

Wroxton House Hotel
Stratford Road A422 Wroxton

16/01641/LB

Case Officer: Bob Neville **Contact:** 01295 221875

Applicant: Best Western Plus Wroxton House Hotel

Proposal: Two-storey extension to rear of hotel to provide 8 no. additional bedrooms, reconfiguration of car park and associated works

Expiry Date: 07/10/2016 (Extension of time agreed until 16/12/2016)

Ward: Cropredy, Sibfords And Wroxton **Committee Date:** 15/12/2016

Cllr Ken Atack

Ward Councillors: Cllr George Reynolds

Cllr Douglas Webb

Reason for Referral: Member call-in in light of public interest indicated by the Parish Council

Recommendation: Refusal

1 APPLICATION SITE AND LOCALITY

- 1.1 The site is an established hotel complex located in the rural village of Wroxton. The hotel buildings are largely of stone construction, with a mixture of roofing materials (including thatch, clay tiles and slate) being employed on various buildings within the site. The site is accessed off the Stratford Road (A422) and has an existing parking area. The site is bounded by the Stratford Road to the south and east, residential properties to the west and a sports pitch and further residential properties to the north. The site has been the subject of significant development over the years with numerous extensions and alterations being approved by Cherwell Council.
- 1.2 In terms of site constraints, the site sits within the Wroxton Conservation Area and the historic village core which is considered of archaeological interest. The original main buildings are grade II listed and further grade II listed properties sit adjacent the site to the north and along Church Street to the south. The grounds of grade II* Wroxton Abbey lie some 130m east of the site.

2 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 2.1 The application seeks listed building consent for a link detached two storey extension to the rear of the hotel to provide 8 no. additional bedrooms (a 25% increase in overall bedroom capacity of the existing hotel) with the reconfiguration of the car park and associated works including landscaping. The proposed extension would be located to the north-west of an existing previously extended accommodation block, and would have a footprint of some 113m², with accommodation on two floors with an overall height ridge of ~7.85m. The building is proposed to be of predominantly stone construction, with elements of hung tile under a twin-ridged pitched tiled roof to match the existing roofing materials on the

adjacent building. The proposed extension would be linked to the existing accommodation via a two storey glazed link.

- 2.2 The proposals would also include landscaping works, including the removal of two protected Cypress Trees, a tree replanting scheme and the reconfiguration of the car park area to provide 46 no. parking spaces. However these works are not considered as part of this listed building consent application are subject to separate assessment under the related planning application (16/01640/F).
- 2.3 The determination period for the application has been agreed to be extended with the applicant's agent, to allow for consideration of revised and additional information submitted in response to case officer and consultee comments and to allow for the application to be presented to Planning Committee.

3 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 CHN.LB.CA.763/86 - Main entrance alterations, additions of bedroom block and demolition of existing store room to existing hotel. Alterations to existing bungalow into staff quarters and formation of car park. Permitted 04.12.1987.

CHN.LB.871/87 - Extension and re-modernising of existing hotel. Permitted 17.04.1988.

CHN.91/589 - Conversion of staff house to hotel bedroom accommodation. Permitted 03.12.1991.

CHN.LB.810/90 - Change of use, conversion and refurbishment and extension to form 5 hotel bedrooms and bathrooms. Permitted 21.01.1991.

09/01108/F & 09/01109/LB - Proposed alterations and single storey extension. Permitted 22.10.2009.

09/01636/F - Proposed single storey servery extension and alterations (Modification of Planning Consent 09/01108/F dated 22 October 2009). Permitted 18.03.2010.

15/00736/F & 15/00579/LB - Alterations and erection of two storey extension to rear of hotel. Withdrawn 31.08.2015.

