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Planning & Sustainable Communities  
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CB23 6EA

29 June 2010

Your ref: S/0551/10/F and S/0552/10/LB



Dear Ray,

**Re: The Red Lion Hotel, Station Road East, Whittlesford Bridge.**

Further to the additional comments made by the Conservation Officer dated 25 June 2010 I would like to make the following comments on behalf of the Appellant.

**Pre-application discussions**

Extensive negotiations have taken place with SCDC and English Heritage both prior to and during the consideration of the applications. As you are aware English Heritage have raised no objection to the details being presented to Committee and have confirmed that they intend to issue Schedule Ancient Monument Consent for the works to the north eastern corner of the site.

**Justification for the works**

It is disappointing that, despite having explained on a number of occasions, including within the documentation for the Phase 1 and 2 Applications, the view taken by the Conservation Officer is that the extension is purely to provide additional dining facilities. The proposals represent a major refurbishment of the building which will secure its long term future and major enhancement of its setting. The alterations to the building include enlarged and improved kitchen facilities to be provided in a less sensitive part of the building, a new flexible function area to be created, new toilets which now include disabled facilities and the formation of a new coffee snug in a restored 15<sup>th</sup> century part of the building. The purpose of the extension is not just to provide additional dining to support the new hotel. It enables the historic building to retain its multiple uses of a public house, venue for local events and societies, a conference and function venue as well as providing dining facilities. The need to provide an additional seating area outside the existing bar area has also not been understood. This provides both a meeting and waiting area as well as a facility for people to use laptops and make business calls outside

the busy bar area or the quieter space of the coffee snug. The aim is to ensure the business remains competitive and viable and the new space is flexible, thus enabling the historic hotel use to continue into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Concerns at the size of the extension have led to this being reduced in footprint. The scheme as now presented represents the minimum floor space necessary to support the required functions and ensure flexibility of space.

### **Amendments made**

Following a productive meeting with SCDC Officers on 18 June 2010 the scheme has been revised to address SCDC concerns at the appearance of the rear elevation and the works to the eastern side elevation. These proposals having been discussed in detail with SCDC Officers have been fully supported, it is therefore disappointing that further concerns have been raised and that the recommendation remains one of refusal. English Heritage have been kept informed of the alterations and they continue to raise no objection to the proposals.

In this second part of the letter I am seeking to consider in detail the concerns raised in the memo from the Conservation Officer dated 23 June 2010:

In terms of the amendments to the floor plan suggested, these have been fully considered but rejected by the Applicant on the basis they would have an adverse impact on how the hotel would function. A great deal of time has been invested in working up the layout so that the new and old elements work in harmony. The suggested relocation of the dining area fails to take into account the need to retain routes through the building when the function room is occupied and a seating area for working or meeting people outside of the dining, bar or snug areas.

The new extension represents a 25 % increase in the total existing floor space. It is a 45% increase in the existing footprint area and not equal to the existing ground floor area as stated in the comments.

The opinion that the new element will compete with the historic fabric is not supported. The design of the new element seeks to use traditional materials in a modern contemporary format, such that it will subtly read as a modern extension sitting comfortably alongside the original. The scale and form of the extension are lower than the existing historic building and thus the historic fabric will remain the visually prominent and important element on the site. The design has sought to ensure that the span proportions of the pitched roof elements relate to the historic form of the existing building.

It is argued what has not been given due weight is the visual enhancement to the building which will result from the proposals both internally and externally. The multiple single storey poor quality extensions to the rear and eastern side of the building will be removed and replaced with this far higher quality and suitable form of development.

The new element has been designed to create a large venue space, which could not be achieved within the small compartmentalised spaces of the historic building without severely affecting the historic fabric. A contrast between old and new will be created. It is argued this will assist in revealing the significance and extent of the historic building which will enhance the understanding and enjoyment of the Listed Building.

It is argued in weighing up the potential heritage benefits of the proposal the enhancement resulting from the removal of the kitchen area from the 15<sup>th</sup> century eastern cross wing to enable this to become a coffee snug have not been fully considered. A sense of place will be created whereby the timber framing and the inglenook fireplace, currently largely concealed behind hygiene surfaces and equipment, will be appreciated by users of this area.

In setting out their considerations the Conservation Officer has had no regard to the important and significant enhancements to the setting of the adjacent Grade II\* Listed chapel building resulting from the proposed hard and soft landscaping works. This includes the additional land purchased by the Applicant to the east of the chapel. The downgrading of the eastern driveway access to a pedestrian only access will enable the former linkage between the hotel and chapel to be more appreciated – and hopefully encourage greater visitor numbers to the chapel. The hard landscaping will include interpretation measures showing how the chapel included a further bay to the west. The views of the chapel from the adjacent NCP car park, the street and from the hotel site will all be significantly enhanced. This is considered to be a major positive contribution and heritage benefit to the setting of both Listed Buildings and this is fully acknowledged by English Heritage.

At the meeting with Officers held on 18 June 2010 it was stressed how important it is to ensure the hotel remains open throughout the course of these works. The works will have to be phased to enable this to take place. It is therefore totally incorrect to state that the Applicant is unwilling to undertake opening up works and discuss the findings with the Conservation officer. Given the building is still functioning as a commercial hotel the timing of this is critical to the running of the business. These works simply cannot be programmed to take place at the moment. The areas where opening up is requested are to the kitchen and first floor bedrooms, all of which are currently in full use and are hoped to remain so over the summer period. The opening up works cannot therefore occur until the new hotel provides alternative bedrooms and the kitchen can be relocated. The Health and Safety issues preclude any such works occurring to these areas until the kitchen and bedrooms are not in use. It is therefore requested that a degree of understanding and flexibility be applied in this instance given the building is still in use. It is argued this work could be conditioned on any consent. In the event of historic fabric being found which would preclude the scheme as tabled being implemented then a revised proposal would have to be drawn up.

The fire route proposed by the Conservation Officer is considered to be unacceptable given that it creates a far longer route than that existing, it will require the creation of a solid corridor through the building which raises issues with regard to the flexibility and access to the ground floor space and will lead to a number of physical alterations to the central flat roof area including the need for a hand rail, alteration of historic windows to have fire proof glass and the provision of a covered stairwell area given it will descend into the building. The tabled option offers a far more simple option subject to there being no significant loss of fabric resulting to the eastern side wall.

It is argued that the proposals meet all of the following potential heritage benefits which the Practice Guide to PPS5 set out (Para 79):

- It will sustain and enhance the significance of the Listed Building and the contribution of its setting – most notably to the adjacent chapel
- It removes the risks to the Listed Building as it ensures its continuing economic use as a hotel/inn
- It secures the optimum viable use of the building – for which it was built
- It will make a positive contribution to the economic vitality and community facilities for the locality
- The proposals are considered to be an entirely suitable design for the context – and are fully supported by English Heritage
- It better reveals the significance of the Listed Building and enhances the enjoyment of it and the sense of place – both internally and externally.

On this basis the heritage impacts accruing from the development must be weighed up. It is argued that the potential heritage benefits which the scheme will secure outweigh any of the concerns still raised by the Conservation Officer. On this basis it is argued the scheme can be supported as it fully complies with the guidance in PPS5 and the Local Development Policy Framework.

Yours sincerely



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Associate

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