

Report to **Planning Committee**
Date **9 April 2026**
By **Director of Placemaking**
Local Authority **Winchester City Council**
Application Number **SDNP/25/04920/FUL**
Applicant **Mr Galvin (on behalf of Corhampton Golf Club Ltd)**
Application **Change of use from agricultural field to golf course including creation of 4 holes, associated fairways and tees, with an irrigation pond in the south west corner of the field and works associated with the existing golf course including; reshaping of existing fairways and tees, translocating trees, with new chalk grassland and chalk scrapes over the whole site.**
Address **Corhampton Golf Club, Shepherds Farm Lane, Corhampton, Hampshire, SO32 3GZ**

Recommendation:

- 1) That planning permission be refused for the reasons set out in paragraph 9.1 of this report.**

Executive Summary

The development proposals include the entire golf course and the extension area, together these occupy approximately 62ha. It also includes Shepherds Copse (an Ancient Woodland), existing hedgerows, the existing playable area, club house, car park and practice area. The application would create an irrigation pond and four new holes on an agriculture field owned by the club and immediately adjacent to the course.

The planning statement notes that the extension area (the new holes created) will occupy approximately 15 hectares (ha) and it is proposed to import approximately 317,000 metres squares (m³) of locally sourced soils to create the tees, fairways and greens as well as 'bank up' the proposed irrigation pond. The existing course will be redesigned in association with the creation of these four new holes and the resulting course will be 18 holes, with one 'spare'.

The proposed 9,000m³ irrigation/run off storage pond is located in the south western corner of the site and the collected water will be used for irrigation of greens, tees and approaches. A series of attenuation ponds will feed this pond and water will be pumped back to where it is needed.

The applicant has engaged with the Authority over two pre application submissions and there are positive aspects to the scheme including an increase in biodiversity and a greater resilience and

adaption to climate change through capturing and storing rainwater on site to reduce water abstraction.

However, the extensive proposals, especially the proposed land profiling would fundamentally alter the character and appearance of this open downland site, which contributes to the prevailing local landscape character, to one which would be significantly re-profiled and engineered.

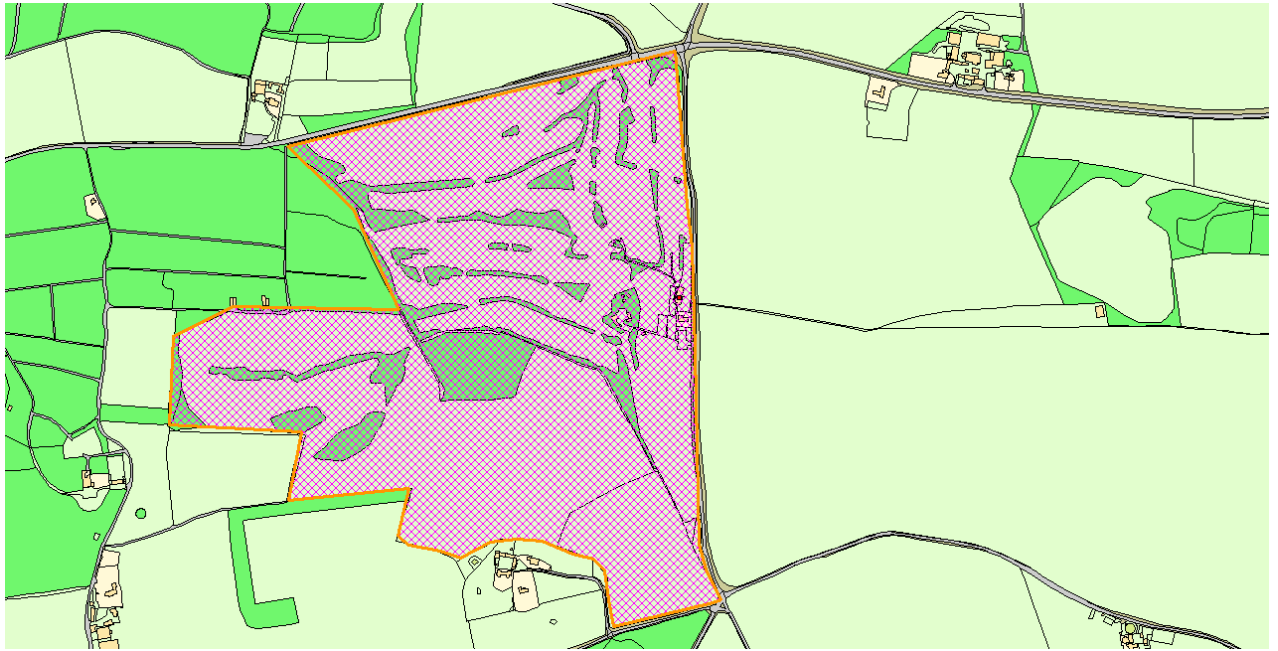
This change in character would be visible from the public environs of the surrounding rural road network and public footpaths. The mitigation of re-using the grassland topsoil on top of these earthworks would not mitigate for these impacts and it would appear as a large-scale incongruous form and appearance that would not conserve or enhance the National Park landscape.

These works would also fundamentally change the natural processes of the site as a result of the irrigation scheme capturing and storing water, in comparison to its current characteristic of infiltrating rainfall into the chalk aquifer.

Consequently, for these reasons the proposals would not achieve a landscape-led and ecosystems services approach to development and would not constitute sustainable development, which outweigh that the proposals involve less reliance on abstraction and mains water as well as the proposed biodiversity net gain. The application is therefore recommended for refusal in on landscape character and ecosystems services impacts.

The application is before Members due to the scale, nature and location of development and the issues raised, as well as the level of representations received.

Site Location Map



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1. Site Description

- 1.1 Corhampton Golf Club was established in 1891 and comprises a 19-hole golf course (18-holes plus a spare for maintenance purposes) over approximately 34Ha. The site is immediately adjacent to the existing golf course and located approximately 1.7 kilometres (km) South West of Corhampton.
- 1.2 The site for the proposed extension of the course covers an area of approximately 15Ha of agricultural grazing land, located immediately south of the existing golf course. It is separated from the existing golf course by hedged and wooded boundaries, although there are ‘clear points’ in this boundary with views across the field looking south from the Wayfarers walk (which follows the northern boundary line). Shepherds Copse is in the northwest corner of the existing agricultural field. This is linked to Hazel Holt & together with this is classified as a priority habitat due to the presence of ancient semi-natural woodlands (1A)/other woodland where there is a significant element of ancient semi-natural woodland surviving (1B)
- 1.3 The Wayfarers Walk Public Right of Way runs alongside the proposed development site. The path runs along Shepherds Farm Lane, before entering at the hedge and tree lined route through the existing golf course. There is also a Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT), number 067/505/1 which joins a bridleway (067/501/1) along the top of Shepherds Down and from which the site is visible in long views across the valley, especially in wintertime. Additionally, the site is also visible from points on the surrounding rural road network.
- 1.4 The nearest residential properties are at Shepherds Down Farm, which borders the south boundary of the proposed extension area.

2. Relevant planning history

- 2.1 SDNP/17/05396/FUL - Creation of new vehicular access to highway – Approved April 2018.
- 2.2 SDNP/23/04918/FUL - New entrance canopy, to remove existing conservatory structure and replace with a new roof. Creation of a new ground floor office and extension of first floor communal/bar area. Approved January 2024.
- 2.3 SDNP/24/02279/PRECON – Change of use of agricultural grazing land to golf course (4 holes).

Officer note: The applicant was advised that the proposals raised serious concern regarding the potentially adverse impact upon the protected ancient woodland and any protected species on site. Noted that the concerns predominantly centre around the importation of soil and the reprofiling of the site in a heavily landscaped way, along with the end result of a fairly formalised landscaped setting, manicured fairways, artificial water bodies etc akin to the existing course.

- 2.4 SDNP/25/01317/PRE STAGE 2 - Change the use of agricultural land to a golf course.

