

**EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE  
ON 26<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2019**

**UPDATE REPORT**

**Item No:** (1)                      **Application No:** 18/02975/FUL                      **Page No.** 29-68

**Site:** The Swan At Streatley High Street Streatley Reading Berkshire RG8 9HR

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**Planning Officer Presenting:** Matthew Shepherd

**Member Presenting:**

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**Parish Representative speaking:** Mr Jeremy Spring and Mr Martin Jubb

**Objector(s) speaking:** N/A

**Supporter(s) speaking:** John McGahan  
Mr Ian Judd (Treasurer of the Morrell Room Management Committee)

**Applicant/Agent speaking:** Mr John Gripton and Mr David Burson

**Ward Member(s):** Councillor Alan Law

**Update Information**

**Site History**

Further earlier site history related to the proposed car park site has been found to be relevant to present to committee. This is as follows;

- 06/00975/FUL. Proposed swimming pool. Refused 04.07.2006. Appeal dismissed.
  - The refusal reason for the application is as follows “*The proposed development is wholly inappropriate in its scale, form and visual impact and detracts from important views from the surrounding area given its siting in a prominent and sensitive location outside of a defined settlement boundary, within the AONB, adjacent to a Conservation Area and some 100 metres from the River Thames*”
  - The appeal decision for this application can be found attached to this update. Officers wish to direct you to para. 9 and 10 of this decision.
  
- 00/57341/FUL. New boathouse for goring gap boat club. Refused 19<sup>th</sup> July 2000

- The refusal reason for the application is as follows *“The proposed building by virtue of its size, scale and siting will create unacceptable visual harm in this sensitive area, which is part of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty adjacent to the Streatley Conservation Area and also in the floodplain setting of the River Thames.”*
- 99/54344/FUL. Erection of staff housing- boat house- tennis courts and associated landscape works. Refused 14.04.1999. Appeal withdrawn
  - Application refused for two reasons, the following text is taken from refusal reason 2 *“The proposed buildings and tennis courts, by virtue of their scale and siting will create unacceptable visual harm in this exceptionally attractive area, which is part of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, part of the Goring Gap, and also in floodplain setting of the River Thames”.*
- 99/54343/FUL. Erection of staff housing- boathouse- tennis courts and associated landscape works. Refused 14.04.1999.
  - Application refused for two reasons, the following text is taken from refusal reason 2 *“The proposed buildings and tennis courts, by virtue of their scale and siting will create unacceptable visual harm in this exceptionally attractive area, which is part of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, part of the Goring Gap, and also in floodplain setting of the River Thames”.*
- 89/35667/ADD. Erection of staff housing for 35 staff 2 squash courts 2 tennis courts and associated landscaping work. Refused 12.10.1989.
  - Refused on impact to the rural character of the NWD AONB, out of character with the riparian nature of the river valley and beyond settlement boundary.
- 89/35550/ADD. Erection of staff housing for 35 staff 2 squash courts 2 tennis courts and associated landscaping. Refuse 12.10.1989.
  - Refused on impact to the rural character of the NWD AONB, out of character with the riparian nature of the river valley and beyond settlement boundary.

### **Current Car Parking Facilities**

Following the committee site visit, the following clarification is provided on the parking situation:

- As a result of previous applications (16/02364/FUL and 17/01562/FUL) made on site for the redevelopment works to the hotel there was **117** car parking spaces approved. This is the baseline presented in the application.
- The applicant has shown that with the ongoing changes to the existing car park seen on site at the site visit including the new kerbed areas, re-orientation/loss of spaces down the site of the hotel, and the loss of spaces to accommodate a turning circle at the site the baseline would now be only **100** spaces.
- The proposed car park would provide an estimated **89** spaces, which would result in a total of **206** spaces with the previously approved car park layout.
- Or **189** spaces with the amended layout as seen on site.

### **Update on capacities of the facilities**

For ease of reference relevant extracts and comments from the applicant and agent regarding capacities of the Swan Hotel and Coppa Club restaurant are summarised below.

