

**TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990**  
**BICESTER HOTEL GOLF AND SPA LTD**  
**PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT**

**BICESTER HOTEL GOLF AND SPA**  
**CHESTERTON**  
**OXFORDSHIRE**  
**OX26 1TE**

**Erection of two storey extension to existing hotel to form 62 new bedrooms (net increase  
60No. bedrooms)**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This statement is submitted in support of a planning application for the following:

*‘Erection of two storey extension to existing hotel to form 62 new bedrooms’*

1.2 The application submission follows the approval in October 2013 of an extension to provide 51 new bedrooms (13/01102/F) thus firmly establishing the principle of additional hotel accommodation in this location. This revised application is for 11No. additional rooms with a different design with the accommodation being provided on two floors as opposed to being on 3 floors (i.e. two floors plus roof accommodation).

1.3 Bicester Hotel Golf and Spa (BHGS) is an established and well known leisure and recreational complex lying to the south west of Bicester town. The complex has been a major success for the local area creating numerous employment opportunities for local people (full and part time), both professional and manual. It caters for a wide variety of events including weddings and conferences although the main uses are predominantly recreational (i.e. golf, health & fitness and tennis). Its close proximity to a number of nationally important sporting and cultural locations such as Blenheim Palace, Oxford, the Cotswolds, Bicester Village and Silverstone, makes the site an extremely popular choice as a location to stay for tourists, business visits, weddings and leisure breaks from the UK and abroad. The proximity of the leisure and health / fitness facilities is a major consideration in the choice of Bicester HGS as most visitors choose the hotel for short breaks. This is expected to continue with the new hotel rooms as the additional accommodation will be meeting a specific demand. The appended letter from the hotel manager confirms that occupancy levels are well above the national average and that potential customers have frequently been turned away. Employment opportunities at Bicester HGS include green keeping staff, catering, bar staff, health and beauty and hotel staff. This proposal will provide for new employment opportunities in all of these job areas.

1.4 The application is accompanied by the following reports:

Sequential Test (Updated) - Davis Planning

Transport Statement - DFM Highway Consultants

## 2 SITE HISTORY

- 2.1 Bicester Hotel Golf and Spa has been the subject of the following applications as set out below:

02/00182/F – Reapplication of a partially implemented permission CHS.344/90 to show the redesigned extension to the existing golf clubhouse including fitness gym, swimming pool, health and beauty suite, 52 bedrooms and ancillary service yard. Approved 17-05-2002.

03/01050/F – Reapplication of partially implemented permission CHS.344/90 to show redesigned extension to existing golf clubhouse inc. fitness gym, swimming pool, health and beauty suite, 52 No. bedrooms. Ancillary service yard, alterations to existing golf course and landscaping. Amendments to 02/00182/F. Approved 25-07-2003.

04/01290/F – Construction of 8No. three bed and 12No. two bed holiday two storey lodges. Refused 21-01-2005.

04/01399/F – Two storey extension to gold club and erection of stable office and golf cart store building. Approved 17-09-2004.

05/01327/F – Construction of 3No. three bed and 5No. two bed golf lodges. Refused 16-09-2005.

05/01542/F – Non-compliance with Condition 7 of planning permission 03/01050/F to allow occupation of the overnight accommodation by other than golf club members, their guests or members of visiting golf societies. Refused 16-09-2005.

09/01357/F – Removal of condition 7 of 03/01050/F. The overnight accommodation shall be occupied only be members of Bicester Golf and Country Club, their guests and members of visiting golf societies. Approved 22-12-2009.

10/01169/F – Relocation of service entrance to Bicester Golf and Country Club, erection of 1 No. dwelling and retention of existing farmhouse (amendment to 03/00609/F). Approved 01-12-2010.

10/00416/DISC – Discharge of conditions 7&8 of 10/01169/F. Approved 07-03-2011.