Officer note: The applicant was advised in August 2025 that the Authority welcomed the engagement of the club in pre application discussions and that the volume of work and submitted evidence, coupled with on-site meetings and discussions with colleagues has led to the conclusion that, conversely to the position set out in SDNP/24/02279/PRECON, the change of use of the land from agricultural to golf course *could* be acceptable, providing all the other cited benefits to nature recovery are secured and the intervention into the landscape is as minimal as possible.

- 2.5 Officers advised that the pre application submission did not yet demonstrate minimal impact on the landscape. The advice cited the proposed importation of soils and noted that concerns were raised in regard to the proposed re-profiling to create the course. The advice strongly advised against soil importation.
- 2.6 Following this advice, further advice was issued in December 2025. This again welcomed the constructive engagement of the Club with the Authority and welcomed the relocation of the irrigation pond to better suit the existing topography of the site and space around the ancient woodland to allow it to naturally regenerate. However, the advice again reiterated

how important it was to keep soil importation to a minimum and noted that importing foreign material, which is not characteristic of this part of the landscape, would not be supported. The applicant was advised that the Authority would expect them to re-use all the soil from the excavated pond areas and that officers were yet to be convinced that importing soils was appropriate in this instance.

- 2.7 In summing up officers noted that a stage in negotiations had been reached whereby a full application should be submitted, noting that the previous 'in principle' objection to the change of use had been removed, provided that all the other cited benefits to nature recovery were secured and the intervention into the landscape was as minimal as possible.

3. Proposal

- 3.1 The proposals involve the change of use of an agricultural field to a golf course, in order that the club may expand. The club has set out that there are a (higher than industry standard) number of hazards across the existing course which is a historic and cramped layout. The expansion of the club into the adjacent field (which it has owned since 1891) would allow 18 holes to be played over an expanded area. The Golf course already has access to this field, from several points adjoining the existing golf course on the northern and western edges and also from a gate from Shepherds Lane on the eastern edge of the site.
- 3.2 The proposals involve significant land re-profiling to provide these new four holes as well as to create the new proposed large irrigation pond in the southwest corner. This pond will be fed by a series of three smaller ponds and a range of swales; the smaller ponds being cited to the northeast of the irrigation ponds. It is envisaged that water will be pumped up from this point to where it is needed elsewhere on the course, however no details have been provided regarding this.
- 3.3 The application submission refers to the importation of between 317,000m³ – 320,000m³ of inert soils and the re-profiling of the existing field to create the four proposed holes and storage pond. It notes that the imported material would be sourced largely from local construction sites and it would be subject to an existing management regime that would govern the type and quality of soil to be deposited, based on industry best practice and Environment Agency permitting.
- 3.4 A phasing plan has been submitted showing phase 1 of the works to start in the far western corner of the site, they would then proceed eastwards with the last phase, 5, being adjacent to Shepherds Farm Lane. It is envisaged that the site compound and soil holding area would be located in the far eastern corner of the site. The applicant has confirmed that the existing topsoil would be stripped off and stockpiled in phases. Once the imported material has been contoured, the existing topsoil would be re-laid over it with any new seeding or planting, in line with the landscape scheme.
- 3.5 The site would be accessed via the existing double access gate into the field, which leads off Shepherds Farm Lane.
- 3.6 In terms of the changes to the existing topography these are materially significant. The existing field slopes gently down, from the northern and eastern higher points to the lowest southern and western points. The proposed re-profiling would create a series of 'humps', banks and plateaus, some of which would be as high around 6 -8 metres above the existing ground level. Whilst the large irrigation pond lowest point of the site and involves some excavation, it is also proposed that soil is banked up around this body of water.
- 3.7 The system would capture surface water run-off into the new storage pond, with a 9,000m³ capacity, it is estimated this could take around 1.5 years to fill depending upon rainfall levels and it is anticipated to be a permanent water body with some seasonal fluctuations.
- 3.8 The submitted flood risk and drainage statement notes that the irrigation pond will be lined to reduce losses to ground and landscaped to mimic the appearance of a dew pond. A solar-powered pump inlet will be installed near the base of the feature to transfer water from the pond to the course for irrigation when needed. An overflow will be constructed on the downgradient bank of the pond to convey runoff to a linear infiltration trench installed

within the permeable chalk bedrock to reduce off-site runoff and encourage aquifer recharge.

- 3.9 The transport statement notes that; *“It is proposed to import 320,000 cubic metres in 4-axle tipper lorries each with a carrying capacity of 18 tonnes (15 cubic metres). The proposed development will generate approximately 21,300 inbound loaded trips. There will be the same number of outbound empty trips.*
- 3.10 *The site will work from 07.00 to 17.00 weekdays only. There will be no importation during weekends and bank holidays. The site will import three to four loads per hour, that is 30 to 40 loads per day. The site will operate for 253 days per year. Based on these import rates, the site will take about three years to complete the works.”*
- 3.11 All HGVs will leave and enter the site via the entrance at the eastern edge of the existing agricultural field, onto Shepherds Farm Lane. The submitted draft Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) shows the proposed routing of these vehicles and notes that these shall only approach and leave the site via Shepherds Farm Lane and the B3035 to the north of the site. There will be no right turn out of the site onto Shepherds Farm Lane.
- 3.12 In addition to the substantive works proposed within the existing agricultural field the proposals also include for layout changes to the remainder of the golf course, this would spread out from 11 holes as currently located in this northern portion to eight holes as re-designed. The works in this part of the site would involve the translocation of trees, planting of chalk grassland, creation of chalk scrapes and the re-shaping of the greens and creation of new tees.
- 3.13 The application includes the entire redline area of the Golf Course. If the application were considered acceptable in all other regards the proposed BNG gain of 14.9% in area habitats and 12.14% in linear habitats would be secured via a s106 agreement which would secure a Habitat Monitoring and Management Plan for a minimum period of 30 years.

4. Consultations

4.1 **WCC Arboriculture:** No comments received.

4.2 **WCC Archaeology:** Comments & Advice.

Officer Note: The full response from WCC archeology is available on public access. The officers concluding comments are as follows and these are further discussed at paragraphs 7.43-7.49;

“As such the proposed excavations together with impacts from ongoing plant movements across the site would not result in the successful conservation of archaeological remains across this application site.

Finally, it is unclear whether there is any public benefit arising from the proposal that would outweigh the identified harm to undesignated archaeological remains, generally less than substantial harm (at the lower end of the scale), but substantial harm / potential total loss in relation to the Bronze Age barrow.

If upon balancing all material planning considerations you are minded to grant planning permission for this proposal, the following conditions (3 in number) are recommended to secure appropriate archaeological mitigation measures”.

- 4.3 **Hampshire County Council (HCC) Ecology:** No objection, subject to conditions and legal agreement.
- 4.4 **District Licensing Officer (Newts)** No comments received - any comments to be reported to committee.
- 4.5 **Environment Agency:** No objection subject to conditions.
- 4.6 **Environmental Health:** No objection, subject to a condition.
- 4.7 **Highways Authority:** No objection, subject to conditions.
- 4.8 **Planning Policy (SDNPA):** Comments, which can be summarised as below;

- It is unclear from the submitted documents whether the applicant is intending to apply via a Contaminated Land Application in Real Environments (CL:AIRE) for a Definition of Waste: Code of Practice (DoW CoP) Declaration.
- If the applicant is intending to apply CL:AIRE the Authority will need to see a commitment to following DoW CoP for all imported materials (i.e., via a DoW CoP Declaration), along with clarification about “donor site” location(s), how soil will be handled between donor site(s) and the application site, and the chemical composition, type and quantity of imported inert materials.
- If commitment, clarifications, and monitoring mechanisms are not provided, then the Authority may have to consider the proposal as “waste development”.
- The impact of transporting materials can, if not controlled, be significant for sensitive environments and on communities. The HGV movements will need to be considered against SDLP Policies SD7 (Relative Tranquillity), SD19 (Transport and Accessibility), and SD20 (Walking, Cycling and Equestrian Routes) and, if applicable, HMWP PU Policy 13 (Managing Traffic). If the proposal is acceptable, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) should be agreed via condition to ensure all required control, management and mitigation measures are captured.
- In Summary *“it is unclear whether the applicant is intending to apply to CL: AIRE for a DoW CoP Declaration. This will need to be confirmed in order to clarify how the proposal should be considered against policies in the Development Plan. Fundamentally, however, the proposal includes large-scale works and land reprofiling in a sensitive landscape and so will need to be considered against National Park Purpose 1 and relevant policies in relation to ecosystem services, landscape character, design, views, relative tranquillity, transport, and biodiversity and geodiversity”*.

