

Planning Committee: 8 April 2014

Item Number: 5

Application No: W 13 / 1793

Town/Parish Council: Blackdown
Case Officer: Penny Butler

Registration Date: 21/01/14
Expiry Date: 22/04/14

01926 456544 penny.butler@warwickdc.gov.uk

Ramada Warwick, Leamington Road, Chesford Bridge, Kenilworth, CV8 2LN
Ground floor extension to ballroom and new reception area with internal alterations
FOR Mr Johal

This application is being presented to Committee due to an objection from the Parish Council having been received.

RECOMMENDATION

Planning Committee are recommended to grant permission subject to the conditions listed.

DETAILS OF THE DEVELOPMENT

Planning permission is sought for ground floor extensions to create a new reception area and increase the size of the ballroom within the site.

The reception extension will provide approximately 100sq.m of new reception area incorporating a new lift and stairwell to upper floors and a new modern facade and glazed entrance focal point of 7m in height to the principle elevation of the hotel facing the highway. The existing Porte Cochere will be demolished.

The ballroom extension and associated entrance lobby and storage area will provide some 520sq.m of additional space by extending the existing front, side (northwest) and part rear elevations. The ballroom extension will have a flat roof reaching 4m in height and the rear lobby entrance will provide a focal point reflecting the design of the main entrance with a total height of 6.8m.

Existing parts of the building will be clad above the extensions to complement the new extensions and create a more modern appearance.

The application is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement (DAAS) which states that the improvements sought include:

- a better main entrance/reception;
- an extended function room;
- improved internal circulation;
- new cladding to transform the currently tired and uninviting building; and
- an external landscaped terrace.

An addendum to the DAAS includes a case for very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development within the Green Belt. The application is also accompanied by a bat survey.

THE SITE AND ITS LOCATION

The application site comprises the Ramada Hotel and its immediate environs, which includes a large field to the rear that adjoins the River Avon. The hotel is essentially a two-storey extended building that has a frontage onto the A452 and which is visible on approach from either direction. The site is situated in the West Midlands Green Belt and Special Landscape Area where it occupies an open and prominent site on the southern side of the A452, close to the A46 junction to the south-east of Kenilworth. The general character of the area is of open countryside and woodland within the River Avon valley. To the west is the River Avon, beyond which is the Chesford Grange Hotel. To the northwest is Chesford Bridge, which is the A452 Kenilworth-Leamington Road which forms the northern boundary of the site. There is open countryside beyond it on the opposite side of the road and to the east, together with a bungalow known as 'Quest Avon'.

Vehicular access to the site was improved a number of years ago by the provision of a roundabout approximately 100 metres to the east of the site at the junction with the main A429 and Bericote Road, which connects to Cubbington and the northern part of Leamington Spa. Vehicular access to the hotel is now by means of a dedicated road from this roundabout.

The Ramada website states that the Ramada Kenilworth offers 4 Meeting Rooms. The largest room is for a maximum of 350 persons. The total capacity of all meeting rooms is 470 people. The banqueting capacity is 500 people. The applicant has confirmed that there are spaces for 140 cars and 5/6 coaches within the site.

PLANNING HISTORY

W/13/0814 - Ballroom extension/ new reception area: Withdrawn 13th August 2013

W/07/0584 - Alterations to frontage & car park; Erection of a single storey extension to provide a new porch, cloakroom and cellar for a function room; single storey extensions to existing restaurant; first floor extension to create a board room; and amendments to previously approved extensions (W04/0141) comprising of a revised design of dormer windows and revised elevations: Granted 15th June 2007.

W/04/0141 - Extensions to hotel to provide additional bedrooms and a new leisure facility following demolition of existing bungalow, change of use of meadow from agriculture to woodland/ leisure, and replacement sewage treatment works (Resubmission of W/2002/0736 including submission of updated Tourism Study): Granted 1st August 2005.

W/04/1860 - Extension of existing plant room to create storeroom with interior access: Granted 8th December 2004.

W/02/0344 - Erection of replacement conference room extension: Granted 27th May 2002.