11/00157/F – Removal of condition 2 of 09/01357/F. Within two months of the date of this permission, a scheme for the traffic calming of nearby access routes shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The agreed works shall be undertaken within a further six months in accordance with approved details. Approved 15-04-2011.

12/00054/DISC – Discharge of Condition 1 of 09/01357/F. Approved 27-04-2012.

12/01006/F – Erection of single storey extension and provision of new lake. Approved 30.10.12.

13/01102/F – Two storey extension to existing hotel with roof accommodation to form 51 new bedrooms. Approved 04.10.2013.

13/01492/F – Change of use for the formation of an assault course. Approved 29.11.13.

14/01598/F – Erection of new building to house activity hall adjacent to assault course plus 6No. covered driving bay ranges. Approved 19.12.14.

2.2 As stated above, the site has now planning permission for a two storey extension to the hotel to house 51 new bedrooms (net increase of 49) under planning ref. 13/01102/F. The main points in the officer report in support of the proposal were as follows:

- The proposal is considered to comply with Policy T5 of the Local Plan;
- Officers are satisfied that a sequential analysis has been appropriately and thoroughly undertaken and there is no doubt that there are sites that would

be described as sequentially superior. This needs to be weighed in the planning balance when reaching the decision bearing in mind the other factors material to the case. No harm would for instance be caused to Bicester.

- The club is centrally located within the grounds and not readily visible from the public domain of the surrounding networking;
- The setting of the conservation area is not considered to be a constraint to the development.
- Conclusion: Officers considered that there were sequentially more preferable sites available but as directed by the NPPF consideration needs to be given as to whether or not there would be significant adverse impact on the surrounding road network in terms of trip generation. As the design is acceptable and no harm would be caused to the visual amenities of the landscape, the balance fell in favour of the proposal.

### 3 RELEVANT POLICIES

3.1 Relevant planning policy falls within the adopted Local Plan (1996) saved policies, The Non Statutory Local Plan, The Cherwell Submission Local Plan and Government Guidance (NPPF and NPPG).

i) **Cherwell Local Plan 1996 (Saved policies)**

3.2 Relevant policies include: C7, C9 and T5.

3.3 Policy C7 is concerned with landscape conservation. The policy states that **'...development will not normally be permitted if it would cause demonstrable harm to the topography and character of the landscape'**.

3.4 Policy C9 deals with development beyond the planned limits of Banbury and Bicester. The policy states that development should not be of a **'...type, size or scale that is incompatible with a rural location....'**

3.5 Policy T5 deals with the provision of new hotels outside of the built up limits of a settlement. The policy states that proposals will only be approved when they would:

- i) Be largely accommodated within existing buildings which are suitable for conversion or for such use; or
- ii) Totally replace an existing commercial use on an acceptably located commercial site. Proposals to extend existing hotels, motels, guest houses and restaurants will be acceptable provided they conform to the other relevant policies in this plan.

ii) **The Non-Statutory Cherwell Local Plan 2011 (December 2004)**

3.6 Policy T5 of the Non-Statutory plan is almost identical to the equivalent policy of the adopted Local Plan. The main difference is that there is reference made to Policy



EM6 and H22 of the Non-Statutory Plan together with an additional requirement that extensions to such uses do not have an adverse effect on the countryside.

iii) **Cherwell Submission Local Plan (incorporating Proposed Modifications - February 2015)**

- 3.7 Policy PSD1 states that the Council will take a pro-active approach to reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Planning applications that accord with policies in the Local Plan (or other part of the Statutory Development Plan) will be approved without delay. Supporting policy B8 states as follows:

*'We will support limited new employment development in the rural areas to help strengthen the rural economy and increase employment opportunities throughout the District.'*

- 3.8 Paragraph B.34 states that employment growth in the rural areas will include:

- sustainable growth in tourism including recreation based tourism.

