

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Planning](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: OBJECTION TO THE COMET HOTEL PLANNING APPLICATION (6/2016/1739/MAJ)
Date: 11 September 2016 14:14:24

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir / Madam

Please be advised that I wish to object to the second Student Fusion planning application for the Comet Hotel for the same reasons that I objected to their original application for this site (attached below).

If anything, having attended their open day and seen how on a lovely sunny day how empty the terrace and bar was, only confirmed my belief that they are not interested in running the venue as an amenity for the general public.

Yours faithfully

Desmond Markus
5 The Pastures
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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 31 October 2015 09:47
To: planning@welhat.gov.uk
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: AMENDED: OBJECTION TO THE COMET HOTEL PLANNING APPLICATIONS 6/2015/1997/MAJ AND 6/2015/1998/LB

Please disregard my submission dated 30/10/2015 and use this one - the date of the consultation and a URL have been corrected, an extra historical fact with supporting URL added and I have made minor tweaks to improve clarity. Thank you.

OBJECTION TO THE COMET HOTEL PLANNING APPLICATIONS 6/2015/1997/MAJ AND 6/2015/1998/LB

To who it may concern

Background: Historic and cultural significance of the Comet Hotel

The Comet Hotel is an aviation-inspired landmark art deco period building (some sources put this as only lasting from 1925-1935; others more generously give 1925-1940), that has significant architectural, artistic and historic importance.

The developer's proposals mention the architect E B Musman who developed the original structure based on an aircraft plan form (and had some claim to be an artist as well). Sadly, changes over the years, have served to obscure the original design. However, probably of greater significance is the sculpture supporting the DH.88 Comet racer in front. The sculptor's initials, EHK, can clearly be seen when viewed from directly in front of the hotel ie. between the hotel and sculpture.

Eric Henri Kennington made his name originally as a painter. He has the distinction of being an official WWI war artist for both Britain and Canada (and served as an official British war artist again during WW2). An associate of T E Lawrence - better known as Lawrence of Arabia - Kennington was one of the main artists who illustrated his book 'Seven Pillars of Wisdom'.

Turning his talents to sculpting he is credited with several war memorials (including one in Battersea Park) and funerary works (including monuments for T E Lawrence and plaques for Geoffrey de Havilland Jnr and Major Halford). It's worth noting that the Geoffrey R De Havilland plaque is still in Hatfield but not readily accessible to the public as the old DH HQ building serves as the Police Station. He is also responsible for the sculptures adorning the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre.

Musman and Kennington also collaborated on the Nags Head public house, which was designed by Musman and sports a frieze by Kennington. So the Comet Hotel is a combination of architecture and sculpture even if the two are separate structures.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/artists/Eric-Henri-Kennington>

The hotel is also a testament to Hatfield's aviation heritage. Apart from the aviation theme (the design of the building and the panels on the sculpture all feature various facets of flight – real and fabled), the hotel is referred to in Flight magazine (10/12/1964 p988) as: "The famous Comet Hotel at Hatfield,Herts..."

<https://www.flightglobal.com/pdfarchive/view/1964/1964%20-%203017.html>

Many important people have stayed at this hotel, including royalty.

Flight magazine (06/05/1937 p464)

"At the nearby Comet Roadhouse, Prince Cantacuzene of Roumania slept each afternoon in anticipation of an early start on an attempt to reach the Cape in the startling time of 29 hours."

<https://www.flightglobal.com/pdfarchive/view/1937/1937%20-%201228.html>

Renown aviation record breaker, Spitfire test pilot and author ('Sigh for a Merlin'), Alex Henshaw, in his autobiographical 'Flight of the Mew Gull' records how he celebrated winning the 1938 King's Cup Air Race at the Comet Hotel.

While anecdotal evidence indicates that Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks stayed there while filming the Oscar-winning WWII epic 'Saving Private Ryan'.

Most recently it was the site of the Incinerator Inquiry.

For many local people it has been used as a venue for a convivial drink, Sunday lunch and wedding / birthday / anniversary venue. Consequently, this landmark occupies a special place in Hatfield's history and geography and should stay a venue open to all and not just a small section of the population.

Reasons for objecting:

1. Damage to a historic asset

While there are some welcome moves to restore the original configuration of the hotel, the plans call for the building of several blocks of student accommodation on the grounds to the rear. As was established, with Hatfield House at the incinerator inquiry, a site's setting is an integral part of its overall appeal / value. Building on the gardens will significantly diminish the hotel's attractiveness including, for example, as a wedding venue.

2. Visual impact

The Comet Hotel has a highly visible location at the junction / roundabout of the A1001 Comet Way and B6426 and the junction / roundabout of the A1057 St Albans Road West and Mosquito Way, and the new developments will be visible to both pedestrians and motorists.

The new blocks (writing from memory of the developer's consultation at How Dell Community Centre on 10/09/2015, as it hasn't been possible to access plans from the WHC planning portal) are all at least one storey higher than the existing hotel. Consequently these will materially affect the setting of the hotel. The developer's proposals showed them largely screened by tree cover. However, these are mainly, if not all, deciduous trees so will shed their leaves in winter. Also, as we have already seen in Hatfield, disease, pests and storms mean that these trees could be lost overnight. In any event I believe that the tops of the new structures will still be visible with or without tree cover; for example, by pedestrians crossing the A1001 Comet Way towards the hotel.

3. Potential loss of a public amenity

The developers' plans will see the loss of hotel rooms and car parking spaces and some 360 students living on the site. This will affect the financial viability and attractiveness of the hotel as a hotel – reducing the number of the general public who can stay on the site and the loss of car parking space will diminish its suitability for social events (like weddings and trade and collectors' fairs). Further the presence of so many students will also reduce its attractiveness to members of the public. Already, as we have seen in Hatfield with the de Havilland Social Club, locals have ended up as effectively third class clientele (behind students and event / function trade).

4. Questions over the suitability and trustworthiness of the applicants

I am concerned about this commercial organisation, which has little - if any - interest in preserving what is left of Hatfield's history, and apparently has previous 'form' in that regard.

As I understand it, they are the same organisation that is responsible for, in my opinion, the effective destruction of another Hatfield art deco period landmark building; specifically: the Odeon Cinema / Bingo Hall on The Common.

As I understand it, planning permission was granted with a gentleman's agreement to preserve the original façade, which would have at least partially preserved the exterior of what was The Galleria of its day (the cinema / bingo hall being the centre unit). However, it apparently 'accidentally' fell down during construction. Rather than restore it the developers then successfully submitted a fresh planning application for an even larger structure on the site.

Fusion Students, as far as I can tell and as their name suggests, purely focuses on student accommodation and has no particular interest in the pub / catering / hospitality industry (although there is a Fusion Group that does).

Their plans to reduce the number of hotel beds, build on the gardens/grounds and reduce the number of car parking spaces do not bode well for the future of this famous hotel. And it's also questionable as to how many people will want to stay in / frequent an establishment with over 300 students on the grounds.

Hatfield does not solely require student accommodation - there is also a pressing need for affordable accommodation for migrant workers (not least of all, as at least one of the companies operating on the business park directly recruits from overseas). Consequently, if such a massive expansion of the site was allowed then it should be as a hotel open to the general public and not largely a private student preserve

Consequently, I urge you to refuse planning permission or, at the very least, restrict any further development to the size and height of existing buildings so that this historic site can be preserved for future generations.

Yours faithfully

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31 October 2015

PS

This information is attached as a Word document.
