

Item No. 11

APPLICATION NUMBER	CB/18/01461/FULL
LOCATION	Center Parcs Woburn Forest Holiday Village, Fordfield Road, Millbrook, Bedford, MK45 2GZ
PROPOSAL	Erection of 16 new lodges with associated parking and access, footpaths and landscaping.
PARISH	Millbrook
WARD	Cranfield & Marston Moretaine
WARD COUNCILLORS	Cllrs Morris, Matthews & Mrs Clark
CASE OFFICER	Benjamin Tracy
DATE REGISTERED	01 May 2018
EXPIRY DATE	31 July 2018
APPLICANT	CP Woburn (Operating Company) Ltd
AGENT	NTR Planning
REASON FOR COMMITTEE TO DETERMINE	Steppingley Parish Council Objection - Major Development
RECOMMENDED DECISION	Recommended for Approval

Summary of Recommendation:

The proposed development would be supported by Policy CS11 of the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies (2009) and Policy EMP5 of the Submission Central Bedfordshire Local Plan. Notwithstanding the latter the development is located within the Green Belt, however it is considered that the proposed development would form suitable development in the context of paragraphs 145 and 146 of the NPPF, as well as Policy SP4 of the Submission Central Bedfordshire Local Plan and the development would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and would not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt. It is considered that the development would not cause harm to the character and appearance of the area, including the intrinsic character and beauty of the Countryside and would form sustainable development.

Site Location:

The application site forms part of the Center Parcs development site within Warren Wood, with the Parish of Millbrook, on the southern side of the A507 to the south of Millbrook Village and the North of Steppingley Village. The site is accessed from Fordfield Road.

The Application:

The application seeks planning permission for the construction of 16 new lodges and associated development including car parking and accesses, to be located in various locations across the Centre Parcs site.

Eight of the proposed lodges are proposed to be DDA compliant to cater for guests who may be disabled or wheelchair users.

A small number of new lodges, particularly at Sites 3 and 5 will require retaining walls due to the topography.

RELEVANT POLICIES:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (July 2018)

Core Strategy and Development Management Policies - North 2009

Central Bedfordshire Local Plan - Emerging

The Central Bedfordshire Local Plan has reached submission stage and was submitted to the Secretary of State on 30 April 2018.

The National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 48) stipulates that from the day of publication, decision-takers may also give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The apportionment of this weight is subject to:

- the stage of preparation of the emerging plan;
- the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies;
- the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework.

Reference should be made to the Central Bedfordshire Submission Local Plan which should be given limited weight having regard to the above. The following policies are relevant to the consideration of this application:

Central Bedfordshire Design Guide (March 2014)

Relevant Planning History:

Case Reference	MB/08/00614/FULL
Location	Warren Woods, Fordfield Road, Millbrook, Bedford, MK45 2GZ
Proposal	Section 73: Variation of Condition 15(b) of planning permission MB/05/01066/OUT
Decision	Outline Planning Permission - Granted

Decision Date	30/06/2008
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Case Reference	MB/05/01066/OUT
Location	Warren Woods, Fordfield Road, Millbrook, Bedford, MK45 2GZ
Proposal	Outline Development and use of land as a forest holiday village including 700 villas, 75 bedroom hotel, 12 bedroom spa accommodation, central buildings and facilities, staff accommodation, 1400 space car park, main access onto Fordfield Road, engineering operations and lakes, hard and soft landscaping and forest management works together with associated works and activities (all matters reserved except means of access).
Decision	Outline Planning Permission - Granted
Decision Date	05/09/2007

Consultees:

Millbrook Parish Council No response received.

Steppingley Parish Council Steppingley Parish Council objects to this application for permission to develop.

Its objection is limited only to lodges 9 and 10 to the south of the site and the objection is made on like grounds to those raised to the 3 tree houses for which permission was granted in Committee under CB/16/05883/FULL on the 29 March 2017, where the concerns expressed were successfully addressed with the Committee asking that the Applicant give consideration to the installation of a bund to shield the development from public view from the Byway Open to All Traffic situated to the West. The Applicant did kindly follow CBC's request and install a bund albeit it is a little short and small, and has yet to be planted up.