- 3.9 Policy SLE2 (Securing Dynamic Town Centres) seeks to direct main town centre uses towards the main towns. Where sites are not available, edge of centre locations should be considered. The Council will consider if the proposals satisfy the sequential test and if they are likely to have a significant adverse impact on one or more of the factors in the NPPF.

- 3.10 Paragraph B.59 states that the Council will *'support new tourism provision, that can demonstrate direct benefit for the local 'visitor' economy and sustaining the rural economy.'* Paragraph B.60 continues by stating that the Council will support an increase in the number and quality of hotel beds available in our towns.

iv) **Cherwell Tourism Development Study (August 2008)**

- 3.11 The Cherwell Tourism Development Study (CTDS) forms part of the LDF evidence base and was commissioned by Cherwell District Council to inform the future development of tourism in the district. The aim of the report is to advise on realistic

aims for the District in terms of tourism development over the coming years and to identify how these aims might be achieved. The study takes a medium to long term view (2016 and 2026). The key findings which are relevant to this application are set out below:

- Bicester has a limited choice of town centre hotels, although a greater choice is available in the wider area. There is little prospect of securing additional operators in Bicester Town Centre at present due to the lack of visitor attractions in the town centre and a weak office market (page 10).
- Tourism is viewed as an important element in the local economy with an ability to contribute to the wider quality of life goals and potential for further growth (page 12).
- Hotels are mainly small and there is only one new build hotel (NB it should be noted that 3 hotels have now been built since the study – Bicester Premier Inn, Holiday Inn and Bicester HGS). The report also states that there are no 4/5 star hotels although it should be noted that Bicester HGS is now the only 4 star establishment.
- Bicester Village is the most important attractor of visitors (page 25).
- Respondents to a survey identified that there is potential to grow business and leisure tourism and to attract more visitors to both Banbury and Bicester and the countryside (page 31).
- There is a lack of higher quality, larger and branded accommodation (page 32).
- The average length of stay in Cherwell is 3.3 days. i.e. short breaks dominate (page 33).
- The value of tourism to Cherwell's economy in 2006 was £251.9 million of which £20 million is for accommodation (page 35).

iv) **National Planning Policy Framework**

- 3.12 **National Planning Policy Framework** - This guidance states at paragraph 14 that at the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development which should be seen as a 'golden thread' running through both plan-making and decision-taking. This includes at paragraph 7 three main dimensions including the economic role, social role and environmental role.
- 3.13 Development proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved without delay. Where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of date, planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies of the Framework as a whole, or specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted. In paragraph 17, twelve 'core planning principles' are outlined, including, *'always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings'*. Paragraph 17 also states mixed use developments should be promoted and that there should be encouragement to multiple benefits from the use of land in urban and rural areas (my emphasis).
- 3.14 Chapter 1 (paragraph 18) states that the Government is committed to securing economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity. It goes on to state *"planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth. Therefore significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system."* Local planning authorities should plan 'proactively' and meet the development needs of business.
- 3.15 Chapter 2 is concerned with town centres. Paragraph 24 states that local planning authorities should apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses that are not in an existing centre and are not in accordance with an up to date Local Plan. Preference should be given to applications within town centres, then in edge of centre locations and only out of centre if suitable sites are not

available. When considering edge of centre and out of centre sites, preference should be given to accessible sites that are well connected to the town centre. Hotels are classified as a main town centre use.

- 3.16 Paragraph 28 states that planning policies should support economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity. This includes supporting well designed buildings and sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments.
- 3.17 Paragraph 56 concerns good design. It states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people. Paragraph 58 states that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:
- Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
  - Establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit;
  - Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development;
  - Respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation;
  - Create safe and accessible environments;
  - Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.
- 3.18 Paragraph 60 confirms that planning policies and decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles. It is, however, proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness.