Officer Note: the applicant has since confirmed that they are intending to apply to CL:AIRE for a DoW CoP Declaration but no further details have been provided. Members should note that, had the application been considered acceptable in all other respects officers would have requested further information regarding the importation of soils. However, given that it is unacceptable as outlined below, this information is not requested at this juncture.

- 4.9 **SNDPA Rights of Way Officer:** Objection; the application does not provide enhancements to the local bridleway network, the 42,600 HGV movements pose a major safety and tranquillity risk as the point where the Wayfarers Way crosses Shepherds Farm Lane and where it runs through the middle of the application site. The four new holes are located immediately adjacent to Wayfarer’s Walk and Dundridge Lane there is a clear risk of ball strike.

Officer Note: It should be noted here that whilst officers have sympathy with the impact of the proposed HGV movements and their impact upon tranquillity in this instance the traffic movements relate to construction traffic and the impact would be temporary. As detailed further below there are no concerns from HCC highways with regards to safety.

- 4.10 **SDNPA Landscape Officer:** Objection – the main points are summarised below:

- Landform increases (c.9m) are significant. The site would become visible in more views. These effects are not assessed in the LVIA. In particular, views from (bridleway 067/7b/1 and byway 067/501/1) on Shepherd’s Down, which also provides the site’s setting
- The Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LIVA) claims benefits of ‘enhanced visual connections to the landscape’ but these are for the minority - golfers. No account is taken of the majority, using rights of way and promoted long-distance routes, and seeking experience of a nationally valued landscape
- Site soils have not been adequately surveyed.
- Mitigation for importing non-native soil is matching soils to this site. If this type is not known effective mitigation cannot be agreed.
- This Landscape is characterised by gently rolling landform and dry valleys.

- This undulating landform would be interrupted by a significant 6-9m increase – losing this ‘subtlety’ and key characteristics that make this landscape distinctive
- The pond will not be dug down and spoil used to regrade the golf course. Instead, it sits within the imported soils and bunds used to create depth, increasing its artificial character.
- The site hosts a bowl barrow, enclosure complex and early (potentially medieval) asserts. These are all ‘in situ’ heritage assets. They contribute positively to the coherence of this landscape and none are conserved and enhanced because of this project.
- Landform changes are significant. The site would become more visible from more views and these are not assessed in the LIVA.
- Of particular importance are the views from Bridleway 067/7b/1 and byway 067/50/1/1 on Shepherds Down.
- Without evidence to the contrary the landform change would likely block longer distance views from the adjacent Wayfarers Way. The mitigation proposed is to allow the hedgerow to grow. This mitigation results in a negative impact itself. The proposals lose opportunities for views from a valued route.
- In summary; The proposal would negatively and permanently alter the character of this landscape. This is in a way that cannot be mitigated for. Negative views on visual character would result from these changes.

4.11 **Lead Local Flood Authority:** No objection, subject to condition.

- The LLFA recommend that a planning condition is applied to cover the requirement to use material with similar infiltration characteristics within an acceptable range to ensure the runoff / infiltration characteristics of the site are maintained as far as reasonably practicable. However, they go onto comment that *“Earthworks specification is outside of our remit and we recommend advice is sought from a geotechnical specialist to assist in the wording of the condition”*

Officer Note: had the application been acceptable in all other respects this advice would have been sought.

4.12 **Natural England:** No objection (no conditions recommended), standing advice should be taken into account regarding ancient woodland and veteran trees.

4.13 **Southern Water:** No comments, any comments received will be reported to members

4.14 **Portsmouth Water;** No comments, any comments received will be reported to members.

4.15 **Council for the Protection of Rural England (Hampshire):** Objection

- This response notes that CPRE Hampshire have no objection in principle to a change of use of the area proposed from agriculture field to golf course, with creation of four holes with irrigation improvements. However, there are serious concerns regarding soil importation and landform changes. The response also notes that views from the Wayfarers Walk would be blocked by the proposed bunds.
- The response concludes that *“Accordingly, CPRE Hampshire strongly objects to this Application on the basis of: a) the importation of soils and landfill associated HGV movements and reconstruction of the landform which would be inconsistent with the conservation of the natural landscape and topography of this chalk downland, and (b) impairment of views from the Wayfarers Walk long-distance walking route”*

4.16 **National Farmers Union:** Objection on the following principal issues.

- The scale of infill and waste importation, which appears disproportionate to the stated recreational outcome and raises concern about long-term impacts on chalk geology, groundwater and nearby watercourses.

- Traffic impacts, including a substantial increase in HGV movements on narrow rural roads regularly used by agricultural vehicles. Members are concerned about road safety, congestion, and practical implications for day-to-day farming operations.
- Landscape and environmental harm, given the site's location within the South Downs National Park, where the statutory purpose is to conserve and enhance natural beauty.
- Precedent, with concern that development of this nature, if approved under a recreational classification, could weaken protections for nationally designated landscapes.

4.17 The British Horse Society: Objection noting that;

- Riders and drivers of horses are legitimate users of roads and have no choice but to use roads because there are few areas of the country with bridleways and byways that connect without using roads. 85% of BHS members use roads and bridleways for exercise and recreation, so unsafe roads impact the health and wellbeing of both equestrians and their horses.
- The response notes that local members have raised road safety concerns because of the estimated 42,600 HGV movements over 3 years and that additional level of HGV traffic being a radical change to local roads, making them hazardous and unpleasant to traverse if not in a motor vehicle and difficult to cross. The response notes that the submitted Transport Statement mentions the public footpath but does not address the public's use of the adjacent roads on foot, horse or cycle and states that riders safety will be severely compromised by significant road traffic generated.
- At the least, the society requests that a 'behind the hedge' route is provided for non-motorised users, including equestrians, on the golf course land, adjacent to the lane, to mitigate risk for the lifetime of the development. Continued provision of the route would be welcome as the enlargement of the course will presumably lead to increased traffic from its users. Consideration should also be given to speed limits to allow for signal-controlled crossings of the adjacent roads.

4.18 Bishops Waltham Parish Council: Objection.

- Does not align with SDNPA policies as a National Park to conserve the beauty within the site.
- Landscape - importing of alien material will alter the geological structure of the land and have an impact on the surrounding natural area. (conflicting with Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan 2013, 2023, 2025 and SD2: Ecosystems Services and SD9 Biodiversity and Geodiversity)
- Highways - the increase of HGV movements on rural roads is not acceptable, particularly on Shepherds Farm Lane (conflicting with SD19 and SD21). Bishop's Waltham is already struggling with increased traffic on the B3035 and HGV movements are not encouraged through the market town due to pollution of noise and fumes as well as heavy weight on poorly maintained roads damaging them further), and especially not along its country lanes between the town and the golf course (Dundridge Lane would also be affected it states in the application which is a particularly narrow, winding lane).
- Lack of community engagement or benefit - this is a private members' club and no attempt at consultation or show of benefit to the local communities has been offered or demonstrated in this application.

4.19 Swanmore Parish Council: Objection

- Concerned about HGV movements.

4.20 Soberton Parish Council: Objection

- Unacceptable harm to special qualities of the National Park, the National Planning Policy Framework and the South Downs Local Plan.

- Constitutes Major development.
- Scale of landform changed proposed would result in irreversible harm to the character of this sensitive chalk downland landscape.
- Fails to adequately safeguard ecosystems services contrary to policy SD2 and SD9.
- Could introduce contaminants include PFAS into the chalk catchment.
- Should be considered as waste development.
- Unacceptable impacts on local rural roads and communities.
- Considers that the Golf Clubs sustainable objectives, including water storage could be achieve through an alternative, less intrusive solution.

