

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

7th May 2008

AUTHOR/S: Executive Director / Corporate Manager - Planning and Sustainable Communities

S/0297/08/F - GIRTON Extensions at Hotel Felix, Whitehouse Lane for Cassel Hotels Ltd

Recommendation: Minded to approve

Date for Determination: 14th April 2008

Notes:

This Application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination because the proposal is a departure to Policy GB/1 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework 2007;

Members will visit this site on 7th May 2008

Departure Application

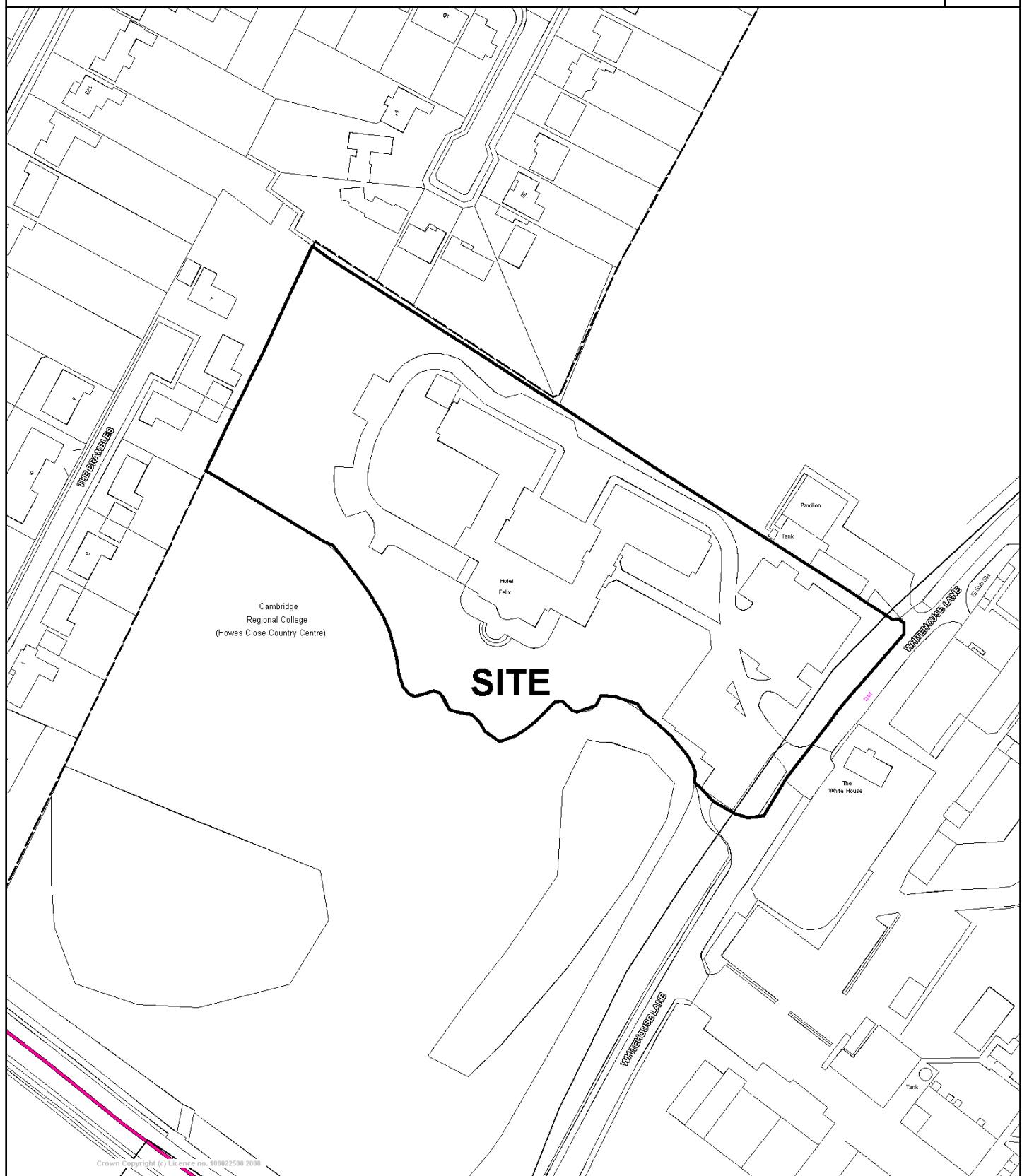
Site and Proposal

1. The Hotel Felix is a hotel complex located within the Cambridge Green Belt which lies between the Girton village framework and the Cambridge City boundary. The site abuts the residential street The Brambles to the northwest and Thornton Close to the north-east. The site is accessible via White House Lane, which is located off the Huntingdon Road.
2. The application, received 18th February, proposes a single storey function room, which would be located on the north-western corner of the hotel. This will create a courtyard between the northern wing of the hotel and the proposed function room. This room will serve a host of annual functions. Its external dimensions are approximately 20m length by 13m width.
3. Also proposed is a conservatory (approximately 11.5m x 6m) on the south-east corner of the Hotel. The proposals include the demolition of a two storey house (footprint approximately 53 sq.m.).

Planning History

4. Planning application **S/0817/00/F** for the conversion, part demolition and extensions to form 48-bedroom hotel, subject to a Section106 agreement was approved.
5. Planning application **S/0307/05/F** for the construction of a kitchen yard was approved;
6. Planning Applications **S/0718/06/O** and **S/0719/06/O** for extensions to form function room and additional accommodation were refused on grounds of being inappropriate development in the Green Belt, noise and visual intrusion to neighbouring residents and an unsatisfactory design in relation to the historic part of the hotel.

S/0297/08/F Girton



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7th May Planning Committee

Planning Policy

South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework (LDF) Development Control Policies, adopted July 2007:

7. **Policy DP/1 “Sustainable Development”** only permits development where it is demonstrated that it is consistent with the principles of sustainable development. The policy lists the main considerations in assessing whether development meets this requirement.
8. **Policy DP/2 “Design of New Development”** requires all new development to be of a high quality design and indicates the specific elements to be achieved where appropriate. It also sets out the requirements for Design and Access Statements.
