

APPLICATION NO: 16/02105/FUL and ADV	OFFICER: Miss Chloe Smart
DATE REGISTERED: 25th November 2016	DATE OF EXPIRY: 20th January 2017
WARD: Oakley Ward	PARISH:
APPLICANT:	Cotswold Grange Hotel
AGENT:	Urban Aspects Ltd
LOCATION:	Cotswold Grange Hotel, Pittville Circus Road, Cheltenham
PROPOSAL:	FUL: Proposed erection of gates and boundary railings, new landscaping scheme and car park reconfiguration. ADV: Proposed illuminated box sign containing menu board

RECOMMENDATION: To follow



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1. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND PROPOSAL

- 1.1 The application site is a hotel known as Cotswold Grange Hotel, which is a locally indexed building within the Central Conservation Area.
- 1.2 Both planning permission and advertisement consent is sought for the proposed erection of gates and boundary railings, a new landscaping scheme, car park reconfiguration and the installation of a menu sign at the pedestrian entrance to the site.
- 1.3 The application is at committee following a request of Councillor Rowena Hay due to concerns raised from residents of Moorcourt Drive in relation to the noise impact, the removal of trees and hedges along with the highway issue of large commercial vehicles accessing at the rear of the site.

2. CONSTRAINTS AND RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

Constraints:

Conservation Area
Local Listing

Relevant Planning History:

08/01351/CACN 17th October 2008 NOOBJ

Holly (T6 on plan) - formative prune to improve shape and form (20% approx reduction in size)

08/01352/TPO 23rd October 2008 SPLIT

3 x Holly (T1, T2 and T3 on plan) - formative prune to improve shape and form (20% approx reduction in size).

Yew (T4 on plan) - reduce and reshape crown by 30% and deadwood

Thuja (T5 on plan) – fell

08/01625/ADV 24th March 2009 WDN

Two illuminated free-standing signs in forecourt

09/00701/ADV 1st July 2009 GRANT

Two illuminated signs

14/01959/FUL 18th December 2014 PER

Installation of 3 roof lights to rear elevation

3. POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

Adopted Local Plan Policies

CP 4 Safe and sustainable living

CP 7 Design

BE 5 Boundary enclosures in conservation areas

BE 12 Advertisements and signs

BE 13 Advertisements and signs in conservation areas

GE 5 Protection and replacement of trees

GE 6 Trees and development

TP 1 Development and highway safety

Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

Central conservation area: Pittville Character Area and Management Plan (July 2008)

4. CONSULTATIONS

Wales And West Utilities

19th December 2016

Letter and Plan available to view on line.

Cheltenham Civic Society

13th January 2017

We consider it essential that the new railings should be embedded in a plinth in the traditional manner.

Gloucestershire County Council Highways

5th January 2017

I refer to the above application, there is no definite location to where the proposed gates are to be erected as long as the gates are set back 4.5m from the carriage way edge it would be unlikely for a highway objection to be raised

Tree Officer

4th January 2017

The Tree Section objects to this application.

The application involves the removal of a TPO'd Thuja plicata (T6) to the front as well as the insertion of car parking spaces under existing TPO'd trees. T6 is a fine tree with capacity for further growth without becoming out of size proportion to the front of this property. It would be unfortunate to lose this tree which contributes to the overall arboricultural fabric of the street scene on Pittville Circus Rd. The proposed 2 Amelanchier trees to be planted to the front would not mitigate for the loss of T6 and the adjacent holly (T4). It is noted that there are 19 car parking spaces to the front whilst the new proposal shows 16 parking spaces-a reduction of 3.

The proposed car parking area to the front could appear to have a quite harsh appearance compared to the current layout.

The proposal to the rear of this property involves the removal of a pine, an Irish yew, a cypress and a holly as a part of the overall re-landscaping of the area. Whilst 'specimen maple' trees are proposed to be planted, it is noted that this area is to the south of the building and likely in near constant shade. The holly and cypress are both shade tolerant and are both good trees (we do not concur with the Arb consultant's BS 5837 classification of their being category 'C' grade trees. Similarly, whilst the pine (T13) is suppressed by the plum (T12) in the adjacent garden, it will out-grow this plum and will not continue to be suppressed in the future. Whilst Acer trees tolerate shade to an extent, it is not considered that they would thrive in this position. No details of the species of maple to be planted have been given.