4.21 Hambledon Parish Council: Objection

- Fails to conserve the landscape, natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Park.
- Full CTMP should be submitted.
- Many of Hambledon road edges are exposed and degrading and lanes are narrow with limited passing places and tight bends unsuitable for Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV).
- Will have an adverse impact on residential amenity and tranquillity, especially for users of the PRoW network, including those using the Wayfarers Walk with transects the village.

4.22 Shedfield Parish Council; Objection

- This is a major development requiring full planning application, not change of use.
- The proposed change to the protected landscape of the national park is unacceptable.
- Noise impact.
- Traffic impact.
- The proposal conflicts with NPPF and SDNP policies and objectives.
- The proposed importation of 317,000 cubic metres of suitable waste soil in three years is unlikely to be achieved.
- Soil disturbance on an industrial scale will cause substantial carbon release affecting climate change.
- The PC would support a proposal for introducing a pond and associated attenuation ponds designed to reduce water extraction and use of mains water provided this did not involve importation of foreign soil waste.

5. Representations

5.1 Over 300 contributors have made comments in relation to this application. 87 of these are in support of the application and 212 are made in objection.

5.2 There has also been a representation from the Hampshire Area Ramblers Area Officer raising safety concerns. It should be noted that there is a response from HCC highways regarding this concern and that the highways authority have recommended conditions to secure operational risk assessments via appropriate conditions. If the application had been acceptable in all other respects officers would have pursued further information in this regard from applicants.

5.3 The submitted objections raise the following matters.

- The amount of landform change to achieve the four holes is unacceptable in terms of landscape impact and unnecessary.
- Many objections note that the application is essentially a waste disposal operation and should be considered under the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan.

- The application does not consider horse riders or horses.
- The land can be remodelled to support the additional golf holes without the importation of waste.
- Additional construction traffic would pose safety risks.
- Would adversely impact tranquillity.
- There are hundreds of golf courses in the UK and Ireland that use existing contours, thereby using the natural landscape for the design of the course. The reason being that most high-quality courses were designed and built before it was possible to move vast quantities of material to the site. The course planners should propose a layout that uses the existing slopes but moving existing on-site material as necessary for tees and greens. This is lazy course design resulting in disruption of local communities for an estimated period of three years.
- Application should also be rejected on grounds of unnecessary and disproportionate environmental pollution caused by 21,300 trips transporting 317,000m³ of material in 31 tonne lorries, as well as 21,300 return journeys.
- Description of development is inadequate, and misleading and the application should not have been allowed to proceed.
- The proposals are contrary to National Park Purposes, NPPF and the Local Plan
- The proposals would directly and adversely affect the two neighbouring residential properties in terms of loss of privacy and amenity, visual impact, noise, dust and unnatural, significantly raised artificial boundary banks and land profile.
- Heavy compaction of soils could change the infiltration characteristics of the soil.
- Proposals would totally destroy the existing tumuli/barrow, a heritage asset which is visible from Shepherds Lane
- Shepherds Farm Lane has a 3-Tonne Weight limit and therefore HGV's cannot use this.
- The B3035 is already notoriously dangerous.
- The application will result in imported soils with no contamination control being put forward. There is also no clarity on how the compatibility of imported soils will be measured. The application does not specify who would be liable for remediation, replacement of long-term failure once the site has been altered.
- The application fails to adequately explain how water boreholes and groundwater resources will be protected from contamination.
- The proposals will cause unacceptable harm to the ecology, landscape character, tranquillity and amenity of the South Downs National Park. In addition, the likely volume of imported material and associated HGV traffic, disturbance and emissions has not been properly assessed or justified.
- The proposals will result in an adverse impact on the Wayfarers Way and the footpath on Shepherds Down
- Panoramic views across the characteristic valley from the Wayfarers Walk immediately adjacent to the site and elevated and long reaching views to the ridge line of hills with the SDNO from the bridleway to the South running along Shepherds Down and from the adjacent rural lanes providing scenic routes through the National Park would be adversely impacted
- There will also be adverse effects of the substantial proposed topographical changes on the characteristic smooth openness of the gently sloping dry valley sides and the introduction of an uncharacteristic water body .

Officer Note: Members are advised that; HCC highways have confirmed that the weight restriction is 7.5-tonnes, not 3-tonnes as referred to and that the Golf Club has the rights to

utilise the road for lorry movements for the purposes of construction. There is no objection to the proposals from Hampshire County Council (HCC) highways. Had the scheme been acceptable in all other respects appropriate conditions would have been attached including a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) and a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP). Highways matters are discussed further below.

5.4 Members should also note that there are other regulatory powers in place that govern soil importation for the purposes of recycling and therefore comments regarding the policing of such soil importation in terms of amount, type, origin and contaminants would have been resolved with further discussion and the imposition of relevant conditions had the scheme been acceptable in all other respects. This is further discussed at paragraph 7.1-7.7 below.

5.5 The submitted letters of support note the following points:

- The Golf Club has a history of environmental stewardship and are good custodians of the land.
- The proposals will enhance biodiversity.
- The club is being responsible and taking measures to become more sustainable through water capture and its use.
- The proposals will ‘future proof’ the golf course.
- The proposals will improve the course significantly for the benefit and safety of the members.
- Traffic disruption will only happen in the short to medium term.
- The club has won ecology awards and is an organisation that seeks to enhance the habitat for many species.
- The proposals would enhance sporting facilities within the SDNP which is in line with policy.
- The additional hedgerows and trees will benefit wildlife.
- The Club maintains the Wayfarers Walk and the proposals will not be detrimental to the landscape.
- The spoil from all the developments in Swanmore, Bishops Walthan, Waltham Chase and Welbourne has to go somewhere so it should be used for positive benefit.
- The temporary impacts of construction will be outweighed by the lasting environmental and land management benefits.
- The club is a long established community asset and in particular offers opportunities for the local youth to enjoy and appreciate the local rural environment.
- Golf promotes outdoor exercise and it is good for mental health.

6. Planning Policy Context

6.1 The First Publication (Regulation 18 Consultation) of the New South Downs Local Plan took place in 2025, with future consultation planned to take place in Summer of 2026. Currently, the New South Downs Local Plan does not carry weight in decision making. As it progresses through the adoption process, it will gain more weight for the purposes of decision making
Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) (See Appendix I)

6.2 The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Hampshire was published on 8 December 2025 and is a material consideration, especially where the development plan pre-dates the publication of an LNRS. For the purpose of determining planning applications, the LNRS provides guidance on biodiversity priorities and measures to be incorporated into development proposals. This proposal accords with the LNRS through the landscaping and ecological mitigation proposed.