9. **Policy DP/3 “Development Criteria”** sets out what all new development should provide, as appropriate to its nature, scale and economic viability and clearly sets out circumstances where development will not be granted on grounds of an unacceptable adverse impact e.g. residential amenity and traffic generation.
10. **Policy GB/1 “Green Belt”** states that there is a presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt, as defined in section 3 of PPG2: Green Belts.
11. **Policy GB/2 “Mitigating the Impact of Development in the Green Belt”** requires appropriate development in the Green Belt to be located and designed so that it does not have an adverse effect on its rural character and openness and subject to appropriate landscaping.
12. **Policy ET/5 “Development for the Expansion of Firms”** states that expansions will be permitted within village frameworks, or previously developed sites next to or very close to village frameworks.
13. **Policy ET/10 “Tourist Facilities and Visitor Accommodation”** requires that outside of development frameworks, development to provide overnight visitor accommodation, will only be permitted through appropriate replacement of buildings not requiring large extension, or by appropriately modest extensions to existing facilities.
14. **Policy NE/6 “Biodiversity”** aims to maintain, enhance, restore or add to biodiversity. Opportunities should be taken to achieve positive gain through the form and design of development. Where appropriate, measures may include creating, enhancing and managing wildlife habitats and natural landscape. The built environment should be viewed as an opportunity to fully integrate biodiversity within new development through innovation.
15. **Policy NE/15 “Noise Pollution”** states that planning permission will not be granted for development, which has an unacceptable adverse impact on countryside areas of tranquillity or on the indoor and outdoor acoustic environment of existing or planned development.
16. **Policy TR/1 “Planning for More Sustainable Travel”** states that planning permission will not be granted for developments likely to give rise to a material increase in travel demands unless the site has (or will attain) a sufficient standard of accessibility to offer an appropriate choice of travel by public transport or other non-car travel mode(s). Opportunities to increase integration of travel modes and

accessibility to non-motorised modes by appropriate measures will be taken into consideration. The Local Transport Plan road user hierarchy will also be taken into account in the determination of planning applications to ensure adequate emphasis has been placed on the relevant modes, although no modes should be promoted to the exclusion of others.

