

**WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL – DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT
DELEGATED REPORT**

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| APPLICATION No: | S6/2013/1557/LB |
| APPLICATION Site: | Ramada Hotel, St Alban's Road West, Hatfield |

NOTATION:

The application site is excluded from the Green Belt in accordance with Policy GBSP1 as designated in the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE:

The application site itself is a brick wall situated to the southern side of the Ramada Hotel in Hatfield. The Ramada Hotel is a Grade II listed building dating from the 1930's. The listing description, which identifies the building as The Comet Public House, is as follows:

Hotel. 1933. By E B Musman. Red brick with stone dressings on steel frame. The plan is supposedly in the form of an aeroplane. Two storeys. Projecting centrepiece with rounded end, the ground floor projects beyond the first. Wings on either side, also half round, single storey only. Five window side elevations. Largely original steel framed windows, the two modern ones in the front elevations are openings in originally blank walls. Clipsham stone dressings strip above and below windows and to parapets. Flat roofs not visible, the original roof lantern has been removed. The interior has been altered. A pioneer hotel in the modern style.

There is a modern 1990's extension attached to the hotel to the rear which is not mentioned in the listing. A car park wraps around the front of the site with access from St Albans Road West and Comet Way.

The hotel complex is situated on the western side of Comet Way and the southern side of St Albans Road West on an irregular shaped corner plot. The site fronts onto a busy road network including two roundabouts with traffic lights. The rear site boundary to the south-west adjoins the rear gardens of residential properties in Ashbury Close and Selwyn Crescent. The University of Hertfordshire and Hatfield Business Park are located to the north, the Galleria shopping centre is situated to the north-east and the A1 motorway passes in a cutting to the south-east.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL:

This application seeks listed building consent for the erection of a 1.8 metre trellis on an existing dwarf wall to the southern side of the hotel.

The existing wall separates two areas of the car park and the land to either side of it is at different levels. At its tallest it measures nearly a metre tall. With the addition of the trellis fencing the entire structure would measure approximately 2.7 metres high.

PLANNING HISTORY:

There is an extensive planning history at the site. The applications relevant to this current application are as follows:

S6/2000/0860/LB – Single storey extension to form linen room to new bedroom block A(G) 31/07/2000

S6/1992/0252/LB - Alterations and extensions including erection of new bedroom block to provide 51 bedrooms and two meeting rooms; single storey extension for laundry room; new entrance lobby and refurbishment; additional car parking facilities A(G) 06/08/1992

SUMMARY OF POLICIES:

National Planning Policy Framework

Circular 03/09: Costs Awards in Appeals and Other Planning Proceedings

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005:
SD1: Sustainable Development

CONSULTATIONS:

None

TOWN/PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS:

Hatfield Town Centre - None

REPRESENTATIONS:

The application was advertised by neighbour notification letters. No representations were received.

DISCUSSION:

The main issues are:

1. The impact on the heritage asset
2. Other material considerations

1. The impact on the heritage asset

Section 16 of The Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act (1990) states that *“In considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works the local planning authority ... shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses”*.

With regards to planning policy, the Government encourages the conservation of the historic environment and heritage assets such as listed buildings. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) notes that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and they should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification.

The proposed development would impact on the setting of the listed building. The setting has already been altered over time. The hotel has been extended to the rear with a modern and contrasting extension and the hotel complex is surrounded by the car-park and various busy roads. There are also lots of signs relating to the car park and traffic signs surrounding the site which all detract to some extent from the character and appearance of the original building at the site.

The accompanying Design and Access Statement notes that the hotel wishes to erect the trellis fencing in order to help screen the rear part of the building. They consider the rear, modern part to be of poor architectural quality and they think the overall appearance of the site as viewed from the east would be improved if the rear part of the building was screened. It is agreed that the modern part of the hotel is of much poorer quality than the main building and it is considered that it detracts from the character and appearance of the original building. It is also considered that the trellis fencing would help to screen the rear part of the hotel to some degree (although not fully). Trellis fencing, because of its natural and temporary nature and appearance is considered to be an appropriate form of screening, especially because it would sit alongside trees and bushes in the car-park. Whereas a solid wall might compete with the main building and appear as a solid and incongruous feature in the setting of the listed building, it is considered that the trellis fencing would help screen the newer part of the building without appearing out of place and inappropriate.

As noted above, in making a decision on whether to grant listed building consent, special regard must be paid to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. The modern extension to the listed building, which the trellis fencing seeks to screen, is not a feature of special architectural or historic interest; instead it detracts from the original, older part of the building. It is therefore considered that the trellis fencing would impact on the setting of the listed building in a positive way. The proposal is therefore recommended for approval on this basis.

2. Other Material Planning Considerations

Sustainable Development: The applicant has completed a sustainability checklist which highlights that the scheme generally responds positively to the topic areas that are required to be considered in accordance with policy SD1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and Supplementary Design Guidance, 2005.

Protected Species: The presence of protected species is a material consideration, in accordance with, Natural Environment & Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 (section 40), Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as well as Circular 06/05. In the UK the requirements of the EU Habitats Directive is implemented by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (the Conservation Regulations 2010). Where a European Protected Species ('EPS') might be affected by a development, it is necessary to have regard to Regulation 9(5) of the Conservation Regulations 2010, which states: "*a competent authority, in exercising any of their functions, must have regard to the requirements of the Habitats Directive so far as they may be affected by the exercise of those functions.*" The Conservation Regulations 2010, (Regulation 41) contains the main offences for EPS animals, however the existing site and development is such that there is not a reasonable likelihood of EPS being present on site nor would a EPS offence be likely to occur. It is therefore not necessary to consider the Conservation Regulations 2010 and amended 2012 Regulations further.

CONCLUSION:

Subject to a planning condition to ensure the materials used are as detailed in the application, it is considered that the heritage asset will be adequately protected. The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and the requirements of the Supplementary Design Guidance (Statement of Council Policy).

RECOMMENDATION: LISTED BUILDING CONSENT WITH CONDITIONS

CONDITIONS:

1. C.2.2 Time limit for commencement of development (listed buildings)
2. C.13.1 The development/works shall not be started and completed other than in accordance with the approved plans and details: 1018-P100 received and

dated 18 July 2013 unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Pre Development

3. The materials to be used for the development shall be as detailed in the application hereby approved, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To ensure a satisfactory standard of development in the interests of visual amenity in accordance with Policies GBSP2, D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE GRANT OF PERMISSION:

The decision has been made taking into account, where practicable and appropriate the requirements of paragraphs 186-187 of the National Planning Policy Framework and material planning considerations do not justify a decision contrary to the development plan (see Officer's report which can be viewed on the Councils website or inspected at these offices).

Signature of author..... **Date**.....