The figures quote in paragraph 8.2 of the agenda report were taken from the proposed figures in the licensing *application*. The applicant has kindly provided the *issued* license figures as follows:

- 200 Capacity in the event space
- 75 in the hotel bar
- 300 in the Coppa club restaurant and bar

The applicant provided clarification on the number of covers that the restaurant has increased by since 2016. They had 255 covers in 2016. The applicant notes that;

*“we have managed to slightly increase this number via space planning to 300” adding “there has been no dramatic intensification of the site”*

Although this information was received on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> June 2019, the applicant’s agent on the 25<sup>th</sup> June 2019 provided further clarification stating that:

*“We confirm the increase in parking demand arises from use of existing capacity, rather than substantial physical expansion. In short the parking demand arises from a substantial increase in the anticipated number of visitors, but not a vast physical extension of the Swan.”*

Your officers have sought to clarify with the applicant the increase as in point 3.2. of the submitted planning statement it states:

*“3.2. ...The renovations include the creation of a ‘Coppa Club’ restaurant which is expected to substantially increase the number of diners at the hotel throughout the day and evening with restaurant covers increased by 320, and the bar by a further 30.”*

However the applicant in the email submitted to the council states there has only been an increase of 45 covers created via space planning *“but there has been no dramatic intensification of the site”*.

The agent has attempted to provide some clarity in their email on the 25<sup>th</sup> June 2019 which states:

*“The capacity of The Swan cited in the submitted statement is considered a fair and accurate projection. We acknowledge the submitted statement on parking demand (prepared by PBA) includes visitor numbers in excess of licence numbers. We are pleased to clarify that the licence for The Swan relates only to internal spaces, and not external areas (lawns, terraces, etc.). The parking statement takes account of anticipated guests across all areas (internal and external spaces) which results in a capacity beyond licence figures.”*

This would be directly contrary to the email received by planning officers on the 21<sup>st</sup> June explaining there would be no increase by 300 additional covers or great increase in intensification of use of the site.

#### Planning Statement November 2018

- In para 3.2. *“substantially increase in the numbers of diners at the hotel through the day and evening with restaurant covers increased by 320, and the bar by a further 30”*
- In para. 5.10 *“The current redevelopment offers four additional guestrooms, additional restaurant space for a further 310 covers, additional bar capacity for a further 30 covers function space for a further 50 guests, and capacity to increase gym membership (capped at 500 members).”*

The Swan at Streatley: Car Park Extension- Additional Justification created by PBA:

- 48 guestrooms, 465sqm restaurant (including terrace) – 395 covers, 322sqm bar – 125 seats, 375sqm functions area – 120/200 seats, 240 sqm gym – 425 members

- Table 1: Summary of redevelopment works:

Table 1 Summary of Redevelopment Works

	Pre-Redevelopment			Post-Redevelopment			Net Change (Pre to Post-Redevelopment)		
	No / Area	Capacity	Parking Spaces	No / Area	Capacity	Parking Spaces	No / Area	Capacity	Parking Spaces
Guestrooms	42		117	48		117	+6		-
Restaurant	192sqm	85		465sqm	395		+273sqm	+310	
Bar	372sqm	95		322sqm	125		-50sqm	+30	
Functions Area	284sqm	150		375sqm	200		+91sqm	+50	
Gym	240sqm	200		240sqm	350		-	+150	
Staff (total)	60			100			+50		

Transport statement “The Swan at Streatley- Overspill Car park” produced by Glanville:

- Hotel – 46 rooms, Restaurant – 395 covers (including terrace), Function room – 120 guests (sit down); 150 guests (maximum), Gym – 350 members.]

Letter from David Burson JPPC:

- Who comments that “*The Swan is nearing completion of a bold programme of renovations which include expansion of the restaurant, bar areas, and other facilities including a gym with a membership in excess of 500 people. The works not only increase the capacity...*”

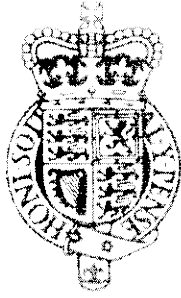
Email from John Gripton (Applicant)

- 200 in events space
- 75 in the hotel bar
- 300 in Coppa restaurant and bar (not 450)

## Conclusion

In summary, it is noted that earlier planning decisions include similar objections to the encroachment upon open countryside at this site in the AONB. Notwithstanding a number of variations in the hotels capacity and parking data presented to the Council, it is considered that the proposal would still result in overriding harm to the protected landscape of the AONB and to the setting of the Conservation Area. Both of these factors weigh heavily against granting planning permission. The recommendation to refuse the applications remains unchanged.

