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<b>Platt</b> Borough Green And Long Mill	<b>563419 157989</b>	<b>5 July 2007</b>	<b>TM/07/02397/FL</b>
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Proposal:	Part single, part two storey extension to existing hotel and replacement car park
Location:	Travel Inn London Road Wrotham Heath Sevenoaks Kent TN15 7RX
Applicant:	Whitbread Group Plc

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## **1. Description:**

- 1.1 Planning permission is sought for a part single, part two storey linked extension to the existing Travel Inn hotel at London Road, Wrotham Heath. The proposed extension would be attached to the existing two storey hotel by a two storey link. Internally, the link would run from the first floor of the existing building to the ground floor of the proposed, these being on the same level.
- 1.2 The proposed extension would provide 18 additional bedrooms plus associated storage and access areas. The proposal would be sited on land currently providing car parking for the existing hotel. The scheme therefore proposes to extend the existing car park in to an adjacent wooded area to the east.
- 1.3 The proposed extension would be single storey to the north (front) half and two storey to the south (rear) half and is wider at the south than the north. The maximum dimensions are 18.6m wide x 23m deep, single storey eaves height (average) of 5.4m and eaves height of the two storey section (average) of 9.4m. The eaves height shown is taken from the proposed adjacent ground level, as the proposal would be partially dug into the site.
- 1.4 The site of the proposed hotel extension lies entirely within the built confines of Wrotham Heath. However, the eastern most area of the car park (spaces numbered 43 – 58 on drawing number 2308/P2 rev D) lies outside the built confines and within an area designated as Metropolitan Green Belt. This application is being reported to Committee because the car park is, in part, a Departure from the Development Plan.

## **2. The Site:**

- 2.1 The hotel site forms the south eastern plot of a complex of buildings. To the north-east lies a Jet petrol filling station and to the north-west The Royal Oak restaurant and public house. To the south lies a mainline railway. The site is accessed off a shared access point which also serves the restaurant and traffic exiting from the petrol station.

- 2.2 The site of the proposed extension comprises part of the existing car park serving the hotel and a steep reinforced bank directly east of the existing hotel building. The top of the bank (car park level) is approximately 3.4m above the ground floor level of the existing hotel building.
- 2.3 The existing car park area is accessed via a moderately steep drive in front of the north-east corner of the hotel. There is a significant level difference between the ground level of the petrol filling station and the car park of the hotel of approx 3 – 3.4m. The ground level of the petrol station is approximately the same as the level of the adjacent A20 London Road.

### 3. Planning History:

TM/65/10791/OLD Grant with conditions 22 July 1965  
(MK/4/165/164)  
Motel accommodation (24 units).

TM/87/10556/OUT Application Withdrawn 23 November 1987  
(TM/87/1518)  
Outline application for motel with eighty double bedrooms and associated external works, parking and access.

TM/89/11423/OUT Refused 13 April 1989  
(TM/87/1932)  
Outline application for motel with 80 double bedrooms and associated external works, parking and access and alterations to existing property.

TM/90/11201/FUL Grant with conditions 6 July 1990  
(TM/89/0490)  
Two storey 41 bedroom Travel Inn block car parking and alterations to accesses.

TM/90/10475/FUL Grant with conditions 1 November 1990  
(TM/90/1222)  
Repositioning of two storey 41 bedroom travel inn block, revised car parking, landscaping and access (previously approved under reference TM/89/0490).

### 4. Consultees:

- 4.1 PC: Although the footprint of the proposed hotel extension is within the settlement confines of Wrotham Heath, the associated extension to the car parking area would appear to encroach onto land designated as Metropolitan Green Belt and Green Wedge. As such we believe that this element of the proposal requires 'exceptional justification' and no such material has been submitted with the application.
- 4.1.1 The A20 at the entrance to the site is shown as being at 80.7m above datum. The FFL of the proposed extension is at 85.08m above datum i.e. almost 4.4m above the entrance road level. This will make the apparent ridge height of the two-storey

proposal greater than that normally produced by a three-storey structure with a FFL near to road level. It is estimated that the ridge of the proposal would appear to an observer on the A20 to be close to the top of the high tree line to the south of the structure. We therefore consider that any structure based on this elevated position should be limited to a single storey height to reduce this visual impact.

4.1.2 As many as possible of the trees to the east and north of the site, i.e. in the MGB/GW area, should be retained. Although the Supporting Statement with the proposal looks at the work to be done in this area, it is interspersed with the words 'could' and 'should'. We feel that a full definitive management proposal for this tree area must form part of the overall proposal.

4.1.3 We therefore object to the proposals in their current form.

4.2 KCC (Highways): Detailed comments on the amended parking layout are yet to be received and will be reported in the supplementary report. The following comments were received on the original submission:

4.3 The applicant recognises the small shortfall in parking provision, but believes the proposed parking will be acceptable for this use, based on the current operating procedures, although space is available to provide additional parking if necessary.

4.4 It is not clear if secure parking for motor cycles / cycles is available within the site, as this could be a useful facility in this location. In this instance, I would therefore raise no objections to this application.

4.5 DHH: Noise from the railway appears to have been taken in to account in the supporting statement, therefore no further comments.