17. **Policy “TR/2 Car and Cycle Parking Standards”** identifies maximum parking standards to reduce over-reliance of the car and to promote more sustainable forms of transport. Cycle parking should be provided in accordance with minimum standards.

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003:

18. **Policy P1/3 “Sustainable Design”** of the County Structure Plan requires a high standard of design and sustainability for all new development and which provides a sense of place, which responds to the local character of the built environment. This policy is supported by policy DP/2 of the Local Development Framework 2007.
19. **Policy P9/2a - Green Belt** defines the extent to which urban growth around Cambridge will be limited in order to preserve the character of Cambridge, maintain and enhance the quality of its setting, and to prevent communities merging into one another and the city. In the Green Belt development is limited to appropriate rural uses such as for agriculture.

Consultation

20. **Girton Parish Council** – recommends Approval
21. **Local Highway Authority** – The proposal does not provide sufficient details of likely traffic impact of the proposal. A more detailed transport statement is required to clarify such issues as parking demand and provision, frequency of use and who will be using the proposed function room. (Highway comments in response to additional information to be expressed verbally at Committee.)

22. Conservation Officer comments:

“The original Victorian building at the core of the Felix Hotel is not a listed building, but is a building of some local interest. The design of the recently constructed bedroom wings respects the symmetry of the overall design of the house, but are architecturally weak and rather disappointing. The proposed new function room will avoid the need to erect temporary (and unsightly) marquees for functions on the ground to the side of the hotel and will allow the opportunity to create a more controlled environment to reduce disturbance of neighbours. The design of the function room is restrained, so as not to detract from the original dwelling, but to complement it. In some respects this approach might be regarded as a bit of a lost opportunity, but it is an acceptable solution that will sit comfortably in its context.

On the assumption that the case for exceptional circumstances justifying development in the Green Belt is accepted, then I would not object to this proposed development.

In the event that the application is approved I would wish to see a condition requiring the removal of the old property before the new function room can be used. Similarly I would wish to see appropriate controls put in place (Section 106) to prevent the continued use or siting of a marquee on the site. Samples of all external materials to also be agreed by condition”.

23. **Corporate Manager (Health and Environmental Services)** – There are no objections in principle, however if the application is successful, it is recommended that the following conditions be applied to any consent granted:
- a) Details of the location and type of any power driven plant or equipment, including equipment for heating, ventilation and for the control or extraction of any odour, dust or fumes from the building(s) but excluding office equipment and vehicles and the location of the outlet from the building(s) of such plant or equipment, shall be submitted to and approved, in writing, by the local Planning Authority before such plant or equipment is installed; the said plant or equipment shall be installed in accordance with the approved details and with any agreed noise restrictions.
 - b) If it is necessary to install subsequent plant and equipment following completion of the development for which consent is currently being sought, the additional equipment shall be subject to a condition that seeks to restrict the impact that it can have on nearby residential property.
 - c) During the period of construction no power operated machinery shall be operated on the premises before 08.00 hours on weekdays and 08.00 hours on Saturdays nor after 18.00 hours on weekdays and 13.00 hours on Saturdays (nor at any time on Sundays or Bank Holidays) unless otherwise previously agreed in writing with the local Planning Authority in accordance with any agreed noise restrictions.
 - d) Details of any external lighting including flood lighting shall be submitted to and approved by the local Planning Authority before construction commences.
 - e) The rating level of noise emitted from the development hereby permitted shall not at any time exceed the existing background noise level determined to be 41 dB LA90. The noise levels shall be determined at the nearest noise sensitive dwelling. The measurements and assessment shall be in accordance with BS4142: 1990.
 - f) To enable fine-tuning of music levels and to ensure that the hotel operates within the design parameters of the function room, an electronic limiter shall be installed to control music levels inside the function room. A competent person shall install the noise-limiting device.