The South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan 2026-2031 (See Appendix I)

- 6.3 The Environment Act 1995 requires National Parks to produce a Management Plan setting out strategic management objectives to deliver the National Park Purposes and Duty. National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) states that Management Plans “contribute to setting the strategic context for development” and “are material considerations in making decisions on individual planning applications.”
- 6.4 This document was adopted by the National Park Authority on 9 December 2025. The Plan sets out a Vision, Outcomes, Policies and a Delivery Framework for the National Park over the next five years. Relevant Policies include;
- Aim 1 - Nature Recovery
 - Aim 2 - Climate Action
 - Aim 3 - Clean Water
 - Aim 7 - A Thriving Rural Economy
- 6.5 The Development Plan comprises the South Downs Local Plan (SDLP) (2019) The most pertinent policies are listed below. A longer list of relevant policies can be found in Appendix I.
- 6.6 The development is not regarded as a waste development. The waste policies in the HMWP are not, therefore, engaged. This is addressed in the planning assessment where it is concluded that the imported material is not classified as ‘waste.’
- 6.7 The most relevant polices of the adopted South Downs Local Plan (2019) (a longer list of other relevant policies and applicable legislation can be found in Appendix I)
- Core Policy SD1 - Sustainable Development Core Policy
 - Strategic Policy SD2 - Ecosystems Services
 - Strategic Policy SD4 - Landscape Character
 - Strategic Policy SD9 - Biodiversity and Geodiversity
 - Development Management Policy SD11 - Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
 - Strategic Policy SD19 - Transport and Accessibility
 - Strategic Policy SD20 - Walking, Cycling and Equestrian Routes
 - Strategic Policy SD23 - Sustainable Tourism
 - Strategic Policy SD17 - Protection of the Water Environment
 - Development Management Policy SD50 - Sustainable Drainage Systems
- 6.8 Most relevant sections of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024
- Section 6: Building a strong, competitive economy
 - Section 12: Achieving well designed and beautiful places
 - Section 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.
- 6.9 Relevant supplementary planning documents (SPD) and other guidance
- Ecosystems Services TAN
 - Habitats Regulations Assessment TAN
- 6.10 Most relevant sections of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024
- Section 14: Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change
 - Section 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.
 - Section 16; Protecting the historic environment

7. Planning Assessment

Soil Importation

7.1 There are a large number of objections and comments that refer to this application as a 'waste application' or soils disposal proposal and state that the description of development should have been changed to reflect this.

7.2 The application was submitted as a 'change of use from agricultural field to four golf holes'. Officers changed this description of the development (as stated at the front of the report), with the agreement of the applicant, to better reflect the proposed works. It is considered that the description reflects what the applicant is applying for and that the extent of soil importation is apparent upon examination of the submitted supporting documentation.

What is inert material and whether it is 'waste'

7.3 In this instance, the applicant states that the material would be predominantly sourced from greenfield development sites. The applicant's position is that the types of soils to be sourced would be inert. Inert material can arise from construction and demolition activities, and from excavation of soils, chalk, and clays which are recycled or recovered and taken to sites for landform changes and landscaping, such as golf courses for example.

7.4 Inert material can be defined as material that does not undergo any significant physical, chemical or biological transformation. Inert material will also not dissolve, burn or otherwise physically or chemically react, biodegrade or adversely affect other matter which it comes into contact with, in a way likely to give rise to environmental pollution or ham to human health. Furthermore, its leachability of any pollutant and its ecotoxicity must be insignificant and not endanger the quality of surface water and/or groundwater.

7.5 The National Planning Practice Guidance states that depositing soils onto golf courses can be considered as 'waste.' This can, however, be subject to further interrogation on a site specific basis. The Definition of Waste: Development Industry Code of Practice (regulated by the Environment Agency) sets out whether excavated materials are classified as waste or not. If material is dealt with in accordance with this Code of Practice the Environment Agency considers that it is unlikely to be classified as waste, provided it is re-used for the purpose of land development. - i.e. material is not discarded from a development site and instead it is recovered and re-purposed.

7.6 There is no objection from the Environment Agency in respect to this application. Any soil importation onto this site would be governed by a different regulatory body from the planning system and any importation to be done under the appropriate regulatory framework (such as CL:AIRE Definition of Waste: Code of Practice). Under this regime, imported clean/inert soils are not classified or defined as waste and as dug soils could be transferred from a construction site to another.

7.7 Officers have consulted internally with the SDNPA minerals and waste team, the policy team and the enforcement team regarding this application and have come to the view that, despite the large volume of soil proposed to be imported, this is not a waste application and therefore the minerals and waste plan is not engaged.

Major Development

7.8 The proposal is not considered to constitute major development for the purposes of policy SD3 and paragraph 190 of the NPPF. The NPPF accompanying footnote 67 advises that 'major development' in designated landscapes is a matter for the decision maker, considering its nature, scale and setting, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated or defined.

7.9 In this case, the proposal is to change an (albeit fairly large) agricultural field into part of the adjacent golf course. The scheme involves extensive changes to the landform, and these changes will be noticeable to local residents, persons using the golf course and passers-by on the local rural road network and public rights of way. However, in terms of broader landscape and environmental impacts these are limited to a local level and not at Park Level

and it is not considered that they fall into the bracket of major development as set out by the NPPF.

Principle of development - Overarching Impact & Core Policies

- 7.10 It is acknowledged that the applicant wishes to secure greater resilience and adaptation to climate change through capturing and storing rainwater on site as well as improve the existing course via the expansion of the course to allow for more playing space.
- 7.11 Addressing climate change and achieving successful resilience and adaptation is overarchingly supported by the Authority in the Corporate Plan, Local Plan and Partnership Management Plan. Nationally, the NPPF also supports development that responds to climate change. This position must, however, be couched within the context of the Purpose 1 and the ‘great weight’ to be applied to natural beauty. Core Policy SD1, Sustainable Development, echoes these Purposes and SD1(4) notes that “*planning permission will be refused where development proposals fail to conserve the landscape, natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park unless, exceptionally; a) the benefits of the proposals demonstrably outweigh the great weight to the attached to those interests and b) there is substantial compliance with other relevant policies in the development plan*”.
- 7.12 Whilst there are some benefits (namely the reduction of water extraction and usage by the club and the potential for increased and long term managed biodiversity) associated with the proposals these do not ‘demonstrably outweigh’ the overriding requirement of policy SD1, which is the requirement to conserve the landscape, natural beauty and cultural heritage. The level of landscape harm and harm to natural beauty as well as the potential harm to cultural heritage (see paragraphs 7.43-7.49 below) is too great to justify exceptional circumstances under policy SD4 and therefore the principle of development is unacceptable, and planning permission should be refused under SD1(4) in the first instance.
- 7.13 Core Policy SD2 refers to Eco-Systems Services which notes that development proposals will be permitted where they have an overall positive impact on the ability of the natural environment to contribute goods and services. The policy goes on to note that development should deliver on a number of opportunities, there are set out, with an evaluation of whether the development achieves them or not, in the table below;

Criterion	Commentary
a) Sustainably manage land and water environments;	Had the application been acceptable in all other respect a legal agreement would have been required to ensure that the proposed Biodiversity Net Gain was achieved and managed for nature.
b) Protect and provide more, better and joined up natural habitats;	The application proposals have the potential to allow natural regeneration and the spread of the trees in the ancient woodland along the western edge of the site to connect with the hedgerow that runs along the southern edge of the existing golf course. Had the proposals been acceptable these benefits would have also been secured as part of a HMMP within a legal agreement.
c) Conserve water resources and improve water quality;	The application proposals allow the club the ability to store rainwater and surface water run-off in times of heavy rainfall and use this in the summer for irrigation purposes, in this manner they conserve water. However, the proposals also include for a large amount of soil importation and the potential ‘capping’ of the principal aquifer that sits below this site. T The submitted flood risk and sustainable drainage statement notes there will be ‘no introduction of impermeable surfaces’ as a result of the proposals,

	<p>however this is incorrect in that all the irrigation ponds proposed will be lined, and therefore impermeable.</p> <p>Additionally, no detailed information is proposed regarding the type of soil to be imported. Whilst the applicant states these will be 'local' in order to avoid potentially capping the existing chalk surface these soils must also be permeable and not, for example, clay – which is a 'local' soil. Without this information it is officers' views that a judgement cannot be made on whether the application would adversely impact water quality.</p> <p>Had the application been acceptable in all other respects the applicant would have been required, via condition, to carry out monitoring of every soil load delivered and to provide the results of this monitoring to the local authority whenever requested.</p>
<p>d) Manage and mitigate the risk of flooding;</p>	<p>The applicant has submitted a flood risk assessment and sustainable drainage strategy. It is agreed that the application is unlikely to give rise to flooding and this criterion is met.</p>
<p>e) Improve the National Park's resilience to, and mitigation of, climate change;</p>	<p>The proposed irrigation system would assist the golf club to use stored rainwater to naturally irrigate the golf course rather than drawing this water from the ground, via a borehole, which could potentially assist with water scarcity during the drier times.</p> <p>However, it also uses impermeable surfaces (lined ponds) to do this and, additionally, could potentially include impermeable soils which could adversely impact the ability of the principal aquifer below the site to 'recharge' in times of rainfall. Because there is an absence of information in this regard it is impossible to assess the severity of this potential impact.</p>
<p>f) Increase the ability to store carbon through new planting or other means;</p>	<p>The proposals involve the planting of more trees however it also involves scraping all the topsoil from this 15ha site, thereby releasing carbon into the environment through the disturbance of this soil. No analysis has been provided of the 'carbon balance' in relation to soil scraping vs tree planting and therefore it is impossible to reach a conclusion on this matter.</p>
<p>g) Conserve and enhance soils, use soils sustainably and protect the best and most versatile agricultural land;</p>	<p>The Authorities mapping system grades this site as agricultural grade 3 – good to moderate quality agricultural land. The submitted ecological statement notes it is 'neutral grassland'. The applicant has submitted a phasing plan, and has committed to retaining and re using the top soil and its seed bank, in this way the application 'conserves' the topsoil. Although there still remains the carbon sequestration question as noted above and also questions over the suitability of the soils to be imported – although it is recognised that this is governed by a different regulatory process and could have been secured via conditions if the proposals as a whole had been acceptable.</p>

