
**OUTLINE PLANNING APPLICATION FOR
THE ERECTION OF UP TO 54
DWELLINGS AND ASSOCIATED
IMPROVEMENTS TO SONNING GOLF
CLUB**

**LAND AT SONNING GOLF CLUB,
DUFFIELD ROAD, SONNING, READING,
RG4 6GJ**

**Updated Statement of Community
Engagement for the Planning
Application**

Prepared by:

**Douglas Bond BA Hons MRTPI
Woolf Bond Planning LLP**

For

Sonning Golf Club Ltd

WBP REF: DB/8340

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Woolf Bond Planning
Chartered Town Planning Consultants

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The applicant having regard to the national¹ and local planning advice² has engaged with the community prior to the formal consultation with the stakeholders which the Council will undertake on the application.
- 1.2. The nature and form of the engagement together with the points raised are detailed in this document.

2. THE PROPSAL

- 2.1 As indicated on the title page, the engagement with various stakeholders reflected the description of development provided on the title page and is repeated on the application form. This was:

Outline Planning Application for the erection of up to 54 dwellings and associated improvements to Sonning Golf Club

- 2.2 The application site is the existing driving range at the Golf Club. The extent of this is shown on the extract of the site location plan.



Extract of site location plan

¹ PPG within the “Before Submitted an Application” section ([Before submitting an application - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/development-planning-guidance-2012))

² The Wokingham Borough Statement of Community Involvement

2.3 A copy of the Illustrative site layout for the proposal is shown below.

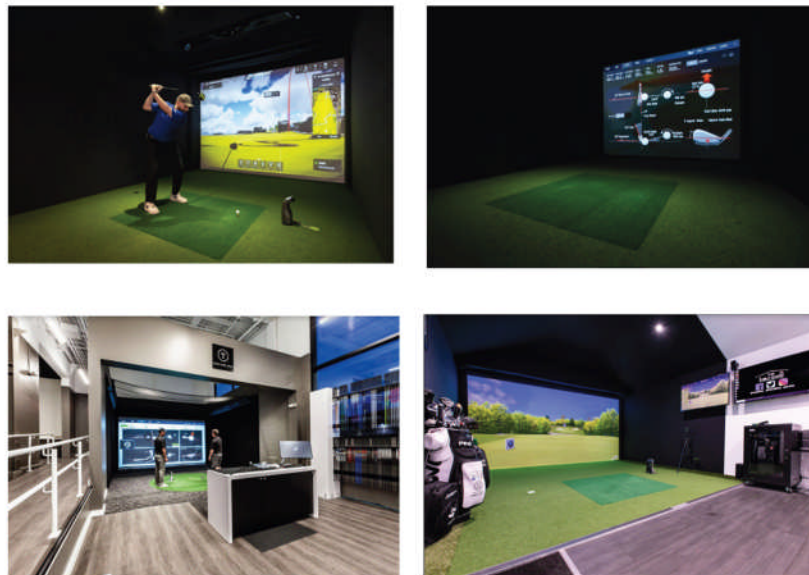


2.4 A copy of the illustrative street scene for the proposal is shown below.



3. Engagement with Golf Club Members

- 3.1 The applicant contacted each of the 575 members of the club, whom all received the letter included in appendix 1 by email. As indicated in the letter, initial plans were available to view within the library at the Club for the week commencing 7th November 2022.
- 3.2 Within the library, alongside the illustrative layout and street scene for the proposal (shown in section 2 of this statement), the members also were able to view the indicative improvements to the Golf Course – the golf simulator. This is shown below.



Foresight Simulators

- 3.3 During the week the plans were available to view in the library, observations were received from 9 people. Two were supportive of them and look forward to the investment in the club which would arise. One person was disappointed that they hadn't been made aware of the proposals as they had only joined in May 2022 (although the plans were not developed at the time). Another person commented that they were concerned regarding the removal of the practice area and its detriment for encouraging better players at the club.
- 3.4 The golf team captains have made the following point on behalf of their respective teams: Perceived lack of opportunity to comment. The practice facility is used by both first and second team members and many others. The outdoor practice facility would be detrimental to the attractiveness of the club to existing and potential future