W/02/0736 - Erection of a two-storey extension to south-eastern side elevation to provide 12no. new bedrooms; demolition of existing bungalow and erection of a two-storey extension to north-western elevation to provide a leisure centre comprising a swimming pool, gymnasium, sauna, steam room and jacuzzi and 12 No. new

bedrooms on the ground floor and 19 no. new bedrooms on the first floor; change of use of meadow from agriculture to woodland incorporating picnic area, erection of replacement sewage treatment plant, children's play area, creation of an otter holt and woodland/riverside footpath; alterations to car park layout and provision of 2 No. bus stops on either side of Kenilworth Road: Withdrawn 8th October 2003.

W/00/0947 - Erection of single storey office extension: Granted 1st September 2000.

W/00/1153 - Erection of a pitched roof over tank room in lieu of existing flat roof: Granted 29th September 2000.

W/96/1397 - Erection of extension to function room and dining room: Granted 28th February 1997.

W95/0237 - Alterations to elevations, construction of new path and landscaping incorporating water jets at front of hotel after removal of car parking: Granted 10th May 1995.

W89/1086 - Erection of extension and refurbishment and alteration to existing property to form bedroom and leisure area: Granted 10th December 1991.

RELEVANT POLICIES

- National Planning Policy Framework
- DP8 - Parking (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- Vehicle Parking Standards (Supplementary Planning Document)
- Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines SPG
- DP1 - Layout and Design (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP2 - Amenity (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP3 - Natural and Historic Environment and Landscape (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP6 - Access (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP7 - Traffic Generation (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP9 - Pollution Control (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP11 - Drainage (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP13 - Renewable Energy Developments (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP15 - Accessibility and Inclusion (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- Sustainable Buildings (Supplementary Planning Document - December 2008)
- National Planning Policy Framework

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS

Old Milverton and Blackdown Joint Parish Council - Objection

The property, situated in the Green Belt adjacent to a flood plane, has had 7 extensions granted since 1991 (evidence from records in Planning Department) resulting in a large rambling hotel with a vastly increased floor area.

The proposed work would serve to increase even the current area disproportionately and it will bear little relation with that of the original building.

The land to the north west of the hotel, next to Chesford Bridge, is flood land which should not be built on as it accommodates flood water reducing that on the nearby road.

It should be noted that since February 2013, flood land at the back of the hotel next to the river has had its levels raised and has been converted into a car park extension without planning consent. The neighbouring 'small farmer' is concerned that her fields flood more to accommodate the flood water.

In view of the publicity concerning flooding and flood plain development it would be irresponsible for the Parish Council and Warwick District Council to fail to give full consideration to the potential impact of these planning considerations.

Highways (WCC) - No objection

Ecology (WCC) - Request for bat, reptile & amphibian and nesting bird notes.

Environment Agency: No objection.

Assessment

The main issues for consideration in this case are as follows:

- Whether the proposal amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt;
- Its effect on the openness and the general character and appearance of the Green Belt;
- If the proposal is considered to comprise inappropriate development, whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, along with any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify it.
- Highways considerations;
- Floodplain considerations;
- The effect on the amenities of any nearby properties.

Principle

The application relates to a hotel which is located within the Green Belt. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) indicates that the extension or alteration of a building is not inappropriate development in the Green Belt provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the *original* building. The planning history of this site indicates that the building has been extended and altered considerably on several occasions.

The current scheme proposes significant extensions in excess of 600sq.m, which alone are considered to be a disproportionate addition to the original building, however, this impact is exacerbated further when factoring in the cumulative impact of numerous previous extensions. The scheme cannot therefore be reasonably described as being proportionate to the size of the original building. As such, it amounts to inappropriate development which is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. The NPPF sets out that in such circumstances, substantial weight should be given to such harm and inappropriate development should not be approved except in very special circumstances the benefits of which must be considered to outweigh the harm identified.

Following the refusal of the previous scheme (W/13/1335) the applicant was advised that extensions and alterations of the scale proposed would be unlikely to be supported unless very special circumstances sufficient to outweigh the harm by reason of inappropriateness could be identified.