h) Support the sustainable production and use of food, forestry and raw materials;	Due to the nature of the application this cannot be secured by the proposals.
i) Reduce levels of pollution;	This is not relevant
j) Improve opportunities for peoples' health and wellbeing; and	Outdoor recreational activities are accepted as being good for people's health and wellbeing. The proposals meet this criterion.
k) Provide opportunities for access to the natural and cultural resources which contribute to the special qualities.	As discussed further below the proposals would adversely impact upon the enjoyment of the surrounding rural road network and public rights of way for users of these links on foot, cycle or horseback. It does not provide opportunities for access to the natural and cultural resources and therefore does not meet this criterion.

7.14 Overall and taking into account the commentary in the table the development proposed is not considered to comply with Core Policy SD2. The proposals would interrupt the natural processes of the site. From rainwater simply infiltrating into the ground and aquifer at present, the highly engineered approach of capturing water for storage and the importation of soils (currently of unknown geology) drastically changes this process.

7.15 Whilst the proposals could achieve compliance with some of the SD2 criteria, e.g. provide more joined up habitat around the boundaries and store some carbon through tree planting, ultimately this does not outweigh the loss or deterioration of natural processes which already exist. There is, therefore, conflict with SD2 overarchingly as well as other specific criteria concerning the water environment.

7.16 In summary on the matter of the core policies, the development does not comply with Core Policy SD1 or Core Policy SD2 and there are no exceptional circumstances or overriding public benefits that would allow an exception to be made in this particular case. Core Policy SD3 (Major Development) is not relevant in this particular instance as already confirmed by paragraphs 7.8-7.9 above.

Principal of Development – Strategic Policies Development

7.17 The site is within designated countryside whereby Strategic Policy SD25 applies. This sets out that development may only be permitted in exceptional circumstances where it complies with other relevant Development Plan policies and responds to the landscape context of the area.

7.18 More specifically, SD25(2) sets out exception criteria for instances where development may be acceptable and paragraph 7.10 notes that this includes tourism uses under policy SD23.

7.19 As noted under the proposals section the application includes changes to the existing course and these are not debated below as they involve low impact landscaping and improvement works to an existing facility, are unlikely to be particularly perceptible to a passer-by and include potential benefits to wildlife such as chalk scrapes. These parts of the proposals are not contentious.

7.20 Golf is considered to be a recreational pastime and the proposals for the change of use of the agricultural field immediately adjacent to the golf course into 4 additional golf holes as well as irrigation ponds comprise a change of use *and* an extension of the existing Golf Club into this field and are considered under policy SD23.

7.21 Policy SD23 relates to sustainable tourism. The policy outlines a range of criteria to assess proposals for tourism uses, including recreational facilities and (SD23(1)) sets out a number of criteria that development proposals for recreation facilities must meet and these are considered and commented upon in the table below;

Criterion	Comments
<p>a) The proposals will provide opportunities for visitors to increase their awareness, understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities</p>	<p>This criterion could have been met, the Golf Club have an existing ecology group and a bee keeping group and have achieved 'Geo Certification' which is the industries certificate of sustainable course management practices. It is considered that additional information boards across the course and the encouragement of a greater awareness of the special qualities of the park could have been secured via additional visitor packs, signage and website links etc, had the proposals been acceptable in all other matters.</p>
<p>b) Design and location of development minimise need to travel by private car and encourages access and/or subsequent travel by sustainable means, including public transport, walking, cycling or horse riding</p>	<p>Corhampton Golf Club is located outside of the settlement boundary.</p> <p>However, the club is existing and travel to it is already by car. Given that the proposals do not increase the number of holes at the Golf Course or include any other additional facilities, it is not considered that a reason for refusal on the grounds of an unsustainable location could be supported in this instance, it is considered that Criterion (b) is met</p>
<p>c) Development proposals will not detract from the experience of visitors or adversely affect the character, historical significance, appearance or amenity of the area.</p>	<p>This criterion is not met. The proposals would detract from the experience of visitors to the park, including walkers, cyclists and horse riders. The character and appearance of the existing field and the views onto this from the adjacent Wayfarers Way and footpaths opposite on Shepherds Downs, as well as views from the rural road network (from which the site is visible) would be adversely impacted as set out further in the landscape impact section below.</p> <p>It should also be noted that, whilst it may not be immediately obvious to the average passer-by, the tumulus shown on the OS map is currently visible as a mound in the field, it would not be so after the proposed landform changes. In respect of this feature the Winchester Archaeology Officer notes that this bronze age barrow "could be considered to have a local to regional significance given it survives as an earthwork feature (although likely denuded)". Therefore, the proposals could also adversely impact the appreciation of this historical feature</p>
<p>d) Development proposals make use of existing buildings, and, if no suitable existing buildings are available, the design of any new buildings are sensitive to the character and setting;</p>	<p>This criterion is not relevant. No new buildings are proposed.</p>

<p>e) Ancillary facilities are not disproportionately large in relation to the rest of the visitor facilities;</p>	<p>The application does not propose ancillary facilities, and this criterion is not relevant.</p>
<p>f) Any proposal does not have an adverse impact on the vitality and viability of town or village centres or assets of community value;</p>	<p>There would be an impact upon the villages through which the HGV's are routed to deliver the soil that the applicant states is required to construct the new extended part of the golf course. However, the applicant has stated that this would be for a temporary period of approximately 3 years. Temporary disruption impact as a result of the construction process can be managed by a CTMP and whilst officers appreciate the concerns of residents in this regard, given the lack of an objection from HCC Highways it is not considered a reason for refusal could be sustained on these grounds. This is further discussed under the traffic and transport section below</p>
<p>g) Where proposals are located outside settlement policy boundaries as defined on the Policies Map, they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Positively contribute to the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park; and ii. Are closely associated with other attractions/established tourism uses, including the public rights of way network; or iii. Are part of farm diversification schemes or endorsed Whole Estate Plans. 	<p>The application does not comply with SD23(g)- i. Whilst the golf club is an established tourism use and located in the open countryside in a rural setting, the proposed extension works would have an adverse impact upon the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park</p> <p>The proposals would be closely associated with the existing and adjacent recreational facility of the club and would therefore comply with SD23(g)ii in this manner, however the site is also adjacent to the Wayfarers Way Public Right of way and the proposed changes to the landform to create the additional 4 holes and the proposed irrigation ponds would adversely change the character of this field and the views from this Public Right of Way.</p> <p>Criterion (g)iii - Farm Diversification and Whole Estate Plans is not relevant in this instance</p>

7.22 In summary, the proposals fail criteria c and g of policy SD23, it is possible that they could have met criterion a, however given the fundamental objection of officers in relation to the proposed landform change and adverse impact this would have upon the purposes of the National Park, discussions were not progressed in this regard.

