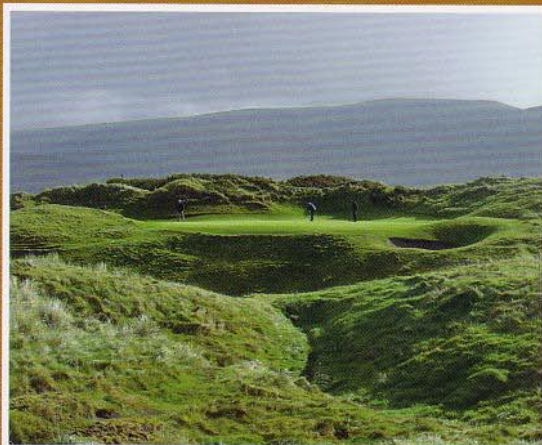


0506

the European Institute of Golf Course Architects yearbook



Golf in the Modern Era

Ten Key Rules for Golf Developers

Testing Equipment

Golf Courses and the

Built Environment



EIGCA
EUROPEAN INSTITUTE OF
GOLF COURSE ARCHITECTS



Golf and Housing - Chiberta GC, France

Golf Courses and the Built Environment

In recent years two significant shifts have occurred that account for an increase in the number of residential and resort golf course communities being developed throughout Europe.

1. Self-funding members clubs and stand alone commercial golf courses are less viable economic models for golf course developments therefore additional funding sources are required.

2. Second homes and golf tourism have become more affordable for an increasingly large percentage of the population.

But the link between golf and the built environment is not new. Before golf was played on the commons surrounding towns like St Andrews, Aberdeen and Leith, it was once an urban sport played in streets and churchyards.

By the mid 1800's golf had become a sub-urban sport, with courses situated within easy walking distance of nearby townships and between 1850 and 1890, with the coming of the railways, golf moved further afield.

The increased size and wealth of the middle classes allowed golf

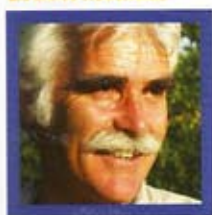
course development to attain a critical mass in Scotland and by the beginning of the last century the earliest golf resort hotels were developed.

Turnberry Hotel was operating by 1906 while one of the first resort courses in the US, Donald Ross's Pinehurst, was opened in 1907. The construction of Gleneagles Hotel was started in 1914.

From a golf course hotel where people could stay to a golf course where people could actually live was but a short step and after the First World War the residential golf course came of age with courses like Wentworth (1926 Colt) in the UK and Chiberta (1927 Simpson) in France.

A century after the creation of the first resort golf courses the built environment now takes many forms that can be grouped into three main categories: Substantial Club Houses and their associated infrastructures; Resort developments with hotels and apartments; and Residential developments, including primary and second homes, retirement and rental holiday homes.

Article by:
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"Whilst many homeowners may desire a view of the golf course they are less keen on being visible to golfers while golfers may find playing along a boulevard of tightly packed homes an unsatisfactory experience."

Three distinct locations for golf course real estate development can also be identified around Europe. Firstly, suburban developments, usually primary residences with houses and apartments aimed specifically at the local populations on the edge of major towns and cities. Business and conference hotels with associated facilities are not uncommon.

Secondly, tourist developments in rural, coastal or mountain (skiing) regions with hotels and second homes or apartments where the golf course is one of many different facilities available to visitors, and finally golf resorts with hotel and/or housing specifically developed for golfers.

There are also four clear spatial relationships between the golf course and the building development.

Core

The central building zone with views over the course (Clubhouse and Hotel/Apartments) is surrounded by the course.

Scattered

Development zones may be scattered around the site, a hamlet approach that has been favoured in recent projects across Europe.

There are numerous possible combinations between type of development, location and form and few golf projects are designed around a single model. The layout will depend on the physical aspects of the site, (its size, shape and topography) the project product definition (luxury, up-market, popular), the developer's own business plan and subsequent management and operational strategies.

