

Standing up for Hertfordshire's countryside

Tom Rea
Planning and Building Control
North Hertfordshire District Council
Council Offices
Gernon Road
Letchworth Garden City
Herts SG6 3JF

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

18th September 2019

Dear Mr. Rea,

Application No. 19/02011/S73

Removal of Condition 3 (occupation of dwelling solely by persons employed at Redcoats Farmhouse Hotel and the dependants of such persons residing with them) as planning permission application reference Number: 95/00205/1 granted 22/06/1995 for detached dwelling with double garage for staff accommodation
At Redcoats Garden House, Stevenage Road, Redcoats Green, Little Wymondley, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG4 7JR.

We have concerns regarding the manner in which this application has been presented.

The original application pertaining to the property (95/00205/1) was for “*a detached dwelling with double garage for staff accommodation at Redcoats Farm Hotel*”. The approval was granted “*solely in the light of the special justification (i.e. need for staff accommodation) presented with the application.*” The approval was therefore for hotel use and the building subject to the current application consequently forms part of the hotel. As such, in alignment with the original justification for development in the Green Belt, the building supports the employment use and retention of the business, provides flexibility for further hotel accommodation in future and reduces the need to travel, all of which will be lost if Condition 3 is removed.

We do not agree with the point made in the Planning Statement that a S73 application “*creates a new ‘standalone’ planning permission, divorced from the original consent.*” (para 4.3) Condition 3 imposed by the Council was to ensure that the dwelling was used solely for the purpose for which the applicant had sought permission in order to safeguard the integrity of Green Belt Policy. In our view, removing Condition 3 would not alter the fact that the original approval, in its totality, was for hotel purposes, and would not result in the building becoming general housing. The application should, therefore, be one for change of use from C1 to C3.

The plan included with the application shows the application boundary (in red) tightly drawn around the dwelling house and garage. This is, in fact, the same plan which was included in the original 1995 application.

Consequently, as drawn, the dwelling is surrounded on three side by the curtilage of the hotel. Two flanks of the house sit on the boundary between the house and the hotel land. This would not be a problem for as long as the house remained as part of the hotel, but if it is separated from it there are potential problems of overlooking etc.

Equally the tightness of the boundary does not allow for adequate private amenity space associated with a 4-bedroom detached property. Aerial views of the property show an enclosed area to the rear, presumably used as amenity space by the occupants, but this area, as the plan is currently drawn, is entirely outside the dwelling curtilage. There is minimal amenity space between the house and the entrance drive. The current North Herts Design SPD says that "*dwelling should have adequate private space to meet the needs of the occupants.*" (para. 145) It is normal practice that garden space around a residential property is an integral part of its character and appearance and should not be reduced to a point where it is out of scale or fails to meet the present and future occupiers need for adequate useable private amenity space. The application as submitted would do precisely that.

The entrance drive itself currently provides access to Hotel land containing a number of substantial outbuildings. Currently there is no other means of access to this land directly from the Hotel. There is no reference in the application on the provision of an alternative access or rights of way across the application site, which would further reduce amenity.

Given the above points, we consider that the application as presented does not adequately demonstrate the full consequences of what is being requested and the applicant should be required to clarify those issues before the Council determine the application.

Yours sincerely,

David Irving