



**Planning Inspectorate  
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1) ~~Feb~~  
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PLANNING DEPARTMENT DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL			
Mr N V Hyde	Ref	Ack	28647
Chartered Architect	P	J.C.	J.C.
Windmill Hill House			
Windmill Hill			
Highbury Road			
Hitchin			
Hertfordshire			
SG4 9RT			
9 MAR 1989		9 MAR 1989	
File		Date: -7 MAR 89	
Refer to		20913	
Cleared			

Your reference 1664  
Our reference APP/A1910/A/88/088493/P7

Sir

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1971, SECTION 36 AND SCHEDULE 9  
APPEAL BY QUEENS MOAT HOUSES PLC  
APPLICATION NO:- 4/1374/88**

1. I have been appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment to determine the above mentioned appeal following the failure of the Dacorum Borough Council to determine a planning application within the prescribed period for extensions at the Hertfordshire Moat House Hotel, London Road, Markyate to form a leisure complex. I have considered the written representations made by you and the Council and I inspected the site on 20 February 1989.
2. Having inspected the site and surrounding area and taken into account the written representations received, I consider the main issue in this appeal to be whether the proposed extensions would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the area or to parking facilities on the site.
3. The appeal land is located on the north east side of the A5 trunk road; although in a rural area and close to an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the property is also near to housing and other commercial development. At the present time the site contains an hotel of modern red brick design and having a flat roof type construction. The hotel consists of a long central section and two short wings projecting towards the highway. The present car parking facilities, which you claim to be about 250 spaces, are located mostly to the north west of the hotel, but also in front of and to the south of the building and where the new extensions are proposed. To the rear of the building, there appears to be a service area with access from either end of the site; due to the shape of the site, there is an area of surfaced land along the south east boundary which may also be used for parking.
4. The present proposals are for a single storey building, but with the pitched roof attaining a similar height to the existing two storey hotel. Within the building there would be a swimming pool, squash courts, sauna, gymnasium, changing rooms and other leisure activities. It is intended that the new extensions would be constructed in materials to match the existing hotel; no provision is made for additional car parking, although you suggest that the areas at the rear of the new extensions could be fenced and gated and used for longer term parking facilities.

5. In their representations, the Council make it clear that in general terms their policies favour leisure activities where it meets local and regional needs. However, they consider the siting and design of the new building would be objectionable and loss of about 23 parking spaces from the front and side of the hotel to be unacceptable.

6. As this site is already occupied by a large hotel complex, is close to other development and the Council's policies favour leisure activities, I do not consider the principle of extending the hotel to be wrong. However, as the site is quite open to view from the surrounding countryside and close to an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the design of the proposals is most important in the interests of protecting the appearance of the locality.

7. Although the extensions would project about 16 metres in front of the existing building and about 17 metres towards the southern boundary, the hotel is already set well back from the highway and therefore I do not consider the siting of the new development would be out of place. Due to the open nature of this area and the elevated position of the hotel, the new extensions would appear prominent. However, as the new building would also be seen against the background of the existing hotel, I do not consider this matter would cause serious harm to the character of the locality.

8. However, you propose the design of the new building to be a series of pitched roofs and with mostly blank brick elevations. As the hotel generally has a modern design with a flat roof type construction and with windows occupying much of the front elevations, the proposed extensions would appear incongruous and out of character adjacent to the existing building. I accept that a pitched roof in itself need not be out of place in this position and that the particular use of the building has to some extent dictated the roof height, but it would be possible to provide greater detailing to mitigate the blank elevations, as well as improving the design and shape of the roof structure.

9. I am aware that Government advice suggests that developers should not be compelled to conform to a particular design at the expense of individuality or originality. However, Circular 22/80 also points out the need to control the external appearance of development, particularly in environmentally sensitive areas. As this site is close to an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and in open countryside, I am not satisfied from the evidence before me that the present proposal would be compatible with the existing building or with its rural surroundings.

10. Turning to the question of loss of parking spaces, I have noted the capacity for parking on the site that you mention in your correspondence. But due to the siting of the new extensions, a considerable proportion of the land would no longer be available for parking; it would also result in a rather tortuous route for vehicles to park at the rear in the manner you suggest. As that route would also be through the service area and where the site narrows considerably, it does appear to me that the proposals would result in the significant loss of practical parking facilities from the site. In addition, it is likely that your clients would expect further customers to visit the premises to use the leisure facilities, as well as for use by residents of the hotel. In these circumstances, I am not satisfied that adequate or proper provision has been made for parking facilities for the proposed development.

11. I have taken into account all other matters raised in the written representations, but none was sufficient to outweigh the considerations which led to my decision.

12. For the above reasons, and in exercise of the powers transferred to me I hereby dismiss this appeal.

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I am Sir  
Your obedient Servant

*D.G. Hollis*

D.G.Hollis BA DipTP MRTPI  
Inspector

4 April 1989  
DE/AR/1361  
4/1374/88/JD/AC  
Mr J Doe  
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FAO: Mr D Ewins

Dear Sirs

HERTFORDSHIRE MOAT HOUSE - PROPOSED EXTENSION

I refer to your letter of 17 March 1989 and the accompanying sketch plans. I consider that the siting of the proposed Leisure Centre is much more appropriate at the rear of the Hotel, where it will presumably leave the current car parking provision unchanged. Despite the generous provision of parking spaces, the Inspector noted in dismissing the recent appeal, that one purpose of the extension would be to attract further customers to the site. The Inspector was "not satisfied that adequate or proper provision has been made for parking facilities for the proposed development".

As yet, I have not been able to reasonably assess the proposed car parking requirement. I would be most grateful if you could supply me with floorspace figures for the dining, bar and conference areas of the hotel, together with an up-to-date number of bedrooms. Perhaps you would include your own reckoning of the parking requirement as discussed at your meeting with Mr Doe at the Civic Centre.

However, turning to the sketch plan, my main concerns at this stage are that the extensions at the front of the hotel may take up existing parking spaces. If this is the case, then these should be compensated for elsewhere if practicable.

I hope these comments are of some assistance to you. I look forward to hearing from you in respect of the floorspace figures and your estimate of parking requirements.

Yours faithfully

  
CHIEF PLANNING OFFICER