

Consultee Comments for Planning Application 25/02184/FUL

Application Summary

Application Number: 25/02184/FUL

Address: Oxford Witney Hotel Ducklington Lane Witney Oxfordshire OX28 4EX

Proposal: Part internal reconfiguration of ground floor accommodation within the existing footprint and roofline to include 14 additional guest suites (inclusive), relocated main reception and health suite. Associated accessible external access and landscaping to replace the current entryway and courtyard.

Case Officer: James Nelson

Consultee Details

Name: Mrs S Groth

Address: Witney Town Council, Town Hall, Market Square Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 6AG

Email: info@witney-tc.gov.uk

On Behalf Of: Parish Council

Comments:

Witney Town Council raises no objection to the application on material planning grounds. However, the Council respectfully requests that the following comments and considerations be taken into account by Officers.

Support for Reversion to Hotel Use

The Town Council welcomes and supports the proposal to return the premises from its current use under government contract to a traditional hotel operation. Members recognise the positive contribution this will make in supporting tourism and business visitors to the town.

Loss of Leisure Facilities and Arts, Heritage & Leisure Provision

The Council notes with concern the proposed removal of the existing fitness suite and swimming pool, which have historically provided valuable leisure and recreational amenities for local residents. As specific details of any relocated or replacement health facilities have not been provided, the Council requests that alternative leisure provision, such as rural exercise equipment, be secured through a suitable community contribution or planning obligation.

While it is acknowledged that the proposed development would enhance the hotel's accommodation offering, the removal of the existing leisure facilities results in the permanent loss of amenities that have previously supported community use as well as hotel guests. The replacement facilities proposed within the hotel will be for the benefit of guests only and will not mitigate the loss of publicly accessible leisure provision, albeit on a paid membership basis.

Given Witney's role as the main service centre for the surrounding rural area, it is appropriate that developments within its catchment contribute to the enhancement of community infrastructure serving a wider population. In accordance with Policies OS5 (Supporting Infrastructure) and EH5 (Sport, recreation and children's play) of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031, and with reference to paragraphs 96(c) and 98 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which promote healthy, inclusive communities and the

protection of community facilities, Witney Town Council requests that a proportionate Section 106 financial contribution be secured towards Arts, Heritage, and Leisure provision within Witney.

Such a contribution would appropriately mitigate the loss of the hotel's community-accessible leisure facilities and support the continued enhancement of arts, cultural, and recreational opportunities available to residents within the town and surrounding settlements, as well as hotel guests who will benefit from these amenities.

In line with previous Section 106 contributions secured within Witney, such funding could be directed towards:

- Alternative leisure provision, such as rural exercise equipment be secured through a suitable community contribution or planning obligation. **£15,000**
- Improvements to the adjacent Witney Lake and Country Park, supporting outdoor leisure, nature access, and wellbeing initiatives. **£7,500**
- Enhancements to The Leys Recreation Ground, improving sports, play, and open-space provision; and/or **£7,500**
- Investment in the Corn Exchange, strengthening Witney's arts and heritage offer through building improvements and expanded community use. **£5,750**

Witney Town Council therefore make a S106 request of **£35,750**

Environmental Sustainability

The Town Council encourages the applicant to strengthen the environmental credentials of the scheme. In particular, consideration should be given to incorporating measures such as solar panels, electric vehicle charging points, and secure cycle parking, in line with the Council's and district's shared ambition for carbon reduction and sustainable development in accordance with policy OS3 of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031

Environment and Flooding

The Council welcomes the proposed relocation of the main entrance to improve accessibility for all users and the enhancement of the courtyard landscaping. However, Members also request that attention be given to the maintenance of the existing land to the rear of the hotel, specifically the ditch bordering the adjacent allotments. In accordance with policy OS3 of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031, Improved upkeep of this area could help mitigate flooding incidents that allotment holders experience during periods of heavy rainfall.