Informative: During construction there shall be no bonfires or burning of waste on site except with the prior permission of the Environmental Health Officer in accordance with best practice and existing waste management legislation.

24. **Landscape Design Officer** has no objections but would like to see an additional evergreen tree (Holm Oak) in the area of grass between the west wing of the Hotel and the roadway. This would provide a foreground feature to the extension when viewed from the houses to the north west.

Representations

25. Two letters of representation have been received from the occupiers of Nos. 4 and 6, The Brambles. They outline the following concerns:

The guests attending events should not be permitted on the garden areas adjacent to the back gardens of the houses in The Brambles or Thornton Close.

There are 10 existing parking spaces on the service road to the kitchen area. On the proposed plans it appears that five of these have been removed to improve access to the kitchen. However, it does not appear clear whether these spaces would remain or be removed. No further parking spaces should be allowed on this part of the service road. These parking spaces are mainly used by staff, with shifts ending late at night causing the main disturbance.

Light pollution from the site at night is already significant, so it is hoped that steps will be taken to ensure that the proposed extensions will not make this any worse.

One of the residents also comments:

"The proposals have several merits, namely that the function room fits in aesthetically with the adjacent bedroom block and with the demolition of the old caretakers house. This building has always been an eyesore. The proposed soundproofing should resolve the serious issues with noise".

Planning Comments – Key Issues

Green Belt

26. Planning Policy Guidance Note 2: Green Belts (PPG2) includes a presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt. This presumption, as defined in PPG2, is applied in relation to the Cambridge Green Belt by Policy GB/1 in the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies Development Plan Document (DCP). PPG2 indicates that the construction of new buildings inside a Green Belt is inappropriate unless it is for a limited range of uses.

By definition the proposed function room extension and conservatory would both constitute inappropriate development within the Green Belt. They would not preserve the openness and character of the Green Belt. To a limited extent the proposal would also result in further encroachment into the countryside and in that regard would be contrary to the purposes of the Green Belt.

Noise

27. The two identified main sources of noise that emanate from the site are those from the emptying of bins within the kitchen storage yard and functions that are held within the hotel grounds. The kitchen yard does have permission, but its enclosure has yet to be implemented. Furthermore, the holding of functions is deemed an integral part of the hotel's business and although the hotel does provide small function rooms, up to 20 larger events are carried out every year making use of a marquee within the hotel grounds. It is these large outdoor functions that have resulted in further noise and disturbance to the amenities of the surrounding neighbours, with a marquee offering no sound attenuation and it being difficult to control guests spilling out within the hotel grounds.

28. The proposed function room has been specifically designed to accommodate all types of functions for the hotel with acoustic attenuation in mind. The building is designed to be sound proof with no windows or doors opening onto the grounds to the northwest, to alleviate the possibility of noise disturbance to the neighbouring residential properties within the Brambles and Thornton Close. It is also proposed that the function room would contain a sound limiting device, which, when activated, would trip the power to all equipment. The building would also contain plant and machinery within the roof space in order to cool and heat the room as necessary without the need for opening fenestration. It has also been agreed by the applicant that, should planning permission be granted, they would enter into a legal agreement to prohibit the use of a marquee within the hotel grounds.

