

11. a) 3/08/1823/FP and b) 3/08/1824/LC – Demolition of existing retail and commercial premises, construction of 103 bed hotel with retail use to ground floor including ancillary works and car parking at 71-77 South Street, Bishop’s Stortford for Domland Limited

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Date of Receipt: (a) 29.10.08  
(b) 17.10.08

Type: (a) Full  
(b) Conservation Area Consent

Parish: BISHOP’S STORTFORD

Ward: BISHOP’S STORTFORD - CENTRAL

**RECOMMENDATION**

a) That planning permission be **REFUSED** for the following reason:-

1. The proposed development by reason of its size, scale, massing and design does not relate well to adjacent buildings and to the surrounding townscape, and would result in a development which would be out of keeping with, and detrimental to the character and appearance of the area and the Conservation Area, and its setting. The proposed development would thereby be contrary to policies ENV1 and BH6 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007.

b) That Conservation Area Consent be **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:-

1. Listed Building three year time limit (1T14)
2. Conservation Area (demolition) (8L12)
3. Conservation Area (clearance of site) (8L13)

\_\_\_\_\_ (182308FP.EH)

**1.0 Background**

1.1 The application site is shown on the attached OS extract, and is located within the settlement of Bishop’s Stortford, approximately 50 metres to the south of the junction of South Street, Station Road and Newtown Road. The site is currently occupied by a number of buildings which are either vacant or are in retail or commercial use. The character and appearance of the buildings on the site varies, with some buildings which are traditional in their appearance fronting South Street and more modern buildings with an industrial appearance located to the rear of the South Street frontage.

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Many of the buildings are in a poor state of repair. The buildings are generally two storeys in height, as are those which are immediately to the north and south of the application site.

- 1.2 These applications seek planning permission and conservation area consent for the demolition of the existing buildings on the site, and the construction of a 103 bedroom hotel with a 400 square metre retail unit to the ground floor. The application also proposes alterations to the existing footway to South Street, to close the existing vehicular accesses to South Street, and provide a single access at the southern end of the site, the provision of a total of 59 car parking spaces to the rear of the site and a landscaped buffer, approximately 6 metres deep, to the River Stort.
- 1.3 The application was submitted with a number of supporting documents including:
  - Planning Statement;
  - Design and Access Statement;
  - Design Statement;
  - Flood Risk Assessment;
  - Sustainability Statement;
  - Transport Statement;
  - Heritage Statement;
- 1.4 Only a very small part of the application site is located within the Bishop's Stortford Conservation Area. This is in the northern part of the site, and includes the building known as 71 South Street.

## **2.0 Site History**

- 2.1 Part of the application site (a smaller site at the northern end of the site) has been the subject of a number of planning applications for residential and commercial development. The relevant applications are listed below:
  - 3/04/2321/FP  
Demolition of commercial centre & the erection of eighteen dwellings, one retail unit & associated parking  
Withdrawn January 2005
  - 3/05/1772/FP  
Demolition of existing building and erection of eighteen residential units and one Class A1 shop with associated access, parking and landscaping  
Withdrawn October 2005

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- 3/06/0132/FP  
Demolition of existing buildings and erection of eighteen residential units and one class A1 shop with associated access, parking and landscaping  
Refused May 2006