16/01388/F & 16/01389/LB - Replacement timber orangery and lantern rooflight to entrance and lobby. Permitted 01.09.2016

(Please note that this is not a complete summary of the planning history at the site and that there have been further applications at the site)

4 PRE-APPLICATION DISCUSSIONS

- 4.1 The following pre-application discussions have taken place with regard to this proposal:
 - 16/00110/PREAPP-Proposed two storey rear extension to Hotel to form 8 additional guest bedrooms and associated works: Advice was given that there may be potential for a further extension of hotel facilities at the site, but that support would not be given for the design as submitted with the enquiry. The proposals were considered to detrimentally impact on the setting and significance of Wroxton House Hotel and adjacent grade II listed buildings, and that this harm would not be outweighed by the public benefit, with regard to tourism and the local economy in this instance. The proposals were considered to be contrary to Saved Policies C18, C28 of the Cherwell Local Plan 1996, Policy ESD 15 of the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 and Government guidance within the NPPF. Officers provided indicative sketches of an alternative scheme with the report which was issued to the applicant's agent on the 11/05/2016.

5 RESPONSE TO PUBLICITY

- 5.1 This application has been publicised by way of a site notice displayed near the site, by advertisement in the local newspaper, and by letters sent to all properties immediately adjoining the application site that the Council has been able to identify from its records.
- 5.2 No comments have been raised by third parties.

6 RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

- 6.1 Below is a summary of the consultation responses received at the time of writing this report. Responses are available to view in full on the Council's website, via the online Planning Register.

PARISH/TOWN COUNCIL

- 6.2 WROXTON PARISH COUNCIL: **No objections.** Making the following comments:

'The owners of the hotel have been attempting to add capacity to a very successful business to avoid the necessity of turning trade away, as is happening all too regularly at the moment. The extension would fit neatly behind and at a right angle to an existing modern extension and would be almost entirely invisible to passing traffic. This is because it would be set well back from the road, occupying part of the existing parking area. In addition, it would not be in the sightlines of the neighbouring properties.

It seems to us that, in the difficult economic conditions in which North Oxfordshire finds itself, CDC should be bending over backwards to encourage any business which brings trade, employment and tourism to the area. Wroxton House Hotel is highly respected as a place to stay and to entertain and employs 35 staff, which surely puts it into the category of businesses to be encouraged rather than obstructed by the planning system'.

STATUTORY CONSULTEES

- 6.3 HISTORIC ENGLAND: **No objection.** Commenting that the application should be determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance and on the basis of the Council's specialist conservation advice.

NON-STATUTORY CONSULTEES

- 6.4 CDC CONSERVATION: **Objects.** Commenting: *'We are not opposed to the extension of this successful hotel subject to a good design which respects the listed buildings and their setting. The Grade II listed hotel has been extended by a high percentage of its original footprint and it is strongly recommended that any extension should be compact to ensure minimum impact on the character and significance of the listed building. The views from the conservation area are also important. We previously advised the Applicant that the extension should aim to extend in the style of the existing extensions and look to be an integral part of the building's evolution. We recognised the roof was complicated with a wide valley gutter between two pitched roofs. The proposal shows a separate building with a boxy-glazed link. The form, the heavy horizontal bands and eaves and fenestration are all too heavy and the juxtaposition with the existing building is crude. It would not be a positive enhancement to the listed building, it would not be a neutral addition. It would have a negative effect on the character and significance of the listed building and causes less than substantial harm. We do not recommend approval of the scheme as submitted'.*

7 RELEVANT NATIONAL AND LOCAL PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

- 7.1 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 7.2 The Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 - Part 1 was formally adopted by Cherwell District Council on 20th July 2015 and provides the strategic planning policy framework for the District to 2031. The Local Plan 2011-2031 – Part 1 replaced a number of the ‘saved’ policies of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 1996 though many of its policies are retained and remain part of the development plan. The relevant planning policies of Cherwell District’s statutory Development Plan are set out below:
- 7.3 Cherwell Local Plan 2011 - 2031 Part 1 (CLP 2031)
ESD 15: The Character of the built and historic environment
- 7.4 Cherwell Local Plan 1996 (Saved Policies) (CLP 1996)
C18: Development affecting a listed building
- 7.5 Other Material Planning Considerations
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