Such bunding as has so far been installed in relation to CB/16/05883/FULL has not ameliorated the problem but it is hoped that this made be remedied.

In relation to the present application, the Officer and Committee are referred to the attached photographs which illustrate the problems with the existing arrangements and the bunding which we ask that the Planning Committee to require by way of conditioning the grant, if indeed permission is to be granted at all. Such bunding is marked red on the first photograph.

The objections to this application are these:

1. The development is in land designated Green Belt and accordingly CBC is obliged to protect the same. With respect to the Officer then involved, in application CB/16/05883/FULL it was erroneously reported that the original grant of planning permission for the construction of Centre Parcs in this land had rendered it unnecessary to apply Green Belt criteria. This is plainly incorrect and the Applicant was at pains to stress that the land remained Green belt.
2. The function Green Belts establish a buffer zone between urban and rural land, separating town and country and preserving land for forestry, agriculture and wildlife where environmental conditions can be improved and conservation encouraged. Undoubtedly the land to the west of Centre Parcs, through which the Byway Open to All Traffic passes is rural in quality and a very significant public amenity used by many for recreation. The construction of a means of separating the urban construction that is Centre Parcs by the installation of a bund as sought (see red line on first photograph), would achieve the objective of separation.
3. Accordingly the Applicant must cite and prove exceptional circumstances in order that CBC may have power to grant permission for the development sought.
4. In addition to the issue of construction of buildings a further particular difficulty encountered more generally with the Centre Parcs development, and the particular buildings proposed is the visibility at night, through the trees of pathway lighting, porch lights and light emitted from windows. The result is that many lights are now visible from Rectory Road and Cobblers Lane, Steppingley where the open aspect of rural land should be capable for being appreciated – both at dusk and in darkness.
5. The addition of night time lighting would be contrary to Steppingley's Parish Plan as first published in 2006 and revised in 2016. This includes the policy (support by 94% of the respondents) that there shall be no street lighting

in Steppingley. The addition of unnecessary night time lighting also runs contrary to the more general objective of preserving dark skies – which Steppingley presently enjoys to an appreciable extent.

We strongly recommend, and ask, that the Officer and Planning Committee visit the site but not merely internally, but also from the public vantage points shown in the photos.

Trees and Landscape Officer

The Council's Trees and Landscape Officer has issued the following consultation response:

Supplied with the application are layout plans of the different locations and also a BS5837 2012 Arboricultural Report and Impact Assessment supplied by EMEC Arboriculture dated February 2018. This identifies all trees that are either proposed for removal or would be affected by the proposals. None of these trees are visible from public viewpoints with the majority identified for removal being either C category relatively young trees or B category coniferous trees grown as part of the original plantation for the purpose of harvesting. Plans identify root protection areas of retained trees and details steps and measures to be taken to retain them in good order.

I have no objections to this application.

Landscape Officer

Following the removal of a unit, the Landscape objection has been removed, subject to soft landscaping condition.

Ecologist

The Council's Ecologist has issued the following consultation response:

The ecological Appraisal has identified a number of ecological receptors which could receive detrimental impacts from the development proposals in the absence of mitigation. As such the following condition is recommended;

All works shall be carried out in accordance with the details contained in the March 2018 preliminary Ecological Appraisal as already submitted with the planning application and agreed in principle with the local planning authority prior to determination.

- 1.5 Policy EMP5 of the Submission Local Plan states: Planning Permission will be granted for, expansion, infilling or redevelopment of, significant facilities (including Centre Parcs) provided that the expansion, infilling or redevelopment is within the boundaries of the existing use, relates to that use and enhances the contribution to the local or national economy.
- 1.6 It is considered that Policy EMP5 is supported of the proposed development, however only limited weight can be given to this policy when considering the stage of preparation of the Emerging Local Plan and the examination.
- 1.7 The Centre Parcs facility is an established tourist and leisure facility within Warren Woods, which is considered to provide significant economic benefits to the area, as well as environmental gains as outlined under the original approval for the site. However the site is located within the Green Belt, whereby national green belt policy still applies.
- 1.8 Paragraph 133 and 134 of the NPPF states:
- 1.9 *"The government attaches great importance to green belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.*
- 1.10 *Green Belt serves five purposes:*
- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
 - b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
 - c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
 - d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
 - e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land".*
- 1.11 Paragraph 143 and 144 of the NPPF states: *"inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.*
- 1.12 *When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations".*
- 1.13 Paragraph 145 of the NPPF states: *"A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:*
- a) building for agriculture and forestry;*

