

Proposed Future Development at Former Burlish Golf Course

Introduction

This document sets out the proposed series of developments within the former Burlish Golf Course. As outlined in the Wyre Forest District Council Golf Facility Review (2019), the golf club at Burlish closed in 2017. The site is within the West Midlands Green Belt and therefore green belt restrictions apply. The former club is located between Stourport and Kidderminster, adjacent to the A451 Stourport Road.

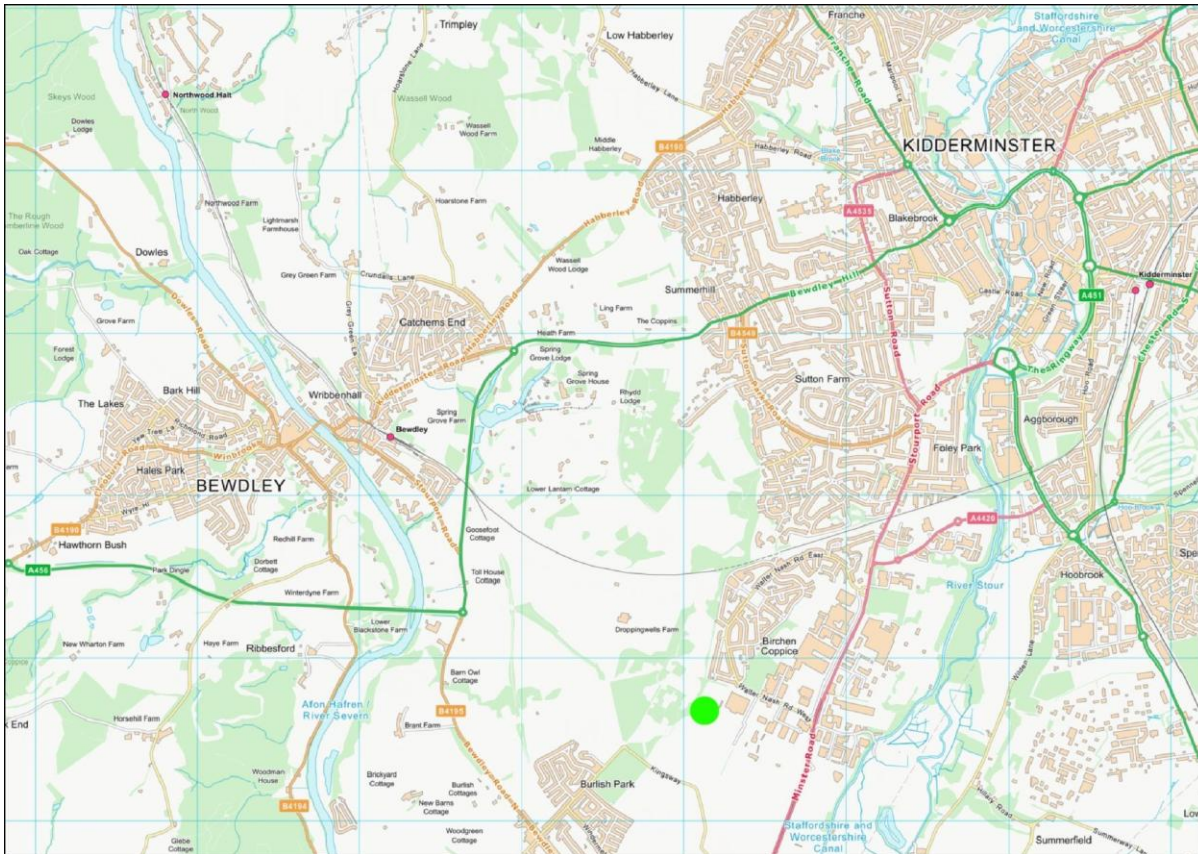


Figure 1- Location of former Burlish Golf Course

The district is still well catered for golf play and this course was surplus to requirements as shown by decreasing membership numbers in the 2019 review. This fulfils paragraph 97(a) within the NPPF, which states “Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements.”

The previous tenants of the property went into creditor’s voluntary liquidation in 2017. The District Council has been in full control of the site since June 2018, after forfeiture of the tenancy. Marketing by the liquidator failed to identify a viable alternative tenant. Parts of the Burlish Park golf course have now been transferred to Wyre Forest Ranger Service to manage.

Proposed Vision

The overall vision is to create a new Country Park. This will act as a green buffer between Stourport-on-Severn and Kidderminster and will offer significant leisure use for the public. A detailed map of the proposed use is attached to the appendix of this document.

The land borders Burlish Top Nature Reserve and has the unique sandy soils and remnants of the plant community found on the district's nationally significant wildflower meadows. It is proposed to manage the land in a similar way to the adjacent Burlish Top Nature Reserve.

This would mean further land being available for public access. The wildlife value will be increased through the control of invasive plants, light seasonal grazing and the creation of features that will increase the available habitat for the bee species that this type of meadow is renowned for.

The council has been in discussion with British Cycling in creating a £100,000 cycling route of 3.24 km distance in the lower portion of the site. The funding from British Cycling will be matched through Section 106 developer contributions from Bovis Homes. The funding from British Cycling though will only be released to WFDC once the first occupation has been achieved from the developer. If this has not been achieved within the timescale agreed by British Cycling then the funding would be withdrawn.

There will be one car park on site for the public to use. Subject to commercial viability, it is hoped to create a refreshment kiosk, subject to capital and revenue funding being identified from sources other than the District Council. The central part of the former course has now been fenced off and will be turned into a meadow with grazing cows to encourage biodiversity. This will be a long term project to change the habitat from a former golf course to a natural meadow. This will take approximately 10 years to establish. It will be open to the public for recreational use.

The former golf club house is in a very poor state of repair having been attacked by arsonists and vandals. This has been allocated for travelling show people in the emerging local plan (LI/12). The two other sites have been allocated for employment (LI/10 & LI/13) in the emerging local plan.

The western parcel of land has been subjected to some tipping by the previous golf operation to make the course play more challenging. It is not thought to be cost effective fully to clear the site for any additional playing pitches. The land is owned by WFDC though is currently not being managed by the Countryside team, and alternative management of the site is being investigated.

The council has been in discussion with the Woodland Trust about the possible creation of new woodland on this site. The Woodland Trust will supply any trees and guards required, and will also work together with the council on design of the site. The objective is creation of new woodland for the community to enjoy and to be an extension to the nearby nature reserves. This would involve the planting of approximately 30,000 trees.

The southernmost parcel of land is not to be upgraded to biodiversity land. At present the countryside team has secured the land and it is allocated as an area for potential residential development. This is allocated as site LI/11 within the emerging local plan. The emerging local plan sets out the exceptional circumstances as to why certain sites within the green belt are being released for future development.

Summary

Overall it is envisaged that the current proposal will fulfil paragraphs 97(a) and 97(c) of the NPPF in which the loss of existing sports facilities will be for some alternative sports and recreational provision. The vision for the former Burlish golf course site will offer a cycle trail, a new country park, and a wooded area for the public to use. The proposed cycle trail will offer a facility that is currently not available in the district and further open space that will be accessible to the general public.

Appendix 1- Map of Former Burlish Golf Course and Proposed Development