### **3.0 Consultation Responses**

- 3.1 Thames Water have commented that with regard to sewerage infrastructure they have no objection to the application. With regard to surface water drainage they have commented that it is the responsibility of a developer to make proper provision for drainage to ground, water courses or a suitable sewer. Thames Water have commented that ideally the surface water from this site should be discharged to the adjacent River Stort.
- 3.2 Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue have commented that confirmation should be provided that access for a fire appliance meet the requirements of the Building Regulations, and that a fire hydrant should be provided within 90 metres of any entry point into the building for fire fighting operations and preferably on the same side of the road as the building.
- 3.3 The Environment Agency have commented that a six metre buffer strip to the River Stort would be adequate. The Environment Agency have reviewed the Flood Risk Assessment and have no objection to the proposal subject to conditions being attached to any grant of permission relating to mitigation measures; contaminated land investigations and remediation measures and details of piling and foundation designs.
- 3.4 British Waterways have commented on the application and object to the proposed development. They comment that the layout effectively turns its back on the water by having car parking at ground floor looking over the water and high fencing, completely divorcing the development from the canal. They are concerned that the landscaped area is not provided with natural surveillance and is likely to be underused, and could potentially attract anti-social behaviour and unsightly littering which may encourage the future blocking off of this area from the development altogether. Furthermore they comment that the proposal, due to its poor relationship with the adjacent waterway, fails to enhance either the development or the canalside environment, and misses the opportunity to capitalise on this unique asset. They comment however that if the Council is minded to grant planning permission it is requested that the developer enters into a legal agreement in respect of a contribution towards the preparation and implementation of the Bishop's Stortford Waterspace and Landscape Strategy, and that conditions are attached to any grant of permission

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relating to the submission of a survey of the condition of the waterway wall, submission of details of the proposed landscaping scheme, submission of details of any proposed lighting scheme and a feasibility study to assess the potential for moving freight by water during the construction cycle.

- 3.5 Environmental Health have commented that conditions relating to construction hours of working, dust suppression, contaminated land, lighting, asbestos and piling works should be attached to any grant of permission.
- 3.6 The County Development Unit, Herts County Council have commented that regard should be had to the policies of the Waste Local Plan.
- 3.7 The Landscape Officer has commented on the application and recommends that consent is granted. He comments that the proposal fits into and appears to be compatible with the surrounding built environment. To South Street the proposed development has been set back from the existing building line and this will clearly provide improved or easier pedestrian circulation and access. The provision of amenity green space along the bank to the River Stort is considered to have a positive visual impact on this stretch of the River, and the design proposals appear to have recognised the river as one of the sites attributes.
- 3.8 County Highways have commented that the principle of the scheme is acceptable in a highway context. They have commented that they estimate that there would be an additional 15 traffic movements (a 20% increase) in the morning peak hour but, significantly a reduction of 60 movements (a 44% decrease) in the evening peak hour. During the mid morning Saturday peak there is likely to be a slight increase of 6 movements (a 5% increase). Accordingly they do not consider that overall traffic conditions will be significantly harmed.
- 3.9 Having regard to the above comments, County Highways have concluded that they do not wish to restrict the grant of permission subject to conditions relating to the submission of details of the proposed alterations to South Street footway and new access arrangements; the permanent closure of the existing vehicle access to South Street, provision of wheel washing facilities; submission of details of construction vehicle movements; areas for parking and storage of materials associated with the construction provided within the site; submission of details of hardsurfacing materials. County Highways have also recommended that any grant of planning permission should be subject to a S106 agreement and a S278 agreement for the off site highway works and a financial contribution of £295,000 towards Sustainable Public Transport Programmes.

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3.10 English Heritage have commented and recommend refusal of the application. They comment that there appears to be no justification for the demolition of the structures within the Conservation Area and they feel that the buildings make a positive contribution. Furthermore, they do not consider that the scale and design of the development as a whole has been justified in terms of its impact on the Conservation Area. They comment that despite the scale and form of nearby recent developments this site has sufficient historic and townscape significance to warrant a more pragmatic approach with the incorporation of some existing buildings, retention of building lines and development of a more subtle relationship with the river. They comment further that they consider that the present proposals are excessive in bulk and height and do not relate well to the South Street frontages, nor do they reflect the historic grain or diversity of the site. English Heritage therefore recommend refusal of the application and suggest that reasons for refusal should include the inappropriate layout, form, massing and elevational treatment, the failure to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area and the lack of justification for the demolition of buildings, which make a positive contribution to the area including nos. 71 and 77 South Street.