7.23 In conclusion, the proposals are not capable of meeting SD1, SD2, SD25 or SD23, all of which determine whether the proposals are acceptable in principle, therefore, for the reasons set out above and, overarchingly, because of the adverse impact that the proposed landform change would have on this part of the National Park and by virtue of this change the detrimental impact that the works would have upon the visual amenity of residents of and visitors to the part of the Park the proposals are not acceptable in principle.

- 7.24 Members should note here that officers have advised the applicant during pre-application discussion that the principle of putting four golf holes and an irrigation pond on this site could be acceptable providing that the adverse impact of the changes were limited and balancing benefits were provided to mitigate any impact.
- 7.25 This is not the case with this application and the set of proposals before the Authority. The amount and scale of proposed intervention in the landscape, including the level of soil importation proposed and the knock-on impacts that these landform changes will have on the site, the immediate surrounding area and adjacent and opposite public rights of way is unacceptable for the reasons set out in the landscape impact section below.

Landscape Impact – Landform Change and Visual Impact

- 7.26 There does not appear to have been any significant changes to the site's landform over 200 years of mapping, although it is noted that the field has become significantly less wooded since 1806. The site makes a positive contribution to the surrounding open downland character.
- 7.27 Open downland is characterised as large-scale, open and an elevated landscape of rolling land with mini-scarps, dry valleys and large-scale field systems. There is also an absence of surface water, due to the permeability of soils and bedrock. The existing site is consistent with such broader characteristics insofar as its smooth, rolling landform and the chalk bedrock and thin soils support a grassland downland character. The site is a relatively large-scale field with fairly low-key land management, The soils also perform key functions with respect of water, carbon storage and other natural processes.
- 7.28 The proposed placement of golf tees and the ponds will have an impact upon this landscape, but this impact could have been considered acceptable, had the change to the landscape been effected in a sensitive and minimalist way. However, the landform profile changes, including the importation of over 317,000 cubic metres of soil, as discussed further below, are not considered to be minimalist or sensitive and it is these that are considered to cause the greatest harm to the natural landscape and also have the potential to adversely impact natural processes.
- 7.29 The proposals include raising the landform by as much as eight metres in some places and will result in very artificial appearing manmade mounds on this currently sloping but 'flat' hillside. Additionally, the largest body of water, the irrigation pond, whilst placed in a more appropriate location following officer advice, is only partially excavated. The remainder of its volume is created by building up steep banks, in some places as high as five metres. This coupled with the intention (as noted within the BNG assessment by Ecosupport)) of no planting, makes a feature that could have been an ecological benefit into a sterile large mass of water enclosed by a clearly man-made structure, which will look alien in this landscape.
- 7.30 Officers have consistently advised on this site that additional golf holes and the irrigation ponds, whilst visually intrusive, could be acceptable, however this would depend upon their impact being mitigated and the landform changes being kept to an absolute minimum. Officers also advised against soil importation if possible.
- 7.31 It is considered that the field in its current character could notionally accommodate four additional golf holes and irrigation ponds with a much less engineered and more minimalist approach and officers question whether the imported material is contributing towards the game and interest of the players or whether the proposed tees and fairways are responding to the amount of material required to be recycled.
- 7.32 The applicant's agent has noted in their response document that the landform changes are required to ensure the irrigation ponds are fed naturally and that the proposed landform follows the existing contours but is shaped to accommodate the fairways.
- 7.33 However, the whole field slopes naturally down to the location of the proposed pond as existing. Officers question why this pond isn't excavated into the landscape, and the spoil from this excavation used to form the gradients required for the golf tees. It is also evident from the sections provided that the engineered mounds which form the fairways could more closely follow the original contour lines, but still achieve the desired profile, if this profile is

essential to play. The raising of the land profile across a large portion of the site doesn't appear to provide any golfing benefits or irrigation benefits and does cause a significant amount of landscape harm.

- 7.34 The amount of material imported appears to be excessive and not the minimum required to create the four holes, and it has not been satisfactorily demonstrated to officers that this is the only manner in which the four holes or irrigation ponds may be created. The proposals would drastically change the character of the site resulting in a significantly different and elevated landform profile and large pond which, with its bunding shape, scale and lack of proposed planting, is difficult to describe as a dew pond. The impact of this changed landform would be harmful and irreversible.

Landscape Impact – Natural Processes

- 7.35 Additionally, the importation of 317,000 – 320,000m³ of soils to re-profile and engineer chalk downland, and the potential to deposit soils that are not consistent with local landscape character, raises the fundamental issue of how the proposals conserve and enhance the open downland character, as described above. It would intrinsically change a character of chalk bedrock and thin soils to something that is much deeper (7-8 m in places) and (presumably, although no details are provided) include some underground pipes so that this water can be pumped up to the remainder of the course to the north of the main irrigation pond.
- 7.36 Overall landform changes appear to be dictated by the amount of material being imported rather than by the requirements of the irrigation system or golfing tees and fairways. This approach and significantly interrupting the site's natural processes is not a landscape-led nor an ecosystems approach in principle.
- 7.37 Concerns about how the development affects natural process and ecosystems services also feeds into SD17 considerations. This policy advises that development which adversely affects ground water, surface water features and watercourse corridors will not be permitted unless they (1) conserve and enhance water quality and quantity; (2) do not affect the ability of the water environment to function by natural processes; and (3) conserve and enhance the character, appearance and setting of surface water features.
- 7.38 The importation of the large volume of soils and extensive irrigation system could impact upon the natural function of the site, as chalk downland helps to recharge ground water, contrary to SD17. The site is located in a sensitive water area and although there is no objection from the Environment Agency there is still a need to address policy SD17 on water quality, There are protocols through other systems than the planning system for managing the amount, type and quality of imported soil however the submitted application material does not provide clarity on how these protocols will be met or how the type of soil imported will protect the aquifer below. Therefore, in the absence of this information policy SD17 cannot be satisfied and it follows that a reason for refusal upon the potential for impact upon ground water resources is appropriate.

Public Rights of Way

- 7.39 The cumulative impact of all the effects noted above is that this currently quiet pastoral agricultural field would be irrevocably changed in character. This change would be engineered, not natural and would be a highly visible alteration in this part of the Landscape. The detrimental impact caused by the substantial change in land profile and creation of uncharacteristic water bodies would cause unacceptable visual harm to views of the landscape from the immediately adjacent Public Right of Way - Wayfarers Walk, the surrounding rural road network and the part BOAT, part bridleway opposite the site on Shepherds Down.
- 7.40 It is noted that the 4 new golf holes, when viewed from Shepherds Down would be seen against the backdrop of the existing golf course. However, due to the land profile changes proposed these new holes will not be viewed as a naturalistic extension to the golf course and the loss of the gently sloping topography of this field to a far more engineered solution would fail to conserve or enhance the natural beauty of the Park.

- 7.41 There are also long sweeping views across the existing field from some points along the Wayfarers Way, which runs along the northwestern edge of the agricultural field. Whilst screened in places by the hedgerow between the foot path and the field, there are places where there are further reaching views down the valley. As a result of the proposed landform changes these views would now be interrupted by the proposed increase in height to form the elevated tees and fairways. The application proposes additional planting to ‘plug these gaps’ in the hedgerow. However, these views are considered to be a characteristic of this part of the Wayfarers Way and contribute towards the public enjoyment of this part of the Park. These impacts of the proposals do not conserve and enhance the amenity value and tranquillity of and views from, non-motorised travel routes and access land and therefore they do not accord with policy SD6(b)

Surface water drainage and flood risk

- 7.42 The Lead Flood Authority has not objected on technical grounds in regard to the drainage strategy itself and any flood risk. A reason for refusal would not be justified on any flood risk grounds for these reasons.