- 3.19 Chapter 8 is concerned with promoting healthy communities. Paragraph 70 states as follows:

*“To deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and serve the community needs, planning policies should:*

1. *Plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments.”*

v) **National Planning Policy Guidance**

- 3.20 Under the heading ‘Ensuring the vitality of town centres,’ the NPPF states as follows:

- Local planning authorities should assess and plan to meet the needs of main town centre uses in full, in broadly the same way as for their housing and economic need, adopting a ‘town centre first’ approach and taking account of specific town centre policy;
- The NPPF sets out two tests: the sequential test and the impact test. The sequential test should be considered first as this may identify that there are preferable sites in town centres for accommodating main town centre uses. The impact test applies only above a floorspace threshold as set out in paragraph 26 of the NPPF (i.e. 2,500sq.m).
- Tourism is extremely diverse and covers all activities of visitors. Local planning authorities, where appropriate, should articulate a vision for tourism in the Local Plan.
- The sequential test guides main town centre uses towards town centre locations first, then if no town centre locations are available, to edge of

centre locations and, if neither town centre locations nor edge of centre locations are available, to out of town centre locations with preference for accessible sites;

- The application of the test should be proportionate and appropriate for the given proposal. If there are no suitable sequentially preferable locations, the sequential test is passed.
- Use of the sequential test should recognise that certain main town centre uses have particular market and locational requirements which mean they may only be accommodated in specific locations.

#### 4. THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 This full application seeks to provide an additional 62 bedrooms within a new two storey extension to the existing hotel. The changes will result in the loss of two existing bedrooms due to the need to access the extension from the existing hotel (i.e. 62 are proposed to be provided which equates to a net increase of 60 rooms with the two that are lost). This will provide for a total of 112 bedrooms at the hotel.
- 4.2 The application proposal requires little internal or external changes. As set out in the letter provided by the Transport Consultant, the existing parking facilities are adequate given the additional bedroom numbers due to the existing overlap between the different facilities and the fact that hotel guests are also visiting/utilising the same facilities. The existing dining facilities are also adequate to serve the additional bedrooms.
- 4.3 As stated above, an application for a similar number of new bedrooms was approved in October 2013 (51 bedrooms) on the basis that it could be justified due to an absence of any other 4 or 5 star rated accommodation for which there was a proven lack. This proposal provides additional high end accommodation satisfying an identified need in the District (see Tourism Study).
- 4.4 Bicester Hotel Golf and Spa is the only combined hotel, golf course, conference / wedding venue, and health and fitness spa in the District. The establishment is a major employer and this proposal will generate the following additional staffing requirements:
- Full time: 2No. chefs, 1No. kitchen porter, 3No. room maids, 2No. waiters.
- Part time: 3No. room maids, 1No. bar staff, 2No. waiters and 1No. porter.
- 4.5 The other main factors in support of the application are as follows:

- i) Projected occupancy for 2014/15 is 84.8% which is greater than average occupancy recorded for provincial hotels in the UK. Projected occupancy for 2015/16 is 86.4%. The hotel frequently turns guests away.
  - ii) The hotel is the only 4 star establishment in the District. The Council's Tourism Study has identified a specific need for top end accommodation. The hotel attracts high profile visitors for this very reason, i.e. the Torro Rosso racing team for the British Grand Prix at Silverstone have taken 46 rooms for the past 2 years and will also be staying at Bicester HGS this year as well.
  - iii) The hotel has major benefits for the local economy particularly in terms of visitors that are attending conferences. The existing 52 bed hotel is not large enough to cater for the demand created by the conference facilities which can accommodate in excess of 160 delegates. Customers are regularly turned away.
  - iv) The additional rooms will have a positive secondary benefit to other local businesses such as taxi companies, Bicester Village and local public houses and shops.
  - v) Recently built hotels such as the Premier Inn and Holiday Inn are aimed at a completely different type of customer i.e the budget end of the market. There are currently no plans in the District for additional hotel rooms catering for the 4 or 5 star level.
- 4.6 Policy guidance applicable to this proposal at a local level is very limited as the now outdated Local Plan (1996) refers to 'new hotels' and not to extensions. However, the NPPF provides for positive encouragement to proposals which support economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity. As detailed above, this proposal will provide for significant job and prosperity benefits.
- 4.7 Paragraph B.59 of the emerging Local Plan (Cherwell Submission Local Plan – Incorporating Proposed Modifications) states that the Council will support new tourism provision that can directly benefit the local visitor economy including within rural areas.