3.11 The Conservation Officer has commented and recommends refusal of the application. The Officer commented that, whilst they have no objection to the demolition of the current buildings within the application site, they do have some concerns about the height and silhouette of the proposals on a site which includes a part of and is bounded by the Conservation Area. They regret the siting of the larger and highest elements on the site so close to the river where they will create a canyon effect and will be detrimental to the riverside environment. They also question the roof shapes and the materials used for various elements which appear to be over complex and unrelated to one another, especially on the South Street frontage.

#### **4.0 Town Council Representations**

4.1 Bishop's Stortford Town Council have commented on the application and object on the following grounds:

- Loss of a thriving industrial area;
- The location was considered inappropriate for a hotel;
- The ingress and egress onto an already extremely congested road was considered totally unsuitable;
- Over development of the site;
- The height of the development would result in a canyon effect on both South Street and the River.

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### 5.0 Other Representations

5.1 The applications have been advertised by way of press notice, site notice and neighbour notification.

5.2 Three letters of representation have been received in relation to the application from Daniel Robinson and Sons Ltd (occupiers of nos. 79/81 South Street), Stort Motors (current occupiers of no. 73 South Street) and a resident of Bishop's Stortford. The following comments were made:

- The occupiers of no. 73 South Street still has 4 and a half years outstanding on their lease on the building;
- The proposal to build a hotel is totally inappropriate in this position taking into account the problems with traffic build up on South Street with the various traffic lights and road junctions;
- Health and safety concerns relating to the demolition of the buildings on the site;
- Concerns about the proposed building line which would not be in accordance with that of nos. 79/81 South Street:
- It is not considered appropriate to compare the proposed development with the scale of development undertaken at Archers Place (opposite the application site fronting South Street);
- Although the hotel is proposed to be set back from the road, an opportunity would be lost to provide a suitably wide pavement in this narrow street;
- The design with five storeys next to the river seems out of proportion and would be over intensification not in keeping with its surroundings.

5.3 The Bishop's Stortford Civic Federation have commented that they have no objections in principle to a hotel in the town but they oppose the application on a number of grounds:

- The additional traffic resulting from the hotel, both cars and delivery vehicles, would add considerably to the congestion and dangers in this area as part of South Street is a congested, narrow road and a main route in and out of the town;
- The egress and ingress onto South Street is sited on the northern approach zigzags to the Post Office pedestrian crossing. Any egress and ingress for a hotel along this stretch of road is undesirable;
- The height of the hotel is not acceptable. With the Leisure Centre on the opposite side, this would give a canyon effect to the river. The Civic Federation comment that the Council need to ensure that the river entrance to the town remains an attractive route into the town centre for visitors coming in via the river;

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- The design of the hotel is also unacceptable as it is not in keeping with, and totally ignores, the architecture of the general area. The design might well be suitable for new towns such as Stevenage or Milton Keynes but certainly not for Bishop's Stortford.

The Civic Federation have commented that they would not object to the demolition of the existing buildings, provided approval had been given for what would immediately replace them, as demolition without replacement would blight the area.

### **6.0 Policy**

6.1 The East Herts Local Plan Second Review (April 2007) policies relevant to the consideration of this application are:

SD1	Making Development More Sustainable
SD2	Settlement Hierarchy
TR1	Traffic Reduction in New Developments
TR7	Car Parking Standards
TR8	Car Parking – Accessibility Contributions
EDE2	Loss of Employment Sites
STC1	Development in Town Centres and Edge-of-Centre
STC3	Secondary Shopping Frontages
ENV1	Design and Environmental Quality
ENV2	Landscaping
ENV3	Planning Out Crime – New development
ENV18	Water Environment
ENV19	Development in Areas Liable to Flood
BH4	Demolition in Conservation Areas
BH6	New Development in Conservation Areas
IMP1	Planning Considerations and Obligations