- b) *the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;*
- c) *the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;*
- d) *the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;*
- e) *limited infilling in villages;*
- f) *limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites; and*
- g) *limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:*
 - *not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or*
 - *not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority".*

- 1.14 The proposed development includes the construction of new buildings within the green belt however it is considered that the proposed development falls within the meaning of infill development on previously developed land, due to the location of the buildings within the established site and within clusters of existing buildings. Paragraph 145 (g) of the NPPF allows such infill development subject to the development not having a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development. The latter shall be considered in detail later within this report.
- 1.15 The proposed development also includes a number of engineering operations in association to the proposed buildings, however in accordance with paragraph 146 of the NPPF, engineering operations are not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. The latter shall also be considered in detail later within this report.
- 1.16 Therefore it is considered that subject to the proposed buildings not having a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development and the proposed engineering operations preserving both the openness of the green belt and not conflicting with the purposes of including land within it, that the development would be appropriate in the Green Belt and would be acceptable in principle, in accordance with Policy CS11 of the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies (2009), Policy SP4 and Policy EMP5 of the

Submission Local Plan, as well as the NPPF. The detail of the application shall now be considered.

2. Green Belt

- 2.1 The site consists of land within Warren Wood and within the Centre Parcs Facility, the proposed development consists of the construction of 16 new lodges adjacent to existing lodges and are considered to fall within the definition of infill development. It is considered that the proposed buildings would be viewed against the context of existing built development from within the site and would be heavily screened from public views from the periphery of the site, due to the mature woodland context.
- 2.2 It is considered that the proposed buildings would not have a greater impact on the openness of the green belt than caused by the existing Centre Parcs Facility. Whereby it is considered that the proposed buildings would benefit from the exemption under Paragraph 145 (g) of the NPPF.
- 2.3 Furthermore; it is considered that the proposed engineering operations associated with the proposed development would preserve both the openness of the green belt and would not conflict with the purposes of including land within it, including:
- 2.4
- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
 - b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
 - c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
 - d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
 - e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
- 2.5 Thereby it is considered that the proposed development would be acceptable in the context of Paragraphs 145(g) and 146 of the NPPF.

3. Affect on the Character and Appearance of the Area, including the intrinsic character and beauty of the Countryside and Landscape Visual Impacts

- 3.1 The site consists of 10 small parcels of land which visually appears as part of the Center Parks facility within Warren Woods. Due to the woodland context of the site the proposed development is screened by existing mature vegetation and the proposed development is not readily visible from public view points. Concern has however been raised in relation to the visual prominence of buildings at sites 9 and 10 from a right of way known as "BOAT +18".
- 3.2 However following site visits by the Case Officer and the Landscape Officer it is considered that subject to soft landscaping, the proposed buildings would not be readily visible from this right of way and impacts relating to lighting would not be greater than the existing facility. Therefore it is considered that the proposed development would not cause an unacceptable or harmful impact on

the character and appearance of the area, including the intrinsic character and beauty of the Countryside and Landscape and Visual Impacts

- 3.3 For the reasons outlined above it is considered that subject to an appropriately designed landscaping scheme, that the proposed development would not cause harm to the character and appearance of the area, including the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and the character of the landscape, in accordance with Policies CS14, CS16, DM14 and DM3 of the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies (2009). Furthermore it is considered that the proposed development would be in accordance with Policies EE4, EE5 and HQ1 of the Submission Central Bedfordshire Local Plan, as well as the policies within the NPPF, in this context.