Visual Amenity

29. At present the site has two approved development proposals, which are yet to be implemented. They consist of a conservatory to the southeast wing of the hotel and the construction of an enclosed kitchen-service and yard to the northwest corner of the hotel. There is also an existing two-storey detached former dwelling upon the northern wing of the hotel, which is currently used as ancillary office accommodation. The cumulative floor space of the unimplemented development and the dwelling is approximately 160 square metres. If the current proposals for a function room and conservatory were granted then the current un-implemented consents could not be built and the applicant would agree to a condition for the existing dwelling to be demolished before any work on site was carried out.
30. The existing dwelling on site is an unsightly building of no architectural merit that bears no resemblance to the vernacular architecture of the hotel or the existing Victorian villa. The building is located upon the northern edge of the hotel within close proximity to the residential properties within Thornton Close. Its loss would not only be an improvement upon the visual appearance of the existing buildings and site as a whole but it would also break down the built form between the hotel buildings and the adjacent village framework, thus increasing the visual break between the two, which offers more openness to this part of the site.
31. The proposed function room has been specifically designed to be non-visually prominent and sound attenuated. The building would be built using materials to match that of the existing hotel and would be subservient in its built form to the existing hotel. The building envelope would not project any further west than the existing northern wing of the hotel and would create an open courtyard between the two. It is my opinion that this building would not interrupt existing views across the site from the south, west or north.
32. The building would be energy conscious in its design and built form as well as its use. It is proposed that it will be insulated with low energy fittings where appropriate. It will be heated through the use of a ground source heat pump and cooled through a ground source loop system. There has already been some minor landscaping carried out to the bund, which separates the hotel grounds and the residential properties within the Brambles. However, given the nature of this development, there would be further scope for a more comprehensive hard and soft landscaping scheme, which could be controlled by condition.

Traffic Impact

33. The site at present has 92 car parking spaces with 6 cycle spaces and 1 disabled space. The proposed development would result in the loss of 5 standard spaces. The design and access statement makes reference to the fact that, during the history of the site, there has been no highway problem through traffic congestion or incidents. The flow of traffic to the site is usually staggered with large numbers of guest travelling by public transport or private taxi. It is argued within this statement that the proposed extensions would not have a greater impact upon the existing car parking or traffic movements to the site as the proposed extension would replace the use of temporary buildings. Under the Council's maximum parking standards the existing site would require a maximum threshold of 127 spaces. The proposed extensions would see a net increase in floor space of approximately 283 square metres, which would require a maximum provision of 140 spaces. The proposed parking provision of 87 spaces is in my opinion deemed acceptable for this site given its close proximity to the village of Girton and the Cambridge City fringe. I acknowledge that those frequenting the function room will in most cases be guests of the hotel or part of larger parties such as weddings or conferences, which would arrive by various modes, including car, coach or private taxi's if not public transport. The 5 car park spaces, which are to be removed are adjacent to the residential properties within the Brambles and Thornton Close and would therefore aid in the alleviation of noise and disturbance upon these residents.

Other Considerations

34. It is necessary to consider whether there are other considerations that would clearly outweigh the harm by reason of inappropriateness in the Green Belt. In this regard the applicant indicates that:

"Planning approval was granted for the creation of the hotel because it provided an opportunity to improve upon the 'openness' of the site by demolishing the inappropriate and sprawling extension that had been built and replace them with carefully designed and sited extensions, further away from the houses.

The hotel is allowed to erect a temporary structure for a number of days each year and, as outlined elsewhere the use of these has caused problems for some of the neighbours. The proposed creation of a permanent function room to replace these temporary structures, which when viewed from any location around the site can either not be seen or being lower than the existing buildings, will have the existing buildings as a silhouetted backdrop.

The proposed conservatory, located partially on the site of the existing Victorian conservatory is likewise located where it can either not be seen or will be silhouetted against the existing buildings".

35. Moreover there will be improved protection of residential amenity through the design and use of a sustainable soundproof building. Furthermore, the applicant has agreed to a condition to demolish the dwelling before work commences.
36. The existing unattractive two-storey detached dwelling (currently being used as an ancillary office) will be removed. Furthermore, the site still has permission to build a conservatory and kitchen yard, which have yet to be implemented. These extensions will not be able to be built if the permission is granted for the conservatory and function room. Floorspace will, therefore, be lost.

37. In my opinion, the cumulative impact of these considerations represent special circumstances, which would outweigh the harm by reason of inappropriateness in the Green Belt.
38. Applications for inappropriate development are treated as Departures from the Development Plan. However, very special circumstances have been identified to justify this development. Having regard to the provisions of The Town and Country Planning (Green Belt) Direction 2005, I consider that, if the Committee is minded to approve the application, it be referred to the Secretary of State, by reason of the narrowness of the Green Belt in this locality, its proximity to residential development and the nature and location of the proposal.

