt land for the purposes of this application. It is, therefore, not inappropriate development in the Green Belt that requires a demonstration of very special circumstances in order to be granted planning permission. Notwithstanding this, very special circumstances exist to justify the proposed development on the basis of the need to secure the long term viability of Boldon Golf Club.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Lichfields on behalf of the applicant, Boldon Golf Club. It accompanies an application for a replacement clubhouse and residential dwellings comprising 6no. semi-detached houses on land at Boldon Golf Club in East Boldon.
- 7.2 This Statement has provided context and further detail in relation to the proposed scheme, and then assessed the application proposals against the statutory development plan. It has also sought to identify other relevant material considerations, including relevant national planning policy.
- 7.3 The site is occupied by an existing golf clubhouse and part of the car park of Boldon Golf Club. It is formed primarily of hard surfacing and existing buildings. The site is sustainably located in close proximity to local shops and community facilities and is well-connected to public transport services.
- 7.4 Whilst the site therefore functionally and visually forms part of the built-up area of East Boldon, the development plan identifies the site as lying within the Green Belt. However, the current South Tyneside Local Plan is now one of the oldest in the country, meaning the policies it contains are significantly out of date, and the need for additional housing delivery generally across the Borough is acute; delivering only 60% of its required housing under the Government's latest Housing Delivery Test.
- 7.5 In this context, the NPPF was updated in December 2024 to introduce the concept of 'Grey Belt; comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that does not strongly contribute to certain purposes of the Green Belt.
- 7.6 It is considered that the application site is Grey Belt, and therefore, it is not inappropriate development. Indeed, the site, and the scheme proposals, are considered to fall squarely with Government's objectives to significantly boost the supply of homes by defining Grey Belt land.
- 7.7 Overall, the application proposals are also considered to accord with the relevant policies within the adopted development plan when read as a whole. The delivery of new residential dwellings will make a small but important contribution to the Borough's dire housing need in accordance with the Government's objectives, and the direction of the latest NPPF.
- 7.8 In the context of Policies ST1, SC4, DM1, EA1, SC1 and DM7, it is considered that the principle of the proposed development is acceptable given the sites current use as a Golf Club and the surrounding residential character, alongside the range of socio-economic benefits the scheme would deliver, and the absence of any other significant technical, amenity or policy conflicts.
- 7.9 Notwithstanding this, in any event, there are also 'very special circumstances' to justify the proposed development, particularly the fact the proposed development will secure the long term viability of the Golf Club to ensure the facility is not lost.
- 7.10 Overall, the proposed development accords with the statutory development plan when considered as a whole and represents sustainable development as defined in the NPPF.

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