### **7.0 Considerations**

7.1 The determining issues in the consideration of these applications are:

- The principle of development and the acceptability of the proposed uses;
- The size, scale massing and design of the proposed building and its impact on the surrounding area;
- The impact on the Conservation Area;
- Parking and Highways consideration;

The principle of development and the acceptability of the proposed uses

- 7.2 The application site lies within the built-up area of Bishop's Stortford wherein policy SD2 of the Local Plan states that development should be concentrated. There is therefore no objection in principle to the proposed development.
- 7.3 The Retail and Town Centre Study 2008 identifies the application site as part of Bishop's Stortford Town Centre. Policy STC1 of the Local Plan states that the preferred location for new retail development and proposals for other key town centre uses (tourism facilities are identified as a town centre use), will be town centres followed by edge-of-centre sites in line with the sequential approach. The policy also identifies a number of criteria which should be met. In principle therefore, the development of a hotel and retail uses on this site is acceptable, subject to all other normal planning considerations.
- 7.4 The South Street Commercial Centre and the frontages to South Street are designated as Secondary Shopping Frontages in the Local Plan. Policy STC3 of the Local Plan outlines the uses that are considered to be appropriate within such frontages. The policy states that proposals for development which result in an excessive concentration of non-shop uses (at ground floor premises) will not be permitted. Currently there are a mixture of retail, hot food/takeaway and commercial uses in the existing units fronting South Street (a total of approximately 1827 square metres of floorspace). At the time of the officer's site visit, the commercial centre was gated and inaccessible to the public, and it would appear that the majority of the premises within the application site are vacant. The application proposes a single retail unit fronting South Street with a floorspace of some 435 square metres. This proposal, whilst resulting in the loss of a number of smaller individual units, would accord with policy STC3 of the Local Plan, and in officers opinion would result in a more useable and attractive retail unit, particularly in comparison to the existing units which are limited in their size, and in the majority of cases are poor quality buildings, with access and servicing issues. Furthermore, the applicant has indicated in the supporting documents submitted with the application that the proposed retail unit could be divided into smaller units if commercially viable.
- 7.5 Policy EDE2 of the Local Plan requires that outside of the identified Employment Areas, development which would cause the loss of an existing employment site, or one that was last in employment use, will only be permitted subject to a number of criteria being met. This application proposes to replace the existing retail and commercial premises with the retail unit at ground floor and a 103 bed hotel, which would also represent



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an increase in the total amount of commercial floorspace on the site. The applicant in their supporting documents have stated that the hotel will employ approximately 35 staff full and part-time. They have also commented that in addition there will be indirect employment generated in the local economy such as laundries, florists, taxis, additional demand for local employment establishments, coffee shops and retail outlets in general.

Having regard to the employment that would be generated by the hotel and retail unit, I am satisfied that the proposal would not result in any significant reduction in the amount of employment generated on the site. The site would still provide some employment, and therefore the proposal is considered to accord with the relevant policy of the Local Plan.

- 7.6 Having regard therefore to policies SD2, STC1, STC3 and EDE2 of the Local Plan it is considered that the proposed uses are acceptable in principle and would accord with the Local Plan.

#### The size, scale, massing and design of the proposed building and its impact on the surrounding area

- 7.7 Notwithstanding nos. 71 and 77 South Street, which are buildings with some historic and architectural interest, the remaining buildings located within the application site are of little interest, and are in my opinion of poor appearance and are not of a design which is appropriate to or in keeping with the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The redevelopment of this site is therefore welcomed, and this concurs with the view of the Conservation Officer who commented that the site is long overdue for redevelopment.
- 7.8 Therefore, whilst there is no objection in principle to the redevelopment of the application site or the amount of development proposed (the amount of retail floorspace and number of bedrooms), the size, scale, massing and design of any proposed development must have regard to adjacent buildings and the surrounding townscape as outlined in policy ENV1 of the Local Plan. Immediately to the south and north of the application site, the buildings fronting South Street are mainly two storey in height. This scale of development can also be found to the north east and south east of the application site. Many of the buildings in these locations are also traditional in their design and appearance, with slate or clay tiled roofs. To the east of the application site on the opposite side of South Street is Archers Place, a residential development with retail units at ground floor which was granted planning permission in February 2005 (Ref. 3/03/1446/FP). The elevation of this development to South Street is approximately 5 metres higher than that proposed as part of this application. However, the building is set away from adjacent buildings, nos. 88 and 100 South Street by approximately 6 and 7.8 metres respectively. Furthermore, it should be noted that the land

