

Once the Lodge is extended to 76 bedrooms, there are no properly assessed planning grounds to retain the right to a 123-bed hotel or any other hotel at the racecourse site. It makes no sense to build on the site of the presently permitted hotel between the Grandstand and the Central Area apartments, or anywhere else, another hotel with only up to 47 bedrooms, unless its purpose is also to be a public house and restaurant utilising the current premises licence. In any event, such a second hotel has never been envisaged.

It would be ridiculous, still to build the 123-bedroom hotel between the Grandstand and the Central Area apartments, and leave the extended Lodge as a redundant building with no sensible alternative purpose. A 76-bedroom hotel building could never revert back to being just a racing-related hostel.

The justified suspicion is that this application, if successful, is a precursor to another application, at any time in the future, to further enlarge the Lodge, taking up much, if not all, of the retained permission for up to 123 bedrooms. If so, that permission and the proposed s.106 agreement would have the effect of avoiding the need to justify more hotel accommodation on this site. Even if you are assured that will not happen, there are no binding guarantees under the terms the officer recommends.

The history of The Lodge gives support for that happening. From the outset The Lodge was only to be a hostel, as confirmed when in 2014 permission to vary its design was granted. Next, as soon as it was built, there followed the temporary 3-year planning consent for hotel use on non-racedays, when you were told by the CEO that they had not secured the finances to proceed with the construction of the permitted 123-bedroom hotel. That temporary use was continuing when the current two applications were made, both with the unequivocal commitment to abandon the 123-bedroom hotel, which was repeated at your July 2019 meeting. Now yet another change of intention is before you.

While the officer requires certain concerns of residents to be disregarded for planning purposes, it is a legitimate planning consideration that residents of the new housing on the racecourse site should be entitled to expect the development scheme to proceed as it was envisaged and permitted, particularly as it still ongoing, and that the commercial interests of the Newbury Racecourse should not be the determining factor for any major changes that may adversely affect residents' lives.

Further, the outcome of this application, if approved, is that your committee will have deprived itself at any time in the future for insisting on a full planning process to support the need for more hotel accommodation anywhere on the racecourse site. With Newbury Racecourse having elected not to build the permitted 123-bedroom hotel, that would be an unfair fetter on future decision-making and manifestly unjust to affected residents opposed to such a scheme.

Raymond Beard