Heritage

- 7.43 The site is within an archaeologically sensitive area. As noted within the response from Winchester City Council Archaeologist the proposal site contains a range of archaeological assets, primarily known from cropmark evidence and thought to relate to late prehistoric – Roman field systems and possible associated trackways, although an enclosure complex located south of Shepherds Copse may be related to domestic or other activities.
- 7.44 A Bronze Age barrow (burial monument) is located in the southern part of the site and there is also the potential for currently unrecorded archaeological remains across the site. The assessment notes that this Bronze Age barrow survives as a low, denuded earthwork in the southern field, opposite the proposed works entrance and will also include buried elements comprising a surrounding ditch and a primary and potentially secondary burials as identified in the Heritage Statement. The barrow could be considered to have a local to regional significance given it survives as an earthwork feature (although likely denuded).
- 7.45 The archaeologist notes that the submitted Heritage Statement indicates that the Bronze Age barrow should not be impacted by the proposed scheme, however the Phasing Plan and Site Set-Up Plan indicate that the proposed site compound will be located (or partly located) over the site of the Bronze Age barrow and the officer goes on to note that the works to create the site compound and the intended duration of its use in addition to the subsequent site stripping for the new site topography / golf course creation will not conserve the barrow and will result in substantial harm if not the total loss of its significance. Even if the barrow were not affected by the proposed compound or site strip the officer also notes that the contour plan and section drawings illustrate that it would be subsumed by the proposed new site topography to such a degree that it would not remain as a legible monument and nor its landscape setting be appreciable.
- 7.46 Finally, the archaeologist comments that it is unclear whether there are any public benefits arising from the proposal that would outweigh the harm to undesignated archaeological remains, generally less than substantial harm (at the lower end of the scale), but substantial harm / potential total loss in relation to the Bronze Age barrow.
- 7.47 Policy SD16 (1) notes that ‘development proposals will be permitted where they do not cause harm to archaeological heritage asset and/or their setting. And SD16 (3) notes that;
- “Development proposals that will result in unavoidable harm to, or loss of, an archaeological heritage asset’s significance, will only be permitted where there is a clear justification in terms of public benefits arising from the development which outweigh that harm and, in the case of substantial harm/loss, also meet the following requirements:*
- a) There is no less harmful viable option; and*
 - b) The amount of harm has been reduced to the minimum possible.”*

7.48 In this case the proposals will result in harm to archaeological heritage assets, there is no clear justification for this harm, and the applicant has not set out any less harmful options or demonstrated that the amount of harm has been reduced to the minimum possible.

7.49 Therefore, the proposals are contrary to policy SD16 and paragraph 215 of the National Planning Policy Framework and a reason for refusal is recommended on these grounds.

Highways

7.50 Third party representations consistently raise the impact (temporary) of HGV movements. Certainly, additional HGV traffic can impact upon local amenity and officers have sympathy with these comments. However, overall, the Highways Authority raises no objection and given the temporary nature of the works and the conditions that could have been attached if the proposal was acceptable in all other respects, a reason for refusal on highways grounds could not be sustained.

Ecology and biodiversity net gain

7.51 The county ecologist raises no objection to the proposed mitigation and enhancement measures regarding protected species and habitats, which could be secured by conditions. They are also satisfied that sufficient biodiversity net gain is proposed. The proposed measures would deliver biodiversity net gain and, had the proposals been acceptable in all other respects, would have been secured via a legal agreement as recommended by HCC ecology.

Impact on surrounding amenities

7.52 Third party representations have raised concerns about traffic which are addressed above. Once the scheme was complete, it would not have any significant detrimental impact upon the amenity of surrounding residential properties. There would be some impact upon the amenity of the existing public right of way running past the site and this is raised as a concern in the recommended reason for refusal. This is due to the visually harmful changes to the character of the site.

7.53 It is accepted that the predicted HGV movements as set out within the submitted documents would have an adverse impact upon the amenity of surrounding residents and also on the amenity of users of the local rural road network and public rights of way. However these impacts would be temporary, and, once works were completed these impacts would fall away.

8. Conclusion

8.1 It is recognised that the applicant has worked with the Authority at pre-application stage and that, when viewed 'on plan' there are positive aspects to the proposals, these include large expanses of rough and native grassland between the fairways and tees, the (deliberate) amount of space left for the natural regeneration of the ancient woodland and southern hedge line as well as additional native hedge and tree planting and the Golf Clubs aspirations to be custodians of the land.

8.2 However, these positive parts of the proposal are undone by the extent and scale of the land re-profiling put forward, consequently the proposals would result in a highly man-made set of landform changes that would be evident from public and private vantage points. The amount of landform change leads to the change of use of the agricultural field to a golf course being unacceptable due to its adverse impact upon this protected landscape.

8.3 It is appreciated that, overtime, the natural regeneration of the woodland (somewhat managed to control bramble scrub) and the proposed additional trees and hedgerow planning would dilute the impact on the proposed landform changes. However, the proposals would still result in a highly engineered landscape which, despite the growth of screening over time, would still be visible from public footpaths and the surrounding rural road network.

8.4 There are no overriding justifications for the amount and scale of land reprofiling proposed and there are not overriding benefits of the proposals which would weigh in the planning balances and fully mitigate against this harmful impact.

- 8.5 The proposals have been assessed upon their landscape merits and have been found to be in conflict with the Purposes of the National Park and the Core and Strategic Policies of the Local Development Plan.
- 8.6 The NPPF outlines overarching economic, social and environmental objectives to sustainable development. In these respects, there would be social and economic benefits. However, the aforementioned environmental harm and harm to the undesignated archaeological heritage assets on the site outweighs these benefits.
- 8.7 Officers do not consider that the applicant has robustly justified the amount of soil importation required to facilitate the change of use of the field to part of the golf course and, even if such a justification were provided, the proposals are required to be assessed on their own landscape merits, and they have been found to be contrary to policy in this regard.
- 8.8 The proposals do not comply with both relevant individual policies and the Development Plan as a whole, the NPPF, National Park Purposes and duty, and relevant legislation. There are no material considerations of sufficient weight which would justify granting permission.
- 8.9 The application is, therefore, recommended for refusal for the reason below.

9. Reason for Recommendation

- 9.1 It is recommended that the application be refused for the following reasons:
- 1) The proposals would fail to conserve or enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the National Park, by virtue of the importation of soils upon chalk downland which would create an incongruous scale, form and appearance of the development. Furthermore, the proposals would impact upon natural processes through the altered landform and engineered irrigation scheme. The proposals, therefore, fail to achieve a landscape-led and ecosystems services approach to development. Consequently, the proposals are contrary to policies SD1, SD2, SD4, SD5, SD17, SD23 and SD25 of the South Downs Local Plan (2019), the First Purpose of a National Park and the National Planning Policy Framework 2024.
 - 2) The proposals would result in the complete loss of features of archaeological significance with no public benefits arising or justification given for such a loss. The proposals therefore fail to preserve archaeological assets in situ and are contrary to policy SD16 of the South Downs Local Plan and Paragraph 215 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024.
 - 3) Insufficient information has been provided to satisfactorily demonstrate that the proposed development would not have an adverse effect upon ground water resources, as a result of potentially 'capping' the underlying aquifer or capturing water on site that would otherwise infiltrate into the ground and recharge the chalk aquifer. The proposals are, therefore, contrary to policies SD1, SD2 and SD17 of the South Downs Local Plan (2019) and the National Planning Policy Framework 2024.
 - 4) In the absence of a completed section 106 agreement the proposal fails to secure on-site BNG in accordance with policy SD9 of the South Down Local Plan (2019) and Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021).

Tim Slaney

Director of Placemaking

South Downs National Park Authority

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Appendices: Appendix I- Legislation and policies

SDNPA Consultees: Legal Services, Development Manager.

Background Documents: [SDNP/25/04920/FUL | Change of use from agricultural field to golf course including creation of 4 holes, associated fairways and tees, with an irrigation pond in the south west corner of the field and works associated with the existing golf course including: reshaping of existing fairways and tees, translocating trees, with new chalk grassland and chalk scrapes over the whole site. | Corhampton Golf Club Shepherds Farm Lane Corhampton Hampshire SO32 3GZ](#)

[South Downs Local Plan \(2014-33\)](#)

[South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan](#)

[SDNPA Supplementary Planning Documents and Technical Advice Notes](#)