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to the rear of this building rises up significantly, and the design and scale of this building takes into account the changes in land level within the site, and is viewed against the higher land to the west of the site.

- 7.9 Turning firstly to the elevation to South Street, whilst I have no objection in principle to the design approach, it is considered that the scale and mass of the building fails to respect the scale of surrounding buildings, and would appear unsympathetic to the context of the site. The proposed elevation of the building to South Street is some 55 metres long, of which some 43.5 metres of this is an unbroken ridge of 10.8 metres high. Although it can be argued that the five projecting mono-pitch elements break up the expanse of the frontage to South Street and provide some variation to the elevation, this element of the design of the building, due to its length, is rather repetitive. Furthermore, I do not consider that it adequately reduces the scale or mass of the building, and the proposed development would be of a scale which is out of keeping with other developments in South Street. Although the building is proposed to be set back from the existing building frontages on South Street by approximately 2.5 – 3 metres, I do not consider that this set back would be sufficient to reduce the impact of the development on South Street, and accordingly it is considered that the development would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the area.
- 7.10 It is also considered that the proposed development would share a poor relationship with no. 69 South Street which it is proposed to adjoin at the northern boundary of the site. Whilst the part of the building adjacent to no. 69 which is proposed to front South Street is similar in scale to no. 69, beyond this element (to the east) the development rises to three storeys in height, which would be approximately 2.5 metres higher than the building that it adjoins. Furthermore, from the submitted plans it would appear that the design of this higher element would result in a blank elevation of approximately 2 metres in height fronting South Street. It is considered that the design of this element of the development would contribute to the poor relationship that it would have with adjacent developments, and would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the area.
- 7.11 Finally in relation to the South Street elevation, it is considered that the lift tower, due to its size, siting and design would appear as an incongruous feature in relation to the overall design of the building, and would be detrimental not only to the character and appearance of the building, but also the streetscene.
- 7.12 Turning now to the elevation to the River, whilst I have no objection to the design of the projecting wings I am concerned at the size and scale of these elements of the development and their impact on the River frontage, and

from views of this part of the site from the towpath, and in particular the Station Road bridge, which is within the Conservation Area. The wings are proposed to reach a maximum height of 15 metres, which would be significantly higher than the existing buildings on the site and those surrounding the site on the South Street side of the River. When compared to Waterfront House, which is north of the application site and fronts the River, the maximum height of the projecting wings will be some 6.5 metres higher than Waterfront House. This building is similar in scale to many of the surrounding buildings. Whilst it is acknowledged that the cinema and leisure complex to the east of the application site on the other side of the river is a substantial building, it shares a poor relationship with the River, and due to its size, scale and design is a prominent building within the town. Whilst the impact of this building was clearly considered to be acceptable when planning permission was granted for it in the 1990s, it is considered that having regard to the impact that this building has, its grant of permission should not warrant a building of a similar size and scale to be constructed now. Having regard therefore to the size, scale and design of the projecting wing elements of the proposed development, it is considered that they would be a prominent feature when viewed from the River, and would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the river frontage. These concerns are shared by both the Conservation Officer and English Heritage.