- 4.8 Paragraph 28 of the Framework comments on sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments. The proposal would represent a sustainable form of development. The additional hotel rooms are to meet a clearly defined requirement for rooms that would be used in connection with existing leisure and conference / wedding venue facilities. This has been identified in the supporting letter provided by DFM Consulting:

*“The increase in bedrooms is intended to complement existing facilities. There is a significant demand for overnight accommodation for guests using the golf and leisure facilities and this demand is not being met by the existing bedroom accommodation. As such, guests using the facilities have to arrive and depart on the same day, often to return the following morning. The additional overnight accommodation will reduce daily traffic movements. The hotel is a popular venue for conferences. A shortage of overnight accommodation results in delegates having to stay overnight at other hotels with the consequent increase in vehicles shuttling between the conference and accommodation venues.”*

- 4.9 An updated Sequential Test produced by Davis Planning has also concluded that there are no other sites that could accommodate the proposal.

## 5. DESIGN AND ACCESS

- 5.1 Use: The application proposal is to provide additional hotel accommodation (use Class C1) over two floors of accommodation.
- 5.2 Amount: The application proposal provides for a total of 62 new bedrooms. However, as two rooms will be lost in the existing hotel to gain access to the new extension, the net increase is for 60No. bedrooms and a total of 112 rooms for the hotel.
- 5.3 Layout: The new two storey extension will be attached to the existing hotel on it's northern side. It will therefore be well related to the existing built development at the site and will be connected to the existing structure.
- 5.4 Scale: The scale of the extension will reflect the existing hotel in terms of eaves and ridge heights.
- 5.5 Landscaping: The proposal does not result in the loss of any trees or planting. A suitably worded condition will ensure that new planting can be provided.
- 5.6 Appearance: The extension will have a traditional appearance and will reflect the style of the existing built development at the site. The building will use natural stone. Fenestration detailing will reflect the existing buildings.
- 5.7 Access: The proposal does not seek to change parking or access requirements. The new development will be compliant with relevant accessibility requirements. The submission is accompanied by a supporting letter from Transport Consultants DFM Consulting and they have concluded that this proposal will not increase demand for parking.

## 6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The application should be supported for the following reasons:

- i) The applicants have identified a need for additional bedroom capacity in the location. Demand is generated by the existing facilities which result in short stay accommodation requirements. Current occupancy rates significantly exceed local and national averages. The hotel is the only 4 / 5 star hotel in the District and the Council's Tourism Strategy has identified a specific need for this type of accommodation. The proposal complies with the sequential test which has been fully updated since 2013 to reflect built and permitted hotels throughout the District.
- ii) The hotel is an integral part of the only combined hotel / leisure/ golf course / events venue in the District. No other hotel provides this level of facilities in the District. It is a major local employer. The proposals will have significant benefits to local employment including secondary benefits to local businesses. This aspect of the proposal is supported by the emerging Local Plan (February 2015).
- iii) The Council have already accepted the principle of expanding the existing hotel through an approval of an additional 51 bedrooms in October 2013. This permission is extant. It was accepted that a lack of provision for high end accommodation in the District was a material consideration in determining the application.
- iv) The Highway Consultant has not identified that there would be any increase in traffic movements as the additional accommodation will prevent vehicles shuttling between the venue and other hotels. The proposal is therefore sustainable.
- v) The proposal is designed to integrate with existing built development at the site. It will be of a traditional design to reflect the existing hotel.