

ANDREW LESTER B. Arch RIBA ARIAS

Architect

Duns Golf Club

Proposed House Site at Greenkeeper's Yard, Hardens Road, Duns TD11 3NS

Supporting Statement

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This proposal is submitted on behalf of the Management Committee of Duns Golf Club
- 1.2 The proposal is to obtain Planning Consent in Principle for an area of land to the southeast of Hardens Hall, formerly used as the Greenkeeper's Yard but now redundant and surplus to the Club's requirements. The area is approximately 0.23 hectares.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Duns Golf Club, which owns the 18-hole golf course situated on either side of the Hardens Road is, like many other golf clubs, suffering from the economic downturn. The club is considering measures to improve the situation but requires a substantial cash injection to carry out improvements to the clubhouse and to maintain the course as an 18-hole course. One of the measures is the sale of part of the course for housing.
- 2.2 Enquiries were made in 2014 and again earlier this year about the possibility of obtaining consent for one dwelling house on a plot of land southeast of Hardens Hall, currently used as the Greenkeepers' Yard, but redundant for that purpose except as an 'elephant's graveyard' for old machinery and spoil materials. The Council indicated that an application was likely to be refused so the Club focussed, instead, on a site occupied by the 1st tee and the 18th green. The response to that proposal was unfavourable towards granting consent.
- 2.3 The club must realise some assets in order to survive in its present form and believes that selling land which the club does not need, is one of the few viable options. If the club cannot raise capital the most likely scenario is to close the section of the course on the west side of Hardens Road (the New Nine) and become a nine-hole course with fewer staff and restricted opening hours for the clubhouse.
- 2.4 Retaining the course as an 18-hole course will allow the Club to maintain employment of Club House staff and greenkeepers at current levels and to work at promoting the course as an attractive option for visiting golfers. Change from 18 holes to 9 holes will require fewer staff for both Clubhouse and greenkeeping staff and will be less attractive to visitors. This could lead to the eventual closure of the course as it becomes less attractive to members and to visitors.

Wellrig Lea Pouterlynie Hardens Road Duns Berwickshire TD11 3QL

Tel 01361 883445

Mob 07850 852 834

Email alester2020@gmail.com

2.5 A detailed analysis of the financial situation is included as an appendix to the application.

3.0 Policies

3.1 It is acknowledged that the site falls outwith the settlement of Duns and is therefore to be assessed against HD2 Housing in the Countryside and PMD4 Development outwith Development Boundaries.

3.2 However, Policy PMD4 allows 'exceptions to the policy if they comply with the rigorous exceptions criteria.' Under the section 'exceptional approvals may be granted provided strong reasons can be given that:

d) It is a development that it is considered would offer significant community benefits that outweigh the need to protect the Development Boundary

and

the development of the site:

a) represents a logical extension of the built-up area, and

b) is of an appropriate scale in relation to the size of the settlement, and

c) does not prejudice the character, visual cohesion, or natural built up edge of the settlement, and

d) does not cause a significant adverse effect on the landscape setting of the settlement or the natural heritage of the surrounding area.'

3.3 The full length of Hardens Road is dotted with a significant number of housing developments (see attached plan), some are single dwellings but there are also groups such as Wellrig Park (18 houses) and the development at Hardens Cottages 8 houses, 7 developed and one consent. The entire length of Hardens Road up to Hardens Cottages could be described as one long dispersed group with very little space between the houses, particularly on the west side.

3.4 An analysis of the land allocated/taken up by housing development from the bottom of Hardens Road to Hardens Cottages shows that 65% of the roadside is housing development with only 35% open space farmland or golf course.

3.5 We believe that adding a single house in the proposed location represents a logical extension of the built-up area; does not prejudice the character, visual cohesion, or natural built-up edge of the settlement and will not cause a significant adverse affect on the landscape setting or natural heritage of the surrounding area.

3.6 We further contend that the proposal complies with policy HD2 - Housing in the Countryside as:

a) the Authority wishes to 'encourage housing development in appropriate locations in the countryside.....'

b) associated with existing building groups where this does not adversely affect their character or that of the surrounding area.