8 APPRAISAL

- 8.1 The key issues for consideration in this case are:
- The impact on the listed building
- Issues relating visual and neighbour amenity and highway safety are to be dealt with under the associated application for full planning permission ref. 16/01640/F.
- Impact on the listed building
- 8.2 The key issue to consider is the impact upon the historic character, interest and fabric of the listed building, and the impact upon the significance of this designated heritage asset. The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and the Framework defines this as having 3 dimensions: economic, social and environmental. Also at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and in the context of this application would include conserving and enhancing the historic environment.
- 8.3 The Wroxton House Hotel is a Designated Heritage Asset and therefore the NPPF requires that any development must sustain and enhance its significance, and development should also make a positive contribution to its local character and distinctiveness. The emphasis is on ensuring that the historic significance of the heritage asset is not harmed.
- 8.4 Policy ESD 15 of the CLP 2031 indicates that new development should be of high quality design that where appropriate should conserve, sustain and enhance designated and non-designated ‘heritage assets’ (as defined in the NPPF) including buildings, features, archaeology, conservation areas and their settings, and ensure new development is sensitively sited and integrated in accordance with Government advice and guidance within the NPPF and NPPG.
- 8.5 Saved Policy C18 of the CLP 1996 further advises of the Council’s desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest.

- 8.6 The proposals would be connected to a more modern addition to the hotel complex and would not directly impact on the original historical elements of the site. Nevertheless the Council's Conservation Officer objects to the proposals, commenting: *'The proposal shows a separate building with a boxy-glazed link. The form, the heavy horizontal bands and eaves and fenestration are all too heavy and the juxtaposition with the existing building is crude. It would not be a positive enhancement to the listed building, it would not be a neutral addition. It would have a negative effect on the character and significance of the listed building and causes less than substantial harm'*.
- 8.7 The applicant contends that any views of the proposals would be limited, and that as the proposed building would not be directly connected to the more historic structures at the site there would be little impact on the existing listed buildings or how they are experienced from within the surrounding Conservation Area.
- 8.8 Whilst in many respects officers acknowledge that views of the proposals will be fairly localised, there would be opportunities for views from surrounding properties, the sports field and into the site from the highway to the east and south. Further, that it is not just these views that need to be considered, but also the experience that is had within the site, with regard to the character, appearance and setting of the listed buildings. Officers consider that the proposed building does not relate well to either the existing historic building or the later additions to the site; other than being of similar construction and finish materials. The two storey proposal with its glazed two storey link extension would have the appearance of being a somewhat separate building which, in officer's opinion, albeit seen in the context of the more modern additions to the hotel, would further compound the harm that has been caused to the significance of the original grade II listed property through the numerous additions that have been permitted at the site.
- 8.9 Given the somewhat divorced siting of the main structure and incongruous design of the glazed link, the proposals are not considered to be sympathetic or respectful of the listed hotel buildings and their setting.
- 8.10 Specific details with regards to the glazed link are considered to be somewhat lacking from the application's supporting information. Given the comments of the Conservation Officer and in order to ensure the satisfactory appearance of such development, it is considered that appropriate design details would need to be secured through appropriate conditions, should the Committee be minded to grant approval. Further conditions would also be required in terms of construction methods and materials.
- 8.11 The proposals as currently submitted are considered to cause 'less than substantial' harm to the character and appearance of the listed building. The NPPF (Para. 134) advises that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
- 8.12 The applicant has provided viability information with regard to the current business and the proposed development going forward. The applicant considers the relevant viability points to be:
- *Hotel occupancy for the last 6 months has been over 87%, which is very healthy but raises issues of room availability and lost revenue at certain times of the year*
 - *The proposal will release an extra 2920 rooms capable of accommodating 3635 extra guests (1.5 x rooms sold), which is significant in terms of the guest, tourism and business accommodation offer at the Hotel and the wider area*

- *Additional room revenue is estimated at some £293,000 pa (NB this is £70,000 pa more than for 6 bedrooms), which with a projected occupancy of 80% + justifies the investment*
- *The proposal will cost some £632,000 to construct and fit out including fees but excluding finance, which adds some £44,000*
- *The return on capital would be about £75,000 pa or in the region of 11.8% (just 6% for the smaller extension)*
- *The proposal is significantly more commercially viable with 8 bedrooms than 6 bedrooms*
- *This is a significant commitment and investment by our clients into a well-run, successful business and Hotel that supports the local community and economy*