5. PUBLICITY AND REPRESENTATIONS

Number of letters sent	32
Total comments received	13
Number of objections	13
Number of supporting	0
General comment	0

5.1 Thirty two letters have been sent to neighbouring properties and thirteen responses have been received raising an objection to the proposals. A site notice has been displayed on Pittville Circus Road in front of the application site and an advertisement placed within the local newspaper.

5.2 Summary of comments received;

- Location of refuse and recycling bins
- Removal of hedge
- Noise disturbance
- Highway safety considerations
- Removal of trees
- Impact on conservation area
- Impact on amenity

6. OFFICER COMMENTS

6.1 Determining Issues

6.2 The main considerations in relation to this application are the impact of the works on the locally indexed building and the conservation area, neighbouring amenity, significant trees within the site and access and highway issues.

6.3 Design and layout and Impact on Conservation Area

6.4 Local Plan Policy CP7 requires development to be of a high standard of architectural design and to complement and respect neighbouring development. Proposals within the conservation area are also required to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the area.

6.5 As set out within the introduction, the application involves various elements which will be discussed in turn.

6.6 *Landscaping*

6.7 Firstly, a new landscaping scheme is proposed for the whole site, but in particular to the front of the building. This comprises a re-configuration of the existing car parking layout which will result in the loss of some hardstanding and soft landscaping, but an introduction of hardstanding and soft landscaping in other areas.

6.8 Members will note the application has been the subject of revisions since its original submission. With regards to landscaping, officers raised a concern that the original

proposals brought the hardstanding closer to Pittville Road and in removing an existing hedge at the front of the property, significantly increased its prominence within the conservation area.

- 6.9** Following these initial concerns, officers have been involved in extensive discussions with the applicant to reduce the impact of the proposal on the conservation area and also to gain a further understanding as to the justification for the proposal.
- 6.10** The justification for the proposed works is an overall enhancement of the building and its surroundings. As part of this, the proposal involves the replacement of hard standing and car parking spaces immediately to the front of the building to allow new soft landscaping to be introduced.
- 6.11** This results in car parking being introduced closer to the frontage along Pittville Circus Road. One of the main concerns of this was the increase in prominence of the hardstanding in a more visible location, which was further made worse by the removal of the hedge. The applicant has now amended the scheme to incorporate a new hedge to the front of the property.
- 6.12** Officers recognise that there is a positive impact on the appearance of the building as a result of the reduction in hardstanding immediately in front of it. To add to this, soft landscaping will be retained at the front of the site, and overall, there is a reduction in hardstanding. It is considered that the changes made have overcome the previous concerns in relation to the impact of the scheme on the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 6.13** *Boundary enclosures*
- 6.14** The next aspect of the application relates to alterations to boundary enclosures at the property. Railings are proposed at the front of the building, together with alterations to part of the boundary enclosure to the rear.
- 6.15** The principle of railings in this location is acceptable. That said, it was considered that should railings be introduced these would need to be historically appropriate. The applicant has reduced the height of the railings to 1.2 metres to ensure this is the case. Cheltenham Civic Society has commented on the application and considers it essential that the new railings should be embedded in a plinth in the traditional manner. There is an existing sandstone plinth at the front of the property and to ensure the railings are appropriately installed within a plinth, a condition has been attached requiring further details and agreement prior to their installation.
- 6.16** In addition, the applicant also proposes alterations to the rear boundary of the site. This involves the removal of part of the hedge and installation of a pair of gates. The initial submission comprised sliding metal and timber gates which were not considered appropriate in such a prominent location and given the sites location within the conservation area. Following further discussions with the applicant, the scheme has now been amended for a narrower pair of hardwood timber gates which are considered a significant improvement to that previously proposed and much more sensitive to the surrounding context. Residents have raised concerns regarding the loss of the hedge in this location. This does not require the benefit of planning permission and therefore officers must consider the acceptability of the proposal put forward. As set out, the proposed gates are now considered appropriate and given they are considerably narrower than the original proposal this enables more of the hedge to be retained.
- 6.17** *Advertisements*
- 6.18** The final element of the scheme is a menu board which is to be located to the front of the property, at the pedestrian entrance off Pittville Circus Road. The applicant has confirmed

that there is a desire to encourage those not staying in the hotel to dine at the hotel and therefore seek some signage to encourage this.

6.19 In terms of assessing the proposed advertisements, Local Plan Policy BE12 advises that advertisements will only be permitted where they do not harm visual amenity and public safety. In addition, Local Plan Policy BE13 requires advertisements and signs in conservation areas to be appropriate in type, size, colour, illumination, material, design and location.