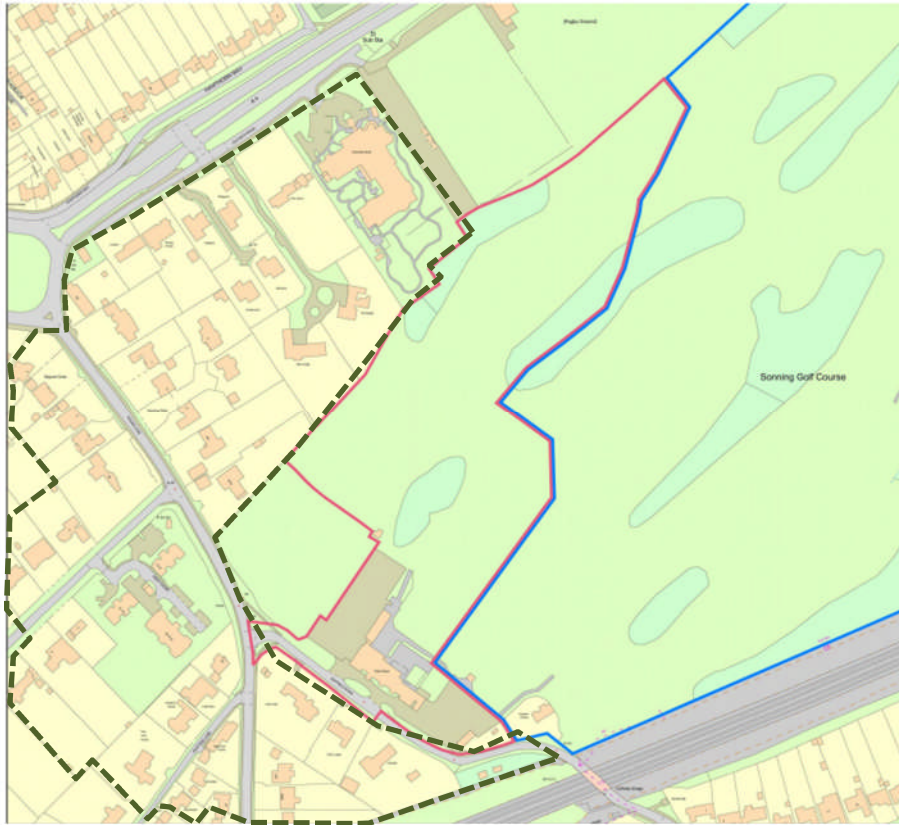
memberships. The indoor facilities would be occasionally useful, but no real substitution, albeit the idea of a dedicated short game area is very welcomed. Concern expressed regarding the changes to the course without damaging its integrity, noting the current length of the course at present. Finally, concern expressed that these proposals are a further step towards the whole course being redeveloped eventually.

- 3.5 A further observation on the information displayed in the library was received from the golf team captains at the Club who indicated that the members were collectively concerned over the loss of the practice ground and the other changes to the Club. The team captains' observations also noted that there was no formal deadline for providing views on the emerging proposals for the club and a perception that no one was invited to comment.
- 3.6 Other comments included that the practice nets would not a substitute to the range for warming up before playing a round of golf. Another member commented that the simulators would be a great addition to the clubhouse. One respondent noted the potential issue arising from the relationship of the proposed houses to the golf course from stray golf balls (to be noted that the site layout plan is only illustrative at this outline stage).

4. Engagement with local residents

- 4.1 Having regard to the extent of the application site and the nature of the proposal, the applicant undertook a leaflet drop advising nearby residents of the nature of the proposals as detailed in section 1³. This was through the distribution of a leaflet (see appendix 2) to the properties within close proximity to the application site as earmarked on the plan below (within the dashed green edged area).

³ Outline Planning Application for the erection of up to 54 dwellings and associated improvements to Sonning Golf Club



- 4.2 Taking account of the plan above, the leaflet was distributed to 45 dwellings. As noted in the leaflet, residents had a number of ways of obtaining further information on the proposal. This was either through accessing the weblink of the leaflet (which provided a copy of the illustrative site layout as shown in section 1) and/or attending a public meeting from 4 until 6pm on Tuesday 22nd November 2022 at Sonning Golf Club.
- 4.3 At the meeting, representatives of the applicants' team were available to provide a briefing on the proposal and answer any questions. At the briefing, a copy of the illustrative layout and street scene as indicated in section 2 was displayed.
- 4.4 Ten local residents attended the meeting and the points raised are covered in the table below.

Points raised within meeting	Response
Concerns over what infrastructure would be provided by the scheme i.e. schools, doctors?	See response to CIL
How much CIL would the scheme provide?	Initial estimates are between £1.2 and 1.5 million. This is dependent upon final mix and associated dwelling sizes.
Concerns over traffic, especially queues towards A4 and over the bridge at Sonning.	A transport assessment has been prepared which indicates traffic is appropriate
Will scheme assist delivery of Third Thames Bridge	This is a matter for the Borough Council as within CIL remit

Points raised within meeting	Response
Sonning is a small community of around 650 households. Concern about size of proposal	See response to draft Local Plan allocation
Query inclusion of the 24 dwellings on draft allocation in Revised Local Plan Update	This was included in Local Plan without Golf Club's promotion. The Club during the November 2021-January 2022 consultation advocated expanded allocation to include whole driving range – this is reflected in application
Query above relationships with extant permission for 13 dwellings. Can this be accessed from Golf Club	The Golf Club has no relationship with the 13 dwellings site. The application on driving range can come forward separately
Query about emerging proposals for RAMs rugby club	The Golf Club has no relationship with the RAMS rugby site. The application on driving range can come forward separately
Question about rights of access from land to north onto Golf Course	Open space is envisaged in the tree belt along northern boundary. This will enable maintenance.
Query about access for pedestrians and cyclists.	This will be covered in transport assessment