8.13 Discussions have taken place with the applicant with regard to the design of the proposals; however, the design has not evolved from the scheme considered at the pre-application stage. The applicant argues that the design solution showing a standalone building, albeit link detached, was considered the preferred option given that it would have less of an impact on the hotel business during the construction phase and that it would simplify the connection to the existing accommodation block, which has a somewhat complicated roof structure. The Council's Conservation Officer has put forward design solutions which offer a more integrated style of development, both at the pre-application stage and during the application; however, these options do not appear to have been explored. Officers further consider that any impact on the existing hotel operations could potentially be managed so that there would only be short-term disruptions, and that a more long-term view of the proposed development needs to be had.

8.14 The applicants contend that other options have been explored including the previous withdrawn scheme 15/00736/F & 15/00579/LB, however these other schemes and their associated viability have not been expanded upon within the supporting information with this current application. A breakdown of construction costs has been submitted with the application; including a comparison of two alternative schemes for a 6 and 8 bedroom development. A request was made as to how these figures have been calculated, however it remains unclear as to what these figures were based on i.e. a comparable scheme or standard construction costing.

8.15 Whilst officers acknowledge that there would be a benefit to the business going forward, and by association a benefit to local tourism opportunities and rural economy, they remain of the opinion that a more appropriate design solution could be progressed that would meet the needs of the applicants whilst being considered more appropriate within the context of the listed buildings and therefore likely to be acceptable to the Authority in terms of the impact on the historic environment.

8.16 As can be seen from the details submitted in support of the application the existing hotel business is very successful and in officer's opinion, this would remain the case should this development not be permitted. Whilst the proposals would result in 8 no. additional bedrooms at the hotel supporting tourism and the rural economy, on balance, given the above assessment it is considered the public benefit gained would not be so significant that it would outweigh the harm to the historic environment that would be caused in this instance.

9 CONCLUSION

9.1 Given the above assessment in the light of current guiding national and local policy context, it is considered that proposals represent an inappropriate form of development which demonstrates conflict with policies of the Development Plan, in terms of harm being caused to the historic environment.

- 9.2 Officers acknowledge that the application is very finely balanced and that there are benefits in terms of the proposals supporting the expansion of the existing successful hotel business. However, by virtue of its siting, form and design it is considered that the proposed development would likely result in detrimental impacts on the character and appearance of the site, and in particular the setting and significance of the Grade II listed Wroxton House Hotel. In this instance, and given the weight placed by the NPPF and planning legislation on preserving designated heritage assets, it is considered that it has not been demonstrated the benefits clearly outweigh the harm that would be caused to the historic environment.
- 9.3 The proposals are therefore considered contrary to the above mentioned policies and as such the application is therefore recommended for refusal for the reason set out below.

10 Recommendation

10.1 That consent is refused, for the following reason:

Reason:

1. The proposed extension, by virtue of its linked detached form, divorced siting and incongruous design, in particular the glazed link, fails to integrate with the existing building and do not preserve or enhance the historic character or setting of the grade II listed hotel building. It has not been demonstrated that the benefits of the proposals clearly outweigh the harm caused. The application therefore fails to accord with Policy ESD15 of the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031, saved Policy C18 of the Cherwell Local Plan 1996, and paragraphs 14, 17, 132 and 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

PLANNING NOTES

1. For the avoidance of doubt, the plans and documents considered by the Council in reaching its decision on this application are: Application forms, 'David Lock Associates' Planning Statement (August 2016), Design and Heritage Statement (Rev. B July 2016), 'Sacha Barnes Ltd' Tree Report (Updated July 2016) and drawings numbered: W.4122.SU01, W.4122 SK21 Rev. A, W.4122 SK22 Rev. B, W.4122 SK23 Rev. B, W.4122 SU02 Rev. C, S7283/FA S01, S7283/FA S02 and S7283/FA S03 Rev. B; submitted with the application and W.4122-Revised Site Layout Plan and Refuse Vehicle Tracking Plan; received with agent's email dated 15/11/2016.