4. Trees, Hedgerows, Biodiversity, Ecosystem Services and Natural Capital

- 4.1 The proposed development includes works to trees, however the Council's Arboriculturalist has raised no objection to the proposed development subject to conditions that would protect retained trees and secure replacement planting. Furthermore the Council's Ecologist has raised no objection to the proposed development subject to conditions that would ensure that works are carried out in accordance with the submitted details.
- 4.2 It is considered that the proposed development would be acceptable within the context of trees and ecology. It is considered that subject to an appropriate landscaping scheme that the proposed development would deliver a net gain for biodiversity.
- 4.3 Paragraph 170 of the NPPF outlines that planning should "contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services - including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland".
- 4.4 According to the Policy paper "25 Year Environment Plan" (DEFRA 2018), "Natural capital is the sum of our ecosystems, species, freshwater, land, soils, minerals, our air and seas. These are all elements of nature that either directly or indirectly bring value to people and the country at large. They do this in many ways but chiefly by providing us with food, clean air and water, wildlife, energy, wood, recreation and protection from hazards".
- 4.5 According to the Policy paper "The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature" (DEFRA June 2011), "Natural Capital can be defined as the stock of our physical natural assets (such as soil, forests, water and biodiversity) which provide flows of services that benefit people (such as pollinating crops, natural hazard protection, climate regulation or the mental health benefits of a walk in the park)".

- 4.6 According to the Policy paper "The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature" (DEFRA June 2011), "Ecosystem Services are the products of natural systems from which people derive benefits, including goods and services, some of which can be valued economically, and others which have a non-economic value". Ecosystem services can be split into four categories:
- 4.7
- Provisioning services: we obtain products from ecosystems, such as: food; water; fibre; and fuel;
 - Regulation services: we benefit from ecosystem processes, such as: pollination; water purification; climate regulation; noise and air pollution reduction; and flood hazard reduction;
 - Cultural services: we gain non-material benefits from ecosystems, for example: through spiritual or religious enrichment, cultural heritage, recreation or aesthetic experience. Accessible green spaces provide recreation, and enhance health and social cohesion;
 - Supporting services: these are ecosystem functions that are necessary for the production of other ecosystem services, for example: soil formation and nutrient cycling.
- 4.8 The natural capital and ecosystem services that the site provides are acknowledged, however it is considered that the benefits of development, including the economic and environmental benefits of the development would outweigh any negative impacts in this context.
- 4.9 For the reasons outlined above it is considered that the proposed development, subject to conditions that would secure an acceptable landscaping scheme, that would ensure a net gain for biodiversity and protect trees would be acceptable in the context of policies CS18, DM3, DM14 and DM15 of the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies (2009) and policies EE2, EE4 and EE5 of the Submission Central Bedfordshire Local Plan, as well as the policies within the NPPF, in this context.

5. Amenity for Existing and Future Occupiers

- 5.1 This application forms seeks to provide additional tourist accommodation. It is considered from the information provided that the development would provide an acceptable standard of amenity for future occupiers, and would ensure that neighbouring units would retain an acceptable standard of amenity.
- 5.2 For the reasons outlined above it is considered that the proposed development is acceptable within this context.

6. Highway Safety and Car Parking

- 6.1 It is considered that the proposed developments would be served by an acceptable number of car parking spaces, in accordance with the Council's standards. Furthermore; it is considered that the increase in movements to and

from the site as a result of the development would not cause a severe impact upon the highway network, in relation to capacity or highway safety.

- 6.2 For the reasons outlined above it is considered that the proposed development is acceptable within this context.

7. Flood Risk and Surface Water Drainage

- 7.1 The site is not located within Flood Zone 2 or 3 nor is it considered that the site is of high risk of flooding. No detail of surface or foul water drainage has been provided, which will be secured by condition.

- 7.2 It is therefore considered that the proposed development is acceptable subject to an acceptable surface water drainage system which shall be secured via condition.

8. Human Rights and the Equality Act

- 8.1 Based on information submitted there are no known issues raised in the context of Human Rights / The Equalities Act 2010 and as such there would be no relevant implications.