The Core approach will reduce infrastructure costs, the size of the safety zones, visual pollution and housing frontage. Core layouts may be best on sites with one or two high points where housing can have dominant views over the golf course, or where apartment blocks are favoured over housing plots.

The Belt model, an island of golf surrounded by perimeter housing, is a preferred option on



Belt

The building development zones are situated around the course perimeter giving increased golf frontage to the development zones whilst leaving the golf course as a central feature.

Ribbon

Maximum development frontage can be achieved by weaving the golf course through the housing zones in single or double fairway configurations.

flat sites where alternatives could mean that houses would be facing each other across relatively narrow single fairway strips. This concept is well adapted to a semi-urban environment. The residential development would have extensive views into the course, and golfers would have adequate privacy and a sense of space.

The American belief that residential development should be designed to create the maximum number of plots with golf course frontage

has come into question in recent years in Europe. Problems linked with the environment, land planning and safety have caused developers and many house purchasers to reconsider Ribbon development.

Whilst many homeowners may desire a view of the golf course they are less keen on being visible to golfers while golfers may find playing along a boulevard of tightly packed homes an unsatisfactory experience. Ribbon configurations are suited to popular residential tourism locations where cheap holiday renters or second home owners are less concerned with privacy than primary residents, and where golfing quality comes second to housing quantity.

The scattered hamlet concept is ideal on large, irregular shaped sites with more severe topography and extensive vegetation, where



**Safety Netting -
A sign of failed masterplanning?**

purchasers are happy to have views to the golf and surrounding countryside. Infrastructure costs may be higher, but can be compensated for by giving a high proportion of golf frontage without the disadvantages of the ribbon concept. This is a recommended model for more discerning residents on problematic sites with larger land banks.

The developer's natural desire to squeeze in the maximum surface area of building land by increasing housing density, combined with technological advances in ball and club design rendering previous safety margins all but useless, has led to legal battles, physical injury, broken windows, angry neighbours and unhappy golfers.

Safety is the single most important factor when considering the interplay between golf courses and the built environment. There are no 'rules' for safety, no safety legislation specifically for golf course real estate, only conventions and recommendations. Each case is unique and should be judged on its merits but if the master plan layout results in accidents something is wrong.

The developer's instinct to maximise building area is usually in conflict with the golf course architect's desire to ensure safety by creating the widest possible 'cordon sanitaire' between the sensitive playing areas and the buildings.

Unwisely and often ineffective safety nets are not a desired option despite their increased use on many sites. It is usually the sign of a failed design if safety netting becomes necessary in order to protect housing.

Whilst a combination of tree planting, water hazards and netting may render a golf course safer, nothing can compensate for an intelligent master plan that allows sufficient space as appropriate.

A successful building development has to find customers in the short term, who will be satisfied with both the golf and the housing over the long term.

The principal criteria for a successful residential or resort golf development will include Golf/Housing interface that has taken safety issues seriously; Golf course quality that reflects the quality of the building development; and an adequate distribution of the land bank that is best suited to both golf course and housing imperatives.

There are many reasons why some projects are unsuccessful. They may be poorly located as the result of inadequate market research; perhaps the quality of the golf course is not reflected in the sale price of the housing; the project design may have shown insufficient regard to the nuances of housing/golf interface with resulting long term safety deficiencies; visual impacts of the built environment upon the golf course may reduce golfer satisfaction and interest; or the developer may have miscalculated the effects of the golf course quality upon housing sales.

Sometimes an inadequate golf course may depress housing sales, whilst the astronomical costs of some signature projects may plunge a development into the red.

In many European countries golf is a recent phenomena and it is not unusual to find local urban planners and building architects who are totally unfamiliar with designing residential layouts around golf courses. Many professional



**Mixed Housing
Development**

golf course architects have a pragmatic understanding of golf course developments involving the built environment.

The success of a golf course development will be heavily dependent upon the quality of the project master plan, drawn up with the involvement of an experienced and qualified golf course architect. ■

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