- 3.7 We respectfully suggest that a building group now exists at Hardens Hall. The main house has been in occupation for some time but the garage has been converted into a dwelling, without consent it would appear, and a new access has been applied for creating two adjacent access drives. The workshop between the Hall and the new dwelling is also used as a dwelling. Although consents are not in place it is quite evident that there is a group of 3 dwellings now present on this site. The development of what remains of the Greenkeeper's Yard (the neighbour has annexed a strip approximately 3.0 metres of the Yard) will be part of that group.
- 3.8 Although not directly applicable the sale of the site, the proposal relates to Policy ED7 - Business, Tourism and Leisure in the Countryside in that if the development is refused then the club will suffer cash flow issues and will need to contract and will become a 9-hole course. 9-hole courses do not attract the same visitor numbers that 18-hole courses attract and so Duns will receive fewer visitors.
- 3.9 The proposal will not breach the policies EP1-EP5 and EP13 - Environmental Promotion and Protection as the land is currently used as part of the course.

4.0 Planning History

- 4.1 Developments on Hardens Road can be grouped into several areas:
- a) Hardens Cottage group at the north end opposite the Hardens Farm
 - b) The Langton Edge group, on the road to Raecleuch Head
 - c) The Western Housing Group
 - d) The Eastern Housing Group
 - e) Pouterlynie
 - f) Developments on Quarry Road
- 4.2 The Hardens Cottage group has consents for the renovation of 4 cottages as holiday lets and 4 new self-build houses – 3 of which are completed. This group of houses has a major impact on the landscape and is a significant distance from the settlement boundary.
- 4.3 The Langton Edge Group has a single dwelling at the east end, North Byers Park (07/00382/FUL); Plot 2 (07/02193/FUL) which was refused consent but granted on appeal and an application for an Occupational and Therapy Centre (20/00754/FUL) which was granted consent in April 2021. There is now a significant development in this area.
- 4.4 The Western group is a confusing mix of applications for large sites which are then subsequently split into smaller sites. Plot 1 at Hardens Road started as consent for 1 house on a much larger site (99/01113/OUT) which was then reduced (07/00033/OUT) and then received consent for 2 houses (10/00407/PPP) with renewal of that consent (13/00491/PPP). The second house now has consent on Plot 2 (21/00295/FUL). The site at Langton Field, confusingly also called Plot 2, received outline consent (99/01114/OUT) but has been subsequently split into 3 further sites (13/00085/PPP), (10/00038/PPP) and (21/00588/PPP).
- 4.5 Part of Plot 3 was refused consent (13/00085/PPP) but was granted on appeal by the Reporter. This then informed the granting of consent for the remaining vacant part of Plot 3 (10/00038/PPP).

- 4.6 Some of these consents overlap with consents for Hardens Hall, which is labelled in applications as Plot 3. This was granted consent for one dwelling house (99/01115/OUT) but now accommodates 3 dwellings. (See para 3.7). The Change of Use to the garage (not yet consented) has been possible by annexing some of the land owned by the Golf Club.
- 4.7 The Eastern Housing Group has the most densely populated development with permission for 12 houses, originally (97/00654/FUL) with a further 4 houses granted consent later (04/01411/FUL). I note that the former rugby pitch between Wellrig Park and Scotston Park is designated for Housing in the draft Scottish Borders Council Local Development Plan as is the area to the northwest of Wellrig Park – BD200 in the draft local plan. These sites will be developed by housing developers in a similar manner to the way Wellrig Park was developed and it is unlikely that sites will be allocated for self-builders.
- 4.8 Pouterlynie has gradually been developed since 2005 and is within the settlement boundary. There are 9 houses in this group with 4 of the houses awarded consent since 2005.
- 4.9 The development on Quarry Road consists of 4 individual plots which were developed by self-builders. There are only 4 new, detached houses in this group.