Recommendation:

That Planning Permission be **APPROVED** subject to the following planning conditions:

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 2 Notwithstanding the details submitted, no works above slab level shall take place until a soft landscaping scheme including replacement tree planting and a scheme for landscape maintenance for a period of five years following the implementation of the landscaping scheme have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall be implemented by the end of the full planting season immediately following the completion and/or first use of any separate part of the development (a full planting season means the period from October to March). The trees, shrubs and grass shall subsequently be maintained in accordance with the approved landscape maintenance scheme and any which die or are destroyed during this period shall be replaced during the next planting season.

Reason: To ensure an acceptable standard of soft landscaping.

- 3 **No equipment, machinery or materials shall be brought on to the site for the purposes of development until a method statement for protecting the retained trees is provided to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, which shall include details of the location of tree protection fencing. The approved methods for protecting trees shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved details until all equipment, machinery and surplus materials have been removed from the site.**

Reason: Details are required pre commencement to ensure the trees are suitably protected during earthwork and construction.

- 4 Planning permission is being granted in recognition that no underground services are scheduled to be routed through the Root Protection Areas of the retained trees and/or hedgerows (as identified by the Tree Survey Plan). If any services are subsequently required to be routed through the designated area protected under the Tree Protection Plan, then this work shall be carried out in full accordance with the National Joint Utilities Group (NJUG) Volume 4 "Guidelines for the Planning, Installation and Maintenance of Utility Apparatus in Proximity to Trees".

Reason: To safeguard retained trees .

- 5 All measures and/or works for protection and retention of trees to be retained shall be carried out in accordance with the details contained in the February 2018 (Revised March 2018) Arboricultural Report & Impact Assessment *and the details agreed under conditions 3 and 4 of this decision.*

Reason: To protect trees.

- 6 **No development shall commence until a scheme for surface water and foul drainage, including details of management of the drainage systems have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Development shall be completed and thereafter managed in accordance with the approved scheme, unless otherwise approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.**

Reason: Pre commencement condition is required to ensure that adequate foul and surface water drainage is provided and that existing and future land drainage needs are protected.

- 7 All ecological measures and/or works shall be carried out in accordance with the details contained in the March 2018 Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Further Surveys as already submitted with the planning application and agreed in principle with the local planning authority prior to determination.

Reason: To protect the existing ecological assets on the site.

8 No works above slab level shall take place until details of the materials to be used for the external walls and roofs of the buildings hereby approved have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To control the appearance of the building in the interests of the visual amenities of the locality.

9 All the buildings hereby approved, shall be for holiday/conference occupancy only in association with the main use of the site as a forest holiday village.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt.

10 The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out except in complete accordance with the details shown on the submitted plans, numbers: 17/2135/PL/LP01 Rev C; 17/2135/(90)001 Rev D; 17/2135/(90)002 Rev D; 17/2135/(90)003 Rev D; 17/2135/(90)005 Rev E; 17/2135/CL(22)006 Rev A; 17/2135/(90)008 Rev E; 17/2135/(90)009 Rev D; 17/2135/(90)010 Rev E; 17/2135/(90)104 Rev F; 17/2135/(90)106 Rev D; 17/2135/CL(22)001 Rev A; 17/2135/CL(22)002 Rev A; 17/2135/CL(22)003 Rev A; 17/2135/CL(22)004 Rev A; 17/2135/CL(22)005 Rev A; 17/2135/CL(22)008 Rev A; 17/2135/CL(22)009 Rev A; 17/2135/CL(22)010 Rev A; 17/2135/CL(25)001; CP01-1 Rev G; CP08 Rev F; CP13-2 Rev E; CP38-1 Rev B; Arboricultural Report & Impact Assessment February 2018 (Revised March 2018); and Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Further Surveys March 2018.

Reason: To identify the approved plan/s and to avoid doubt.

Statement required by the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 - Part 6, Article 35

The Council acted pro-actively through positive engagement with the applicant during the determination process which led to improvements to the scheme. The Council has therefore acted pro-actively to secure a sustainable form of development in line with the requirements of the Framework (paragraph 38) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

DECISION

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