



The Planning Inspectorate

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PLANNING DEPARTMENT					
DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL					
Ref.					Ack.
Dep		D.P.	D.C.	AC	Admin.
Received - 1 DEC 1997					
Comments					

Your reference:
HEP/334/MIF

Our reference:
File/APP/A1910/A/97/285465/P8
T/APP/A1910/E/97/813788/P8

Date: 28 NOV 1997

Dear Sirs

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 SECTION 78 AND SCHEDULE 6 AND
PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) ACT 1990,
SECTION 20 AND SCHEDULE 3
APPEALS BY THE WATERMILL HOTEL LIMITED
APPLICATION NOS: 4/00831/FUL and 4/00832/LBC

1. I have been appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment to determine the above mentioned appeals. These appeals are against the decisions of the Dacorum Borough Council 1) to refuse an application for planning permission for the conversion of existing conference room to toilets and erection of first floor conference room above reception area and 2) to refuse an application for listed building area consent for the works involved at the Watemill Hotel, London Road, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire. I have considered all the written representations made by you and by the Council and also those made by the Bourne End Village Association including those made directly to the Council and forwarded to me. I inspected the site on 11 November 1997.

2. The appeal property stands beside the Grand Union Canal and is within the Metropolitan Green Belt. There has long been a mill on the site and the present hotel complex incorporates at its heart an early 19th century mill building. Various extensions have been approved over the past 20 years, including a single storey element in front of the old mill with taller wings extending to each side. Most of the space between these and the road along the frontage of the site through Bourne End is given over to parking.

3. You explain that the expansion of the hotel has created the need for a larger dining room, which necessitates relocation of toilet accommodation. As proposed in the appeal scheme this would lead to the loss of some conference floorspace which the new first floor room would replace. No change in the approved "footprint" of the buildings is involved.

4. From my inspection of the site and its surroundings, and from the representations made, I am of the opinion that the main issues in these cases are the appropriateness or otherwise of the proposal in the Green Belt and its impact upon the special architectural or historic interest of the hotel, a grade II listed building.

100%



5. The development plan for the area comprises the Hertfordshire County Structure Plan and the Dacorum Borough Local Plan. The Council have provided extracts from both and have explained and referred to the stage reached in reviewing the Structure Plan. Of the policies referred to I regard Local Plan policy 85 as being particularly relevant to this proposal: it provides that extensions to hotels and guest houses in the Green Belt will not normally be permitted. I am required to decide the planning appeal having regard to the development plan and to make my determination in accordance with it unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

6. The local plan reflects national policy set out in Planning Policy Guidance note 2 (PPG2) which among other things defines a number of purposes for which the construction of new buildings inside a Green Belt is not inappropriate. The alteration and extension of hotels is not among these purposes and so the proposal, as well as conflicting with local plan policy 85, is inappropriate and so by definition harmful as the PPG confirms. You believe that in all the circumstances of the Watermill Hotel, not least what you describe as the functional need there for the proposed accommodation, this is clearly outweighed by the fact that there is an approved and unimplemented scheme to alter the relevant part of the hotel. In your opinion the appeal proposal does not differ from it so significantly as to materially harm the openness of the Green Belt. You submit that in shape and form it is equally sympathetic to the existing mill building and argue that it too should be seen as the sort of sensitive change which as PPG15 points out many listed buildings can sustain.

7. The unimplemented scheme is for some reorganisation and enlargement of the flat-roofed single storey accommodation in front of the old building, where the reception area is located. In my judgement it is at present one of the least attractive features of the building and the entrance is not as welcoming as might be thought desirable. The approved design would introduce a pitched roof over part of the area and goes to some lengths to play down what would remain of the present flat roof there and over the driveway leading to the back of the site. Like the Village Association I think it a project which would improve the appearance of the hotel.

8. Equal pains have clearly been taken over the details of the proposal before me. In particular the profile of the roof of the new first floor room is faithfully based on that of the mill building, as well as being on the same axis. But its bulk is much greater than that of the pitched roof which the Council have approved: its ridge would be about 1.5m higher and its width about 5.5m in place of 4.5m. It would be approximately 10% longer. In my judgement such a feature would detract significantly from the dominance of the historic part of the building. In particular it would screen the former mill in views from the road to a much greater extent than it now does - and also more than the approved scheme would. To my mind this would be harmful, and would erode the special interest of the building contrary to the aims of national and local policies. Also even though the site coverage would not be increased the project would compound the reduction in openness of the Green Belt already accepted here, and it does not seem to me that what you describe as the hotel's functional need for the space amounts to very special circumstances to justify allowing something which I am satisfied conflicts with the development plan.

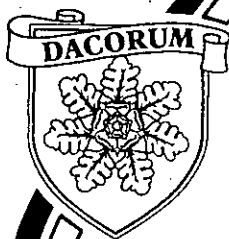
9. I have considered all the other matters raised in the representations but find them of insufficient weight to alter my decision.

10. For the reasons given above, and in exercise of the powers transferred to me, I hereby dismiss these appeals under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Denis F McCoy', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Denis F McCoy ARIBA FRTPi DipArch(Oxford) FRIAI
Inspector



PLANNING

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Applicant:

THE WATERMILL HOTEL LTD
LONDON ROAD
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
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TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

**APPLICATION - 4/00831/97/FUL
CONVERSION OF EXISTING CONFERENCE ROOM TO TOILETS AND
ERECTION OF FIRST FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM ABOVE RECEPTION AREA
WATERMILL HOTEL, LONDON ROAD, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD, HERTS, HP1 2RJ**

Your application for full planning permission dated 23 May 1997 and received on 9 June 1997 has been **REFUSED**, for the reasons set out overleaf.

Director of Planning
Dacorum Borough Council
Civic Centre
Marlowes
Hemel Hempstead
Herts
HP1 1HH

Date of Decision: 15 August 1997

REASONS FOR REFUSAL APPLICABLE TO APPLICATION: 4/00831/97/FUL

Date of Decision: 15 August 1997

1. The site is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt wherein there is a strict control over development. The proposal involves an extension to the hotel, which has already been significantly extended, which would detract from the character, appearance and openness of the Metropolitan Green Belt. As such the development would be contrary to Policies 3 and 85 of the adopted Dacorum Borough Local Plan and advice contained in Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 (Green Belts).