

CLITHEROE GOLF CLUB PROPOSED NEW DRIVING RANGE

STATEMENT TO SUPPORT REVISED PLANNING APPLICATION

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 With a focus on providing better sporting facilities for members and visitors, Clitheroe Golf Club is upgrading its golf driving range with the provision of a purpose-built structure located at the north-eastern corner of the existing open tee bed and range.

1.2 In September 2019, planning permission (3/2019/0653) was granted for a “10 bay covered driving range bays together with teaching swing room and low level lighting”. The planning application had been accompanied by drawings (listed in condition 2 of the approval) illustrating the design and location of the new building, details of the proposed 4 m high fence along the edge of the driving area and details of the intended lighting. A specialist report, confirming that the lighting would have no material impact upon any nearby residences was also included.

1.3 At that stage the proposal was to erect a timber framed building, clad externally on three sides with dark green profiled steel sheet. The intended driving range building (internal) footprint measured 36.2 m long x 6 m in depth, having an apex roof 2.8 m high at the rear and 4 m at the front. The smaller detached (timber framed) swing room was to be sited 1 m south-east of the driving range, the building having an internal footprint of 9m x 4.8m and an apex roof approximately 3.8 m high at the front and 2.8 m at the rear. The swing room would be externally clad on all sides by metal sheeting to match the adjacent driving range structure.

1.4 In December 2019 the Golf Club was approached by the Council asking for clarification of the building dimensions, following concern expressed by local residents that the internal framework of the building under construction was now steel and that the building itself appeared higher than the permitted size. At that point the Club ceased construction of the building and arrange for the Council’s Enforcement Officer to visit the site and speak with Club representatives.

1.5 At that meeting it was agreed that the suggested changes had occurred and that, whilst the revisions had been made (post approval) for plausible sporting and design reasons it was nevertheless agreed that prior approval should have been obtained from the Council. Consequently a rectification application is required to allow the Council (and any local residents) to review the changed details.

1.6 This new application therefore addresses the revisions, accompanied by a reasoned justification prepared by the Golf Club. What was not apparent at the time of the Enforcement Officer’s visit, however, is that the footprint location of the driving range building also differs from the approved site plan (the siting having been adjusted to achieve better drive orientation and improved ‘screening’ from the adjacent tree belt.) That plan utilised a hand drawn base and, only following detailed site measurements together with the positioning of the “as built” building on an up-to-date ordnance survey base, was the scale of the repositioning of the building clearly apparent.

1.7 The Club therefore wishes to set out its reasons for the changes in the hope that the Council and members of the public will acknowledge the benefits in terms of reducing the perceived impact

of the building, improving open aspect for the bungalows fronting Whalley Road as well as offering the highest standard of sporting facilities to club members and visitors.



2 GOLF DRIVING RANGE - EXPLANATION OF REASONS FOR CHANGES

Change of Range and Swing Room height.

2.1 After further research and factoring in 'future-proofing' of the Range, the approved 4m at the front and 2.8 m at the back was, on reflection, considered inadequate. The golfing population is getting taller, reflecting the youth of today and also those entering the sport from future generations. For example, one of the Club's members is 2.0m tall with a raised arm reach of a further 0.6m. A typical driver length of today is 1.17m long. Swings can differ in shape and plane but a more upright swing would need approx. 3.8 m internal clearance around the middle part of the covered structure to give full clearance, provide adequate safety and avoid damage to equipment, as well as not inhibiting the individual's swing or obstructing golfers when practicing.

2.2 The 'as built' external height and dimensions for the Range structure is now 3.3m high to the top of cladding at the rear and 4.8m to the top of the cladding to the front. This achieves the abovementioned desired internal clearance and represents an increase of 0.5m at the back and 0.8m at the front. The Swing Room is 3.3m high at the rear and 4.4m at the front.

2.3 As the driving range structure is an open facility for golfers, and depending on the weather and personal feelings on stance/ball position, the Club has had to factor in that golfers can and will creep towards the back of the bays. This will also add pressure onto the height issue, since the further to the back of the range you go, the closer towards the internal roof and lighting you are and the greater the risk to personal health or equipment damage.

2.4 The new facility also requires installation of a flooring layer on top of the existing concrete base which will require a screed and then adhesive to take a 20mm thickness of artificial grass. To this is added a 60mm thick hitting matt. This, in turn, results in an 80mm loss of available swing height internally.

2.5 All these factors add to the need for a minimum height clearance internally to allow freedom of movement without risk of damage and injury.



This also applies to the swing room for the same reasons.

Change of shape of building base

2.5 Following careful consideration of site context and expected use, the Golf Club has reflected on the shape of the covered range structure. Post (planning) approval discussions focussed upon the relationship to the existing Greenkeeper's Hut from the far right wing orientation and also the far left wing towards the shortest boundary to the right of the outfield/hitting zone.

2.6 This has resulted in the change in building shape to a more simple 2 wings, rather than the approved 3, and the softening of the axis/bend to direct ball hitting towards the centre of the outfield/targets. The size of the main building footprint remains at 36m x 6m, albeit with a slightly different shape.

2.7 The relationship of the Swing Room to the new covered range has been adjusted to place the back profile in line with the Range structure back line. The more forward position of the room offers better visual integration of the new buildings but also gives extra protection and helps visual focus to golfers hitting direction.

2.8 The size of the swing room footprint has been slightly increased to 9m x 5.5m in response to the Golf Club's revised thinking on safe swing distances.

Range building footprint

2.9 The increased building height gave rise to the need to reflect on building position. The existing planning permission shows the building located upon the existing tee bed whereas the 'as built' position is now more towards the back of the bed.