The resubmitted scheme provides an addendum to the DAAS which seeks to provide a case for very special circumstances, including the following matters:

- The existing hotel does not cater for disabled access, except the ramped access to the reception area. The main function room is also seven steps lower than the main ground floor and the dining area/breakfast room is five steps lower than the main ground floor and is simply not accessible to disabled patrons. The proposal includes improvements for disabled access.
- The hotel has been rescued from administration and requires investment to remain a viable business.
- Business has been lost as the function room is too small to take on weddings and conferences. The hotel is currently non-viable and it is absolutely essential that the function area is increased in size to attract new business.
- The existing Porte Cochere (50sq.m) is to be removed offsetting space against extended areas.

The applicant has submitted financial and accounting information in support of some of the above matters.

In view of above benefits arising from the proposed scheme, its provision for economic growth and the provision of additional conference and banqueting facilities within the area assisting the retention of local employment for 30 jobs, it is considered that very special circumstances sufficient to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt have been demonstrated.

Siting/Design

The scheme provides an acceptable design solution with focal entrance points and a side function room extension. The proposed extensions have been reduced in overall scale from the previous application. The scheme also seeks to improve the overall appearance of the building by providing a modern cladding solution, which is appropriate. A condition would be necessary to ensure that samples of external materials are submitted for approval to ensure that the building, as extended, assimilates into the landscape.

Neighbours' amenity

The proposed works will be set well away from adjoining nearby properties and are not considered to result in any significant impact upon amenity.

The hotel is an existing and established use located off a main road and despite any increase in capacity for the ball room it is considered that associated comings and goings are unlikely to result in any significant disturbance to surrounding neighbours.

Ecology

A bat survey has been submitted with the scheme. The Country Ecologist has no objection to the scheme but has requested bat, reptile/ amphibian, nesting bird and great crested newt notes be applied.

Highway matters

No changes are proposed to the access and no highway safety issues are raised with the scheme. After clarification of parking availability the Highway Authority are satisfied that there is sufficient parking on the site to serve the development.

Other matters

The extension will not be within the flood plain as the land levels rise up from the river bank and the hotel sits in an elevated position above the river. The Environment Agency have sought to clarify the location of the extension and its proximity to the flood plain and have raised no objection to the scheme.

In accordance with Policy DP13 and the associated SPD, the Council requires 10% of the predicted energy requirement to be produced on site or in the locality from renewable energy resources. The applicant has provided no information in this regard however further details can be secured through condition.

Summary/Conclusion

The application site lies within the Green Belt where policies of restraint apply. The application proposes substantial extensions that will increase the overall prominence of built development. The development proposed would therefore be harmful to the Green Belt as it is inappropriate; diminishes openness and conflicts with the purpose of including land in the Green Belt by encroaching upon the countryside. However, it is considered that very special circumstances have been demonstrated sufficient to outweigh that harm and that there are no other objections to the scheme so as to justify the refusal of the proposed scheme.

CONDITIONS

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this permission. **REASON:** To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).
- 2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the details shown on the site location plan and approved drawings No. 1414-011; 1414-013B; 1414-014A, 1414-015A, 1414-016A, 1414-017A, 1414-018A, 1414-019B, 1414-020B and specification contained therein, submitted on 27th December 2013. **REASON :** For the avoidance of doubt and to secure a satisfactory form of development in accordance with Policies DP1 and DP2 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011.

- 3 The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced unless and until a scheme showing how 10% of the predicted energy requirement of this development will be produced on or near to the site, from renewable energy resources, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the District Planning Authority. The development shall not be first occupied until all the works within this scheme have been completed and thereafter the works shall be retained at all times and shall be maintained strictly in accordance with manufacturers specifications. Microgeneration equipment no longer needed for microgeneration shall be removed as soon as reasonably practicable.
REASON : To ensure that adequate provision is made for the generation of energy from renewable energy resources in accordance with the provisions of Policy DP13 in the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011.
- 4 The development shall be carried out only in full accordance with sample details of the facing and roofing materials and treatment which have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. **REASON:** To ensure that the proposed development has a satisfactory external appearance in the interests of the visual amenities of the locality in accordance with Policy DP1 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011.
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