Recommendation

That the Committee be minded to approve the application and that it be referred to the Secretary of State in accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Green Belt) Direction 2005. In the event that the Secretary of State does not call the application in for her decision, approval be issued subject to the following conditions:

39. Approve

Conditions

1. SCA – RCA.
2. SC5a Materials - (RC5a)
3. No further windows, doors or openings of any kind shall be inserted in any elevation of the function room, hereby permitted, unless expressly authorised by planning permission granted by the Local Planning Authority in that behalf.
(Reason - To minimise noise disturbance to occupiers of the adjoining properties.)
4. No development shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority a scheme of landscaping, which shall include indications of all existing trees and hedgerows on the land, and details of any to be retained, together with measures for their protection in the course of development. (Reason - To enhance the quality of the development and to assimilate it within the area.)
5. All planting, seeding or turfing comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the occupation of the buildings or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner; and any trees or plants which within a period of five years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless the Local Planning Authority gives written consent to any variation. (Reason - To enhance the quality of the development and to assimilate it within the area.)
6. Details of the location and type of any power driven plant or equipment, including equipment for heating, ventilation and for the control or extraction of any odour, dust or fumes from the building(s) but excluding office equipment and vehicles and the location of the outlet from the building(s) of such plant or equipment, shall be submitted to and approved, in writing, by the local Planning Authority before such plant or equipment is installed; the said plant or

equipment shall be installed in accordance with the approved details and with any agreed noise restrictions. (Reason - To minimise noise disturbance to adjoining properties).

7. During the period of construction no power operated machinery shall be operated on the premises before 08.00 hours on weekdays and 08.00 hours on Saturdays nor after 18.00 hours on weekdays and 13.00 hours on Saturdays (nor at any time on Sundays or Bank Holidays) unless otherwise previously agreed in writing with the local Planning Authority in accordance with any agreed noise restrictions. (Reason - To minimise noise disturbance to adjoining properties).
8. No external lighting including flood lighting shall be installed other than in accordance with a scheme which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. (Reason - To minimise light pollution).
9. The rating level of noise emitted from the development hereby permitted shall not at any time exceed the existing background noise level determined to be 41 dB LA90. The noise levels shall be determined at the nearest noise sensitive dwelling. The measurements and assessment shall be in accordance with BS4142: 1990. . (Reason - To minimise noise disturbance to adjoining properties).
10. The use of the function room, hereby permitted, shall not commence until an electronic limiter shall be installed to control music levels inside the function room, hereby permitted, shall not commence until an electronic limiter has been installed to control music levels; thereafter the function room shall not be used unless the electronic limiter continues to be operational. (Reason - To minimize noise disturbance to adjoining residents).
11. No development shall commence until the existing two-storey dwelling, shown on Drawing No. 530-G2K, as "House Removed" shall be demolished. (Reason - To ensure the protection of the openness and character of the Green Belt.)
12. Notwithstanding the provisions of Part 4 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (or any order revoking and re-enacting that order without modification) no marquee or other temporary structure shall be erected or used within the application site for purposes of functions or for any other purpose connected with any hotel business or any other use falling within the Use Class C1 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 as may be conducted from the site. (Reason - To ensure the protection of the openness and character of the Green Belt.)
13. No development shall commence until details of secure and covered cycle storage have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority; the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details. (Reason - To ensure the provision of travel modes other than the motorised car in accordance with Policy TR/1 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework 2007.)

Informatics

During construction there shall be no bonfires or burning of waste on site except with the prior permission of the Environmental Health Officer in accordance with best practice and existing waste management legislation.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies (adopted July 2007)
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
- Planning Files Ref: S/0297/08/F, S/0817/00/F, S/0307/05/F, S/0718/06/O and S/0719/06/O
- Documents referred to in the report including appendices on the website only and reports to previous meetings

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