4.5 As noted in the flyer, observations on the illustrative proposals could also be submitted direct to the applicant's team through the email and postal addresses referenced by Friday 25th November 2022. Three responses were received through this mechanism, and these were from stakeholders outside of those who received the flyer. These were:

- o Concern over traffic and extent of congestion on A4.
- o Lack of capacity in schools and GP surgeries.
- o The Borough Council is struggling to deliver services i.e. refuse collection.
- o Concern over loss of countryside
- o Loss of recreational facilities at the Golf Club
- o Impact upon settlement separation
- o One of the responses was from a resident who could not access the illustrative layout – this was forwarded to them.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The applicant has undertaken engagement with stakeholders in advance of that by the authority.
- 5.2 The applicants' engagement with the stakeholders including both existing users of the course together with residents. Their observations on the scheme are noted in the previous section.
- 5.3 The Council will take account of this engagement together with that it undertakes prior to its determination of the planning application.

Appendix 1 – Copy of letter sent to members of the Golf Club

Dear Member,

I am writing to you to give you advance notice of the possibility of some significant changes and consequential improvements to the facilities at your golf club.

Plans for these changes and improvements have been prompted by the initiative of Wokingham Borough Council to include our practice ground in their Draft Emerging Plan for residential development. In response we have prepared a detailed scheme for both housing on the practice ground and new practice facilities.

I recognise that the loss of the existing practice ground will come as a disappointment to certain members but the opportunity is too important, to the club's future sustainability and my family, to ignore. Furthermore, with the ever-increasing distances that the younger members are able to drive the ball, the danger to neighbouring property from the range is growing.

I believe that over the last 12 years I have demonstrated my affection for the club and significantly improved the playing experience at the club. I have always taken great pride in what I do and you can trust me to continue to invest both my time and resources in the implementation of these changes and the continuing improvement of all aspects of club life.

There will be an exhibition with an outline of our plans in the library during the week commencing November 7th when you will see that:

A new road is proposed to provide access to the practice ground area. This will affect the members' car park which we intend to transfer to the opposite side of the clubhouse with attendant security. The existing number of member car park spaces will be maintained. Visitor parking will be accommodated alongside the new access road.

A new short game practice area will incorporate the existing 18th green, the practice putting green will be enlarged and a new 18th green will be formed. This will shorten the 18th hole but there are several options being considered for extending a number of holes on the course to compensate and to maintain both the current par of the course and its overall length.

Three high tech simulators for practice and lessons will be introduced, for member practice and coaching, in a bespoke facility, to the wing which houses the current pro's shop. The pro's shop will be redesigned. The simulators, as some of you will know, will give members the opportunity to play most of the top courses in the world and afford analysis on every part of your golf swing - like it or not! It will, of course, be free of charge to members and their guests. I am afraid that the snooker room and the current bag store will have to be sacrificed.

A number of new practice nets will also be built to provide additional practice and warm up facilities.

The restaurant bar and conservatory will be renovated, improved and refurbished to substantially improve the entertaining and dining experience.

Future plans, which must be subject to planning approval, will involve increasing the provision of accommodation for buggies, trolleys and bag storage, and the incorporation, extension and thorough renovation of the cottage adjacent to the first tee. We already have planning permission to extend and improve it as a residential unit but I would like to see it as an attractive feature of the course.

All these matters are in the hands of the local authority but I am excited by the prospect of being able to step up our ambitions for Sonning Golf Club, which gives us all so much pleasure.

In the event that these changes come about, there will be no increase for existing members in annual subscriptions for three membership years to compensate you for the inconvenience. Furthermore, we will endeavour to carry out the changes to the course and the clubhouse before closing the existing practice facilities.

Yours sincerely,

Stuart Crossley

Appendix 2: Copy of the leaflet circulated to nearby properties



Public Consultation Sonning Golf Club Practice Ground

The landowners would like the views of residents on the principle of developing the above site for around 56 new homes. The site comprises 32 open market houses (26) and flats (6) and 22 affordable houses (14) and flats (8).

Our draft proposals for the site are available to see online:

<https://sonning.intelligentgolf.co.uk/uploads/sonning/File/Plans.pdf>

Your views are important to us and we would like to hear your thoughts on the outline planning application.

We will be presenting the proposed plans and available to answer any questions in The Library at Sonning Golf Club between 16.00 and 18.00 on Tuesday 22nd November 2022 for any residents who would like to discuss with us in person.

If you have any further questions or responses, please send your email to: office@woolfbond.co.uk quoting reference Sonning Golf Club. Alternatively, you can write to: Woolf Bond Planning, The Mitfords, Basingstoke Road, Three Mile Cross, Reading, RG7 1AT.

Please submit any comments by 25th November 2022.