- 7.13 The concerns of British Waterways are noted, however notwithstanding the impact of the size and scale of the development adjacent to the River, I do not consider that the siting and layout of the development would result in detriment to the character of the waterway. In my opinion the proposed redevelopment of the site would result in a significant improvement in the relationship of the site with the River, particularly as views of the river are currently predominantly obscured by the existing buildings. The provision of the landscaped buffer to the River would result in an improvement in the relationship of the site with the River, and would significantly improve the appearance of the area. The desire of British Waterways to see the area adjacent to the River being used, must be coupled with the comments of the Environment Agency who seek such buffer zones between waterways and developments to maintain, restore and enhance biodiversity. There is no public access to this side of the River in the proximity of the application site, and therefore the development would not worsen the existing situation. It is considered that the proposed landscaped buffer zone, and the removal of built structures away from the river's edge would result in a significant improvement to the character and appearance of this stretch of the River.
- 7.14 In the determination of this application, regard should also be had to the previous applications that the Council has considered for the redevelopment of only the South Street Commercial Centre site. Whilst these applications considered a smaller application site than is now being considered, the

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consideration of the size and scale of development proposed is relevant to the consideration of this application. The application which was refused in 2006 (ref. 3/06/0132/FP) for the erection of 18 residential units and 1 retail unit on the Commercial Centre site, was refused for a number of reasons, including concern in relation to the height, massing and roof design of the development and the impact that it would have on South Street, the River and the setting of the Conservation Area. This application proposed a development which was predominantly three storeys in height (the third storey being within the roofspace), which was approximately 11 metres high. Although a development of this height would not, in principle, be considered to be unacceptable in this location, it is the relationship of the development to surrounding developments and the River that a key consideration. Having regard therefore to this decision, and the concerns outlined above in relation to the size, scale, massing and design of the proposed development, it is considered that the proposed development would be out of keeping with and detrimental to the character and appearance of the area.

#### The impact on the Conservation Area

- 7.15 Only a small proportion of the application site (nos. 71 South Street and units 1 and 2 South Street Commercial Centre) is actually located within the Bishop's Stortford Conservation Area. In determining these applications, it is necessary to consider the impact of the demolition of the buildings which are within the Conservation Area on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, and the impact of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and its setting.
- 7.16 Turning firstly to the proposed demolition of no. 71 South Street and nos. 1 and 2 South Street Commercial Centre (which are located at the rear of the building which forms no. 71 South Street), PPG15 states that in exercising conservation area controls, local planning authorities are required to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area in question; and this should be the prime consideration in determining a consent application. In the case of conservation area controls, account should clearly be taken of the part played in the architectural or historic interest of the area by the building for which demolition is proposed, and in particular of the wider effects of demolition on the building's surroundings and on the conservation area as a whole. The general presumption should be in favour of retaining buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area.

- 7.17 No. 71 South Street is an attractive single storey timber framed building with a clay tiled roof, which has a frontage to South Street of approximately 5 metres. The south facing elevation of the building is clad with timber boarding. The Heritage Statement submitted with the application states that it would appear that this is the oldest in the line of buildings fronting South Street which form the application site, and the building appears to be largely unchanged from how it appears on the 1898 OS map. Whilst I note that English Heritage consider that the building makes a positive contribution to the Conservation Area, it is my opinion that due to the scale and appearance of the building it does not have a significant impact on the architectural or historic interest of the area, and as such its demolition would not have a wider effect on the building's surroundings and on the conservation area as a whole. It should be noted that the Conservation Officer has no objection to the demolition of the building. This view concurs with that set out in the consideration of application ref. 3/06/0168/LC in which this building was proposed to be demolished to facilitate the redevelopment of the Commercial Centre site. In this instance whilst the officer had no objection to the demolition of the building, they recommended that Conservation Area Consent should be refused until such time as a suitable proposal for the sites redevelopment be approved. It should be noted however, and as with other redevelopment sites within the District, this element can be controlled via a condition which states that the building should not be demolished until such time that a contract for the carrying out of the works or redevelopment of the site has been made and planning permission granted for the redevelopment. As this condition would allow the Council to retain control over the demolition of this building, and ensure that it is not demolished until a suitable scheme for the redevelopment of the site has been approved, it is recommended that the application for Conservation Area Consent for the demolition of the building be approved.
- 7.18 Turning now to the impact of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and its setting, Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that special attention shall be paid in the exercise of planning functions to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area. PPG15 states that the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area should be a material consideration in the handling of development proposals which are outside the Conservation Area but would affect its setting, or views into or out of the area. Having regard to the considerations outlined earlier in this report in relation to the proposed size, scale, massing and design of the