6.20 The proposed sign is to be black powder coated aluminium and to measure a total height of 1.8 metres. Officers advised that a lower sign would be more appropriate or alternatively a menu board sympathetically fixed to the railings. This aspect of the scheme has not been amended by the applicant. Whilst the suggested alternatives were considered more appropriate, officers do not consider this element of the scheme would warrant refusal. The menu board aspect itself is small in size and supporting posts lightweight so it is not considered that the sign will detract from visual amenity or have a harmful impact on the conservation area. Whilst in a prominent location at the front of the site, this is considered appropriate given the type of sign this is, which aims to attract those passing the site.

6.21 *Summary of design and impact on conservation area*

6.22 In summary, officers recognise there is a positive impact on the appearance of the locally indexed building as a result of the alterations to the layout at the front of the site. There is a reduction in hardstanding immediately surrounding the property and the proposed layout has been amended to address initial concerns. Initial concerns surrounding the proposed boundary treatment to the site have been fully addressed by the applicant. Finally, the proposed menu sign to the front of the site is on balance, considered acceptable. The proposal is now considered to respect the surrounding area in line with Local Plan Policy CP7 and in doing so the character and appearance of the conservation area.

6.23 **Impact on neighbouring property**

6.24 Local Plan Policy CP4 requires development to protect the existing amenity of neighbouring land users and the locality.

6.25 Within the submitted letters of representation, concerns have been expressed surrounding the impact of the proposals on neighbouring amenity. Specific concerns include an increase in noise and disturbance as a result of works to the rear of the building, namely improvements to the rear garden area and the bin storage.

6.26 The majority of landscaping works to the rear garden do not require the benefit of planning permission. Notwithstanding this, the use of the rear garden area will remain unchanged as a result of the works undertaken. It will remain the ancillary amenity space to the existing hotel and therefore the level of noise and disturbance will not change above and beyond the current situation.

6.27 Bin storage and collection has been raised as a significant concern from an amenity perspective as the applicant will be re-locating the bins to the rear of the site fronting onto the residential cul-de-sac. Concerns include visual amenity and noise and disturbance from collection.

6.28 It is important to clarify that the location of the bins is not something that the planning authority can exercise any control over in this instance. The applicant could in theory remove the existing hedge to the rear of the site without permission, and store and have bins collected from the location proposed, again without permission.

- 6.29** With this in mind, whilst it is the proposed gates that require planning permission, the current proposal is considered a betterment both in terms of the conservation area and neighbouring amenity, when compared to the fallback position described.
- 6.30** Whilst the concerns of the residents have been noted, in light of the above and also when considering bin lorries currently collect refuse from this cul-de-sac, the proposal is not considered to have any unacceptable impact on neighbouring amenity.
- 6.31** The application is therefore in accordance with the requirements of Local Plan Policy CP4 in terms of ensuring the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.

6.32 Trees

- 6.33** There are a number of trees within the application some of which are protected specifically by way of a Tree Preservation Order and others, due to their location within the conservation area.
- 6.34** The Tree Officer has been consulted in relation to the application and initially raised an objection due to the removal of certain trees within the site. The full response from the Tree Officer can be found above in section 4 of this report. Following the comments, a further site visit was undertaken with the applicant and Tree Officer in attendance to individually consider the trees which needed to remain, those which were acceptable to remove and suitable replacement planting to compensate for any loss. Since this meeting, amended plans have been submitted which appear to be consistent with the discussions which have taken place and importantly, involve the retention of T6 (Thuja plicata) which is a significant protected tree to the front of the site. Notwithstanding this, officers have sought a further comment from the Tree Officer to confirm this, which will follow this initial report by way of an update.

6.35 Access and highway issues

- 6.36** Gloucestershire County Council Highways have been consulted with regards to the application. The response states that there is no definite location for the proposed gates, but these should be set back from the highway. Officers have confirmed there is both an elevation and site plan accompanying the application which indicates the location of the gates.
- 6.37** The proposed gates are not set back 4.5 metres from the highway but the applicant has confirmed these will open inwards and not onto the public highway. In terms of visibility, the proposed gates are significantly lower than the existing hedgerow and will therefore not have any unacceptable impact on highway safety. To add to this, the proposal is not for any new vehicular access and will only be accessible on foot. A dropped kerb is not proposed and the gates are simply to allow bins to be brought out of the rear of the site.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1** Conclusion and recommendation to follow by way of an update once the re-consultation response is received.