50 Hither Green Lane

Redditch

B98 9AZ

Mr P Lester

Principal Planning Officer

Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council

Walter Stranz Square

Redditch

B98 8AH

 4th February 2024

via e-mail : paul.lester@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

Dear Mr Lester

**Ref : 21/01893/FUL - Proposed development of land adjoining Hither Green Lane**

I am writing in my capacity as the NoRCA representative on golf-related matters. I am a long-standing member of the Abbey Park golf club and a resident of Hither Green Lane. I have previously submitted my own personal objection to the proposed application.

Having read the recent Planning Statement posted on the public portal, I am frankly astounded by the attempts to justify the application and the rationale behind the comments regarding the golf course.

The Statement is purely subjective and uses nebulous phrases, such as

* *‘making the course more useable and playable’*
* *‘will safeguard and strengthen the relationship between the hotel and golf course*’
* *‘benefiting the wider borough’*
* *‘making it fit for the future’*

Rather than enhancing the course, as is claimed to be the intention, the proposed reconfiguration will only serve to degrade the course and reduce the challenge it currently presents. It will lose its attraction to all types of golfers.

The golf course is currently promoted as a “*Championship Standard Course – The Best in the Midlands - upgraded and lengthened to challenge all abilities.*  This will no-longer be the case should the application be approved.

The Planning Statement comments that it is the applicant’s intention to submit an updated golf assessment. The need for a definitive plan for the revised layout has been there from day-one, over two years ago. Whatever plan is eventually forthcoming, it cannot disguise the simple facts that two substantial golf holes will be removed, the course will be reduced considerably and condensed into a smaller area. The increase in the number of shorter holes, Par 3’s, will have a detrimental effect upon the overall speed of play producing longer playing times, queues on tees and greens and thereby escalating Health and Safety risks for players.

The course will certainly no-longer be one of Redditch’s precious resources and attractions.

I believe that the proposed changes, however they are eventually implemented, will result in a loss of membership and a reduced ability to attract new golfers including juniors, seniors, casual and competent golfers - and anybody unable to afford membership of a private club. The course is currently the only ‘pay and play’ 18-hole course in the town. Quite simply, the proposed development is profoundly detrimental to the promotion of the game of golf in the Borough.

Contrary to what is being claimed in the Statement, there will actually be a reduced playing and visitor experience which I feel will severely impact the Hotel’s ability to host golf break and attract golf societies as well as the ability to attract and host competitive team/league matches with neighbouring golf clubs; the associated reduction in revenue may jeopardise the long-term viability and sustainability of the facility.

It is likely the housing development and associated changes to the golf course will take 2 – 3 years . NoRCA understands that during this time the course will be restricted to 10 holes. This will severely impact the golf and is likely to result in a dramatic downturn in golfers choosing to play the course. I understand members will be likely to leave and seek membership elsewhere; pay and play numbers will reduce, golf packages will fall away, golfing visitor numbers will decline. Revenues will be significantly impacted.

It is NoRCA’s considered opinion that the proposed development will have a significantly adverse impact on the Abbey Park golf and hotel facilities which will threaten its viability and sustainability. Should the development be approved it is likely that further erosion of the golfing facility will take-place over time. Redditch will thereby lose an important leisure facility and a unique asset.

Yours sincerely

**Graham Smith**

Golf group specialist (NoRCA)

Tel: 01527 66692

cc: Cllr. M Dormer (Leader of the Council)

Ms R Bamford (Head of Planning)