5.0 Financial context

- 5.1 The Financial information provided by the club shows how income has dropped – the main reasons are explained in the narrative – and has only been able to improve its financial situation with the help of a grant from the Covid 19 Strategic Framework Business Fund. If this money is stripped out then the club would have posted a loss of £3.9K.
- 5.2 The club took action in 2019 to arrest the fall in reserves but certain costs, as outlined in the financial information, will continue to stress the cash flow and restrict the club in its aims.
- 5.3 A membership drive has resulted in increased membership fees but even these are not enough to offset some of the costs of operating the club. The management are looking to increase revenue and reduce capital outlay but need an injection of cash to do this. The sale of the Greenkeeper's Yard is one of the few ways to realise cash.

6.0 Access to site

- 6.1 A private access drive with layby as required will be provided with the requisite visibility splays. This can be the subject of the Reserved Matters.
- 6.2 There are many accesses to private dwellings on Hardens Road and a precedent has been set for individual accesses along the full length of the road.
- 6.3 The neighbouring application for the alteration to the driveway will have no impact on the access to the Yard.
- 6.4 There is an existing vehicular access to the parking area adjacent to the Greenkeeper's Yard and this will be maintained.

7.0 Servicing

- 7.1 The plot can be serviced with mains water and electricity from the main road where these services are located.

- 7.2 Drainage to the site will be by septic tank with an outfall to either a soakaway or soakaway/discharge to the Wellrig Burn which is located nearby. A porosity test will be required to establish the suitable form of drainage.
- 7.3 Surface water drainage will be through a SUDS scheme with soakaways or holding features to reduce runoff to the burn. The final design will be agreed with the appropriate authorities.

8.0 Summary

- 8.1 Whilst there is provision for Affordable Housing in the Duns area and provision for developer led housing as well, I note that there is no policy within the Proposed Local Plan for the provision of sites for self-builders. The Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) requires the authority to provide a “generous supply of land for each housing market area to meet the housing land requirement across all tenures”. I cannot find any supply of land for self-builders who wish to purchase a vacant site and commission their own design.
- 8.2 Examining the history of planning consents, on Hardens Road, indicates that the development of plots for housing – either individual plots or site development for housing groups – shows that there is no breach of the Council’s policy of Housing in the Countryside. Where it has been judged that there was non-compliance by the Council, the Reporter has granted consent on appeal in 2 cases (07/02193/FUL & 13/00085/PPP) with a third being granted by the Council after the Reporter’s decision to overturn the refusal (10/00038/PPP).
- 8.3 The policy HD2 Housing in the Countryside wishes to encourage high quality design that is responsive to its landscape context. The site at Greenkeeper’s Yard will not have a major impact on the landscape as it will appear to be part of the dispersed housing group on the Hardens Road and will be specifically linked to the East Housing Group as it will be adjacent to the 3 dwellings at Hardens Hall.
- 8.4 Several of the consents awarded, some on appeal, have had a large impact on the visual amenity of the area. This site will be closely associated with Hardens Hall which is a significant mass in the landscape and will have less impact than houses which are in more prominent positions.
- 8.5 The development of the site will have no environmental impact and does not conflict with environmental policies.
- 8.6 If the road frontage on the west side of Hardens Road is measured from the bottom of Hardens Road, where it joins the A6105, up to the end of the Hardens Cottages development group, the housing land allocated frontage will be 65.4% of the roadside with only 34.6% being agricultural land or open space. I would question if this should be regarded as countryside with so much built-up area.
- 8.7 Duns Golf Club provides a valuable amenity, not just for the local population, but also for many visitors to the area. The perilous nature of the club’s finances is outlined in detail in the financial information provided. The club is working hard to rectify the situation but requires a significant cash injection to see it through the next three years till the machine lease is finished.

- 8.8 Closure of the golf course, or reduction to a nine-hole course will mean a reduction in greenkeeping staff and a reduction in the catering capability of the clubhouse.
- 8.9 In addition, we acknowledge that the Council has a responsibility to support visitor attractions and has been very active in supporting the Jim Clark Motor Museum but it now needs to help Duns Golf Club to maintain its 18 hole course. The loss of the course would be a major blow to the town which is endeavouring to grow as a visitor destination reaching out to more than those who visit the Motor Museum.
- 8.10 The value of the golf club to the local population is measured not just in the number of members but also the fact that the course is used on several occasions in the year for fund raising events. The council is asked to support the local community by responding positively to this application.