## Appendices 1 Appeal decision of 06/00975/FUL (over)



# Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 May 2007

by **Christopher Gethin MA MTCP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for  
Communities and Local Government

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Date: 18 May 2007

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## Appeal Ref: APP/W0340/A/06/2030427

### The Swan Hotel, High Street, Streatley, Reading, Berkshire RG8 9HR

- The appeal is made under Section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
- The appeal is brought by Key Properties Ltd against the decision of West Berkshire District Council.
- The application (ref. 06/00975/FUL) dated 12 April 2006 was refused by notice dated 5 July 2006.
- The development proposed is a swimming pool.

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## Decision

- 1 I dismiss the appeal.

## Reasons

- 2 The Swan Hotel is situated beside the River Thames. The original 17<sup>th</sup> century building has been extended over the years, and the hotel now has 45 bedrooms, a restaurant, and conference facilities. The most recent extension, carried out in 1988, comprises a substantial two-storey block at the north end of the complex. A large car park adjoining this was constructed at the same time.
- 3 The proposal is for a building containing a swimming pool, attached to the modern block and situated in the car park. It would be about 18m long and would project about 15.4m out from the existing building. The height of the roof ridge would be about 5.1m.
- 4 The entire village is washed over by the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The Streatley Conservation Area includes part of the hotel (not the modern block) and the village church which is located a short distance to the west, as well as Church Croft Cottages to the north west.
- 5 At my site visit I saw that the proposed building would not be fully visible from any nearby public viewpoints apart from the footpath which leads from St Mary's Church past the hotel car park and along a green lane to the north, giving access to the banks of the Thames some distance to the north east. Viewpoints from this path are few, namely the gateway at the northwest corner of the car park (a tall evergreen

hedge separates the footpath from the car park up to this point) and a few gaps in the line of trees along the green lane. The hotel buildings and gardens, lying to the east of the modern block and the car park, would hide the proposed building from all other public viewpoints, including the river – only its west end might be glimpsed through a break in the tree cover from Goring Lock, about 140m to the east.

- 6 From the public footpath, the modern block and the car park appear unattractive. The building features a large expanse of bland roof, particularly in the western part of the north elevation. It is bulky and overbearing. The car park intrudes into the open countryside and presents an unappealing foreground to the village church. In my opinion, the proposed building would soften the overbearing north façade of the modern block, particularly in hiding part of the roof. The form and design of the building are pleasing in themselves. It would enhance the foreground view of St Mary's Church, and would accordingly enhance the Conservation Area which adjoins the site. I consider, therefore, that the proposed development would be acceptable by reference to policies EN4 of the 2005 Berkshire Structure Plan and OVS2 of the 2002 West Berkshire Local Plan
- 7 Although the village is washed over by an AONB, I consider that the effect of the proposed building on the natural beauty of the landscape would be negligible in the context of its siting against an existing taller building and within a large car park which appears highly intrusive within the landscape. I consider, therefore, that the proposed development would be acceptable by reference to policies EN1 of the Structure Plan and ENV2 of the Local Plan.
- 8 However, the proposed building would lie outside the settlement boundary for the village of Streatley. The 1988 extension (the modern block) was built right up to this boundary, and the car park lies in the open countryside. I acknowledge the arguments of the appellant that the proposed building would be sited on land which detracts unpleasantly from the open countryside and appears – to all intents and purposes – part of the built-up area of Streatley. But the proper forum for seeking a revision of the boundary is the plan-making process, and in this connexion I note that the Streatley Parish Plan was adopted by the District Council in July 2006 and is a material consideration in this process.
- 9 Policies DP6 of the Structure Plan and ENV18 of the Local Plan deal with development outside defined settlement boundaries. Policy DP6 explains that land outside settlements will be safeguarded, the countryside meriting protection for its own sake. Both policies specify limited categories of development which will be permitted in the open countryside. The proposal falls within none of these categories. If it were to be permitted, as an exception, because of the visual benefits

which I have identified, it might set a precedent for another extension to the north elevation of the modern block, and I consider it likely that pressure would arise for an extension of the car park into the field to the north following the loss of parking spaces. A gradual attrition of the settlement boundary would thus occur, of precisely the sort that the relevant policies (and the Parish Plan) are concerned to prevent. The proposed development would be contrary to them, and would be likely to result in harm to the countryside itself as well as to the setting of Streatley.

- 10 I have considered all the representations before me, including other potential benefits arising from the proposed development, but none outweighs the harm which I have identified and which makes the proposal contrary to the relevant policies of the development plan. I therefore conclude, on balance, that the appeal should fail.

*Christopher Gethin*

INSPECTOR