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development it is considered that the proposed development is not sympathetic in terms of scale to the general character and appearance of the area, and would in my opinion not preserve the character and appearance of the area, or the setting of the Conservation Area.

#### Parking and Highways considerations

- 7.19 As outlined earlier in this report, County Highways have no objection to the proposed development, and whilst there will be some increases in traffic movements in the morning peak hour, there will be a reduction in the evening peak hour. Having regard to these comments and the submitted Transport Statement which concluded that the existing highway network would be unaffected by the proposed development, I have no objection in principle to the amount of development proposed and its highways impact. The site is located in a sustainable location, close to the train and bus station, and would be accessible by both public transport and the private motor vehicle, and also on foot.
- 7.20 The application also proposes to close the existing accesses to the site, which are both poor in terms of visibility and width, and provide a more appropriately sited access at the southern end of the site, which would also be of sufficient width to accommodate two way traffic. The application also proposes a lay-by to the front of the site on South Street. This would allow service vehicles to pull off the highway to make deliveries, and would allow traffic movements along South Street to be maintained. This proposal is similar to that which was approved as part of the Archers Place development, which is opposite the application site. It is considered therefore that the proposal would result in an improvement to the existing situation in terms of highway safety.
- 7.21 Turning now to parking, the application proposes a total of 59 car parking spaces, 6 motorcycle parking spaces and 14 cycle spaces. The Council's adopted vehicle parking standards in relation to hotels state that a maximum of 1 space per bedroom should be provided. However, when considering the provision of parking at hotels generally, it is very often the case that parking is not provided on the ratio of 1 space to each bedroom, and in some town centre locations parking is not available on the site, and visitors to the hotel are required to park away from the hotel in local public car parks. Therefore, having regard to the sustainable location of the site and its accessibility by other modes of transport other than the motor car, it is considered that the number of parking spaces proposed to be provided is acceptable.

7.22 County Highways have requested that if planning permission were to be granted, a financial contribution of £295,000 is provided to be put towards Sustainable Public Transport Programmes. The figure of £295,000 is based on the accessibility contributions as outlined in the Council's SPD on Planning Obligations, and based on policy TR8 of the Local Plan. Such contributions are based directly on the number of on-site car parking spaces provided, and will be used towards investments in schemes within the Local Transport Plan to improve passenger transport, cycling and pedestrian facilities in the travel catchment of the development. Having regard to the development proposed and the tests outlined in Circular 05/2005, it is considered that such a contribution and the amount requested should be required if planning permission were to be granted.

## **8.0 Conclusion**

8.1 Whilst there is no objection to the amount of development proposed and the uses, there are concerns, as outlined also by English Heritage and the Conservation Officer, that the proposed development by reason of its size, scale, massing and design would be out of keeping with and detrimental to the character and appearance of the surrounding area, and the Conservation Area and its setting. It is for these reasons therefore that it is recommended that planning permission be refused. However, in relation to the application for Conservation Area Consent for the demolition of the buildings which are within the Conservation Area, namely no. 71 South Street, officers consider that this is acceptable subject to a condition which does not allow the demolition of the building prior to the contract for the carrying out of the works or redevelopment of the site has been made and planning permission granted for the redevelopment. It is therefore recommended that conditional consent be granted.