2.10 This adjustment provides the opportunity to modestly reduce the base level (as the land falls slightly to the north east) but more importantly allows the re-orientated building to be moved off the skyline and set against the existing mature tree belt at a point where a gap in the belt allows even closer integration with existing landscaping.

2.11 The existing planning approval requires a number of new hardwood trees to be planted to the east of the driving range to help to soften the view of the structure when viewed from the Whalley Road bungalows. However the new trees would take several years or more to have any significant screening benefit and, on reflection, it was considered that a much more immediate and effective means of reducing any visual impact of the building when viewed from the east would be to site the building as close as practical to the tall mature tree screen along the northern boundary. In this manner, the trees would act as an immediately effective background foil, against which the new structure would sit - thereby helping to compensate for any modest increase in building height.



2.12 The Club still proposes to undertake selective hardwood tree planting to screen the eastern edge of the new driving the as well as mounding and lower level shrub planting to soften the bottom edge of the new building. The objective would be to reduce the perceived scale of the clad building(s) when viewed from the bungalows to no greater than the existing approved building heights.

Range framing material – alterations and subsequent change to steel.

2.13 Upon first inspection of the scheme drawings, the Council’s Building Control Team expressed concerns about the intended profile and thickness of the front timber support columns of the Range structure, as approved under planning. They asked for these to be strengthened (increased profile) and redesigned to provide better support and stability. These changes, if remaining in timber, would have altered the overall budgeted costs and reduced the internal dimensions of the space in each bay by adding some 100mm to each column which, along with the required additional safety padding on each support, would have impinged upon golfer’s swing plane, eye line and suitability for purpose.

2.14 The Club therefore reviewed comparable facilities at other golf driving ranges (materials and suitability/sizes) together with design requirements such as stability/height issues/support column interference in swing area. Following consultation with structural engineers, the Club was advised that the most ideal way to achieve all Building Control requested changes, plus changes to make the structure more fit for purpose, was to construct the internal framing out of galvanised steel. This would allow the support columns and stability to be as Building Control requested, also to require only 3 support columns at the front within the 10 bays, rather than the approved 9. This would address all visual issues, width issues and avoid an inhibited swing zone. It would also future-proof the driving range for long-term sustainability, low maintenance and minimal ongoing costs and avoid the repairs that are often associated with a wooden structure.



2.15 The Range will also now be more able to survive the challenges and extremes of the local weather and environmental changes that face us now and increasingly for the future.

Impact of 'steel v timber' frame upon external appearance

2.16 The planning permission approves the use of green profiled metal sheeting to clad the roof and three sides of the (timber) frame of the proposed buildings. Thus the view from Whalley Road and the bungalows would be of the metal cladding and not the frame – whichever framing option (timber or steel) is selected.

2.17 It is still intended to utilise the originally approved green metal sheeting to clad the building in a similar manner, as demonstrated by the cladding already installed on the halted project.

2.18 Whilst the Golf Club acknowledges that, when seen from the open front of the structure, some parts of the metal framing might be apparent, there are no dwellings or public viewpoints in that direction where any framework variation would be noticeable. Additionally, the intention has always been to clad the uprights with protective safety insulation - which will remain the same. Consequently a change of internal framing material will have no material impact upon the visual amenities of residents or of members of the public using the local highway.

2.19 Landscaping is already proposed at the rear of the new driving range (between it and the dwellings) in order to soften the impact of the building upon residents' view and that is a condition of the planning permission. The new tree planting still forms part of the proposal and would be increased through additional soft landscaping and ground re-contouring.

Summary

2.10 The Golf Club accepts that the changes to the approved details should have been addressed at initial design stage and regrets any concern caused by the late change either to local residents or to the planning authority. However, further clarification of ground conditions and sporting requirements brought about the late adjustments. The current application is intended to seek an amended permission for the works already commenced.

2.21 The Club regrets the need to adjust the scheme and its related permission at this late stage but hopes that the planning authority and local residents will recognise its endeavours to minimise any landscape intrusion and to deliver high standards of sporting excellence.

2.22 Whilst the scale of the building has modestly increased and the footprint been adjusted, the fundamental principles of the proposal remain the same. The change of framing material from timber to metal provides a more durable and better designed building and should not be noticeable from Whalley Road or the nearest dwellings since the external cladding (which effectively screens the framing from public view) remains the same as that already approved.

2.23 Additional landscaping will be introduced if required in order to soften the building profile and could be controlled by condition in a similar manner to the current permission.

3 ADDITIONAL RELATED WORKS (subject of the new application)

a) Access track

3.1 Golfers currently access the existing tee bed/driving area via a 3 m wide gravel track which runs from the car park adjacent to the greenkeepers hut in a north east direction. The current permission envisages the retention of the track in its existing location but proposes a 75m long x 4m high black plastic safety fence on 4m posts along its western edge.

3.2 The repositioning and realignment of the new driving bays questions the retention of the access track in its current position and calls for relocation approximately 40 m to the east - having a similar gravel surface and width as the present track.

b) Safety fencing

3.3 The benefit of the revised track location is that it would no longer be necessary to provide the 4 m high black protective fence along its edge. Instead a shorter length of 6m high safety 'ball-stop' fencing would need to be erected closer to the Clubhouse, around the edge of the overspill car park in front of the greenkeepers hut.

3.4 In this position the fence would be much less noticeable, especially when viewed from the east. Under the current permission, the fence would have been visible cutting across the skyline when viewed from the rear of the Whalley Road bungalows whereas, as now proposed, there would be no such feature on the skyline.

c) Site landscaping

3.6 The Club proposes to supplement the currently planned new hardwood trees at the back of the Range/Swing room with mounding and low level shrub planting to reduce the perceived scale of the structures when viewed from the Whalley Road bungalows. Additionally the land located between the old and new access tracks would be planted/retained as a 'wildflower meadow'.

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