

Sixteen Bowling Lanes At Iford Bridge

Council Support For More Indoor Entertainment

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A PUBLIC inquiry at Christchurch Town Hall yesterday was told that there was a definite lack of indoor recreational facilities in the area and that a proposal to erect a building for 16 ten-pin bowling lanes at Iford Bridge Golf Course would meet this need and also serve as an adjunct to the golf course itself.

This view was put forward by Mr. Leonard John Ratcliffe, chartered surveyor and auctioneer, in support of an appeal by Mr. H. D. Newbury, managing director of Iford Bridge Sports and Entertainment Centre Ltd., against the Planning Authority's refusal to allow the building. **Coun. Barrington Myers, chairman of Christchurch Borough Council's Municipal Committee, said the Council, which was charged with the responsibility for lands owned by the Corporation including the Iford Bridge Golf Course, had resolved to support Mr. Newbury in this case and had authorised him to give evidence at the inquiry.** The Planning Authority feel that the land is defined in the Christchurch Town Map as an open space, golf course, and the proposed use would be inconsistent with this provision; that the proposed use would be seriously detrimental to the amenities of this important part of the proposed Green Belt within which the site is situated; and that the design and external appearance of the proposed building are unsatisfactory and would be detrimental to the visual amenities of the area.

Mr. Ratcliffe said a dual purpose would be achieved by permitting the proposed development in that the facilities for both outdoor and indoor games calculated to attract the public at all times of the year irrespective of weather conditions.

There was ample space for adequate car parking arrangements within the curtilage of the golf course. This, he suggested, was a most important factor when one considered the difficulties which were invariably experienced in urban areas.

Mr. Ratcliffe said there already existed in the immediate Green Belt area residential and business development which, on the local Planning Authority's arguments, were in conflict with both the Town Map and Green Belt proposals.

"SPORT"

The written statement attached to the Green Belt submission to the Minister defined the type of building to be permitted in the Green Belt. This included buildings for the purpose of sport. The word "sport" as used in this context was not, so far as he was aware, in precise terms.

Apart from purely visual amenities it would appear to him that the only amenities of substance attached to the appeal site were sporting amenities which the proposed development would usefully supplement and enhance.

Mr. Ratcliffe said he could understand the local Planning Authority's reasoning if one were dealing with development proposed to be carried out in an area purely rural in character. In this case, however, they were concerned with development of land sandwiched between two thickly populated urban areas separated at that point by the River Stour, having in effect a narrow belt of riverside open space along both its banks.

IN AGREEMENT

He was fully in agreement with the desirability of preserving the few remaining areas within the borough allocated for retention as open space, but he considered that if the proposed development were allowed, the building could be so sited as not to interfere with the visual amenities at present enjoyed by the public over the golf course nor give a feeling of curtailing the amount of open space.

There already existed along the Barrack Road frontage a reasonably good screen of trees and shrubs, but if thought necessary, additional trees could readily be planted.

The design and external appearance of the building was a matter which should be capable of amicable negotiation between the appellant and the Planning Authority.

Mr. F. F. Freeth, Area Planning Officer for South-West Hampshire, said the first reason for refusal was a clear statement of fact and there appeared to be no reason to assume that there was any intention to change the Town Map so as to permit the development proposed. The second reason for refusal indicated that the appeal site was within the proposed Green Belt,

The open space was the last remaining open break dividing Christchurch from the County Borough of Bournemouth and it formed an important amenity to both boroughs. It was considered to be of sufficient importance to be included within the proposed Green Belt and this was further reinforced by the fact that the Minister when announcing his intentions to approve the Green Belt did not propose to modify it in so far as it related to the appeal site.

TYPES OF DEVELOPMENT

The proposed development was not the type of building or use to be permitted in a Green Belt; in the written statement attached to the Green Belt submission the types of development to be permitted were:

"Agriculture and forestry, sport, cemeteries, institutions standing in large grounds, or other uses appropriate to a rural area,"

Coun. Myers said his committee felt that the situation of the golf course was suitable for the development of the nature which Mr. Newbury proposed. They had at all times been anxious to secure that the golf course itself should remain in being but did not think the proposed development of a sort of indoor games centre would be detrimental to the golf course.

In fact, the general development proposed that additional car parking space provided and other amenities for the attraction of visitors might well mean the golf course itself would become more popular than it is at present.

Provided it was suitably designed his committee did not think the proposed building would be detrimental to amenities and considered that the building could be sited in a way as to preserve a large part of the view enjoyed up river from Iford Bridge and so as not to give offence to local residents.

Four residents of the vicinity spoke against the proposed building, one of them also voicing the opinion of four other residents and a petition signed by 45 residents of Cedar Avenue, was also handed in.

The inquiry was conducted by Mr. R. St. John Whelan, who later visited the site. The Ministers decision will be made known later,