4.6 Private Reps: (11/0X/0R/0S) + Press and Site Notices: No response.

## **5. Determining Issues:**

5.1 The main determining issues within this application are the principle of the development in this location, the potential impacts on highway safety and the impact of the proposal on visual amenity and the adjacent wooded area.

5.2 The principle of extension to the hotel, within the built confines, is acceptable in broad policy terms and, given the context provided by the existing hotel, is supported by policy CP13. However, the extension of the car park to the east to partly replace the loss of parking that would occur due to the extension, is a departure from the development plan as it is partly on land within the Metropolitan Green Belt (MGB).

5.3 To the extent that the use of the area of car park outside the confines would have an adverse effect on the openness of the Green Belt, this is inappropriate development in the MGB and thus, in principle, unacceptable and contrary to

PPG2: Green Belts which seeks to maintain the openness and functioning of the MGB. A case of very special circumstances must therefore be demonstrated to override the policy objections to the infringement of the car park in to the MGB.

- 5.4 The proposed hotel extension has been designed to be in keeping with the scale, form and proportions of the existing hotel and matching materials are proposed. The ridge height of the proposed single storey portion of extension would be 1.4m lower than the ridge of the main hotel and the ridge height of the proposed two storey extension would be 2.8m higher than the ridge height of the main hotel building.
- 5.5 Whilst the 2.8m increase in ridge height between the two storey extension and the existing hotel is a significant rise, when the siting, orientation and distance from public vantage points along the London Road are taken into account, I do not consider the height of the proposed two storey extension would be detrimental to the streetscene or visual amenity.
- 5.6 The PC raises concerns that the ridge height would be in line with the trees to the rear, however I do not consider the proposal would reach this height. The tops of the trees to the rear would remain visible above the proposed extension.
- 5.7 I therefore consider the proposal would accord with Core Strategy policy CP24 in terms of the scale, layout, siting, character and appearance being respectful to the site and its surroundings.
- 5.8 The proposal would not result in harm to residential amenity as there are no nearby dwellings.
- 5.9 The rooms proposed to the rear would be affected by noise from the adjacent railway line. The proposal would incorporate construction methods to provide sound reduction in accordance with the “good” criteria for bedrooms to meet British Standards: general noise LAeq 30dB and individual noise events LA max 45dB. Other areas of the hotel block will achieve an internal sound level of LAeq 45dB. Accordingly, the proposed extension would not be subjected to an undue aural climate.
- 5.10 The site currently provides 82 parking spaces and the applicant has carried out a survey which shows that the maximum level of use was 67 spaces (82% occupancy). The proposal would provide 86 spaces in total. The extension of car parking area has been reduced over the course of the application to reduce the encroachment into the adjacent wooded area to the east and MGB.
- 5.11 The submitted survey demonstrates that the existing car parking area over-provides for the existing 40 bedroom hotel and adjacent restaurant. The proposed car parking provision takes account of the “over-provision” and suggests that 86 spaces will meet the needs of the site as a whole.

- 5.12 The proposed parking area would meet the current needs of the hotel and restaurant (a maximum of 67 spaces as identified in the applicant's survey) and would provide additional parking of one space per room, plus one, a total of 19 spaces. Accordingly, I consider the proposed parking provision would provide sufficient provision for the site. Over-provision would not be desirable as it would not conform to the Government's overarching sustainability agenda which seeks to reduce reliance on the motor car.
- 5.13 The encroachment of the eastern edge of the proposed replacement car park into the MGB is a minor infringement on to the open countryside. The wooded area has been neglected and is therefore in need of a sound management plan. The applicant has suggested a Woodland Management Plan would be entered into and secured by a condition. I consider the requirement of a management plan to be an effective way of ensuring this land is optimised for its long term amenity and biodiversity value.
- 5.14 The majority of tourism spend within the Borough relates to the short break market with visitors staying one to two nights. The provision of value-for-money accommodation is therefore welcomed in this regard. This benefit to the Borough as a whole in terms of increased tourism, added to the benefit a woodland management plan would secure for the site as whole, would, in my opinion provide a special justification to override the harm to the MGB caused by the minor encroachment of the car park in to the Metropolitan Green Belt.
- 5.15 In addition to the above, the proposal would accord with Core Strategy policy CP6 as it would not erode the separate identity of the settlement of Wrotham Heath, or harm the setting or character of Wrotham Heath when viewed from the countryside or from adjoining settlements.
- 5.16 In light of the above considerations, I am satisfied that there is a sufficient case of very special circumstances to override the identified harm to the MGB. I consider the proposal to otherwise accord with Core Strategy policies CP24, CP6, CP13 and CP14 adopted September 2007.

## **6. Recommendation:**

- 6.1 **Grant Planning Permission** in accordance with the following submitted details: Certificate B dated 05.07.2007, Letter dated 05.07.2007, Location Plan dated 05.07.2007, Site Plan 2308/P1 dated 05.07.2007, Site Plan 2308/P2 C dated 05.07.2007, Floor Plan 2308/P3 B dated 05.07.2007, Elevations 2308/P4 dated 05.07.2007, Survey GBA4407.01 dated 05.07.2007, Supporting Statement dated 05.07.2007,

## **Conditions**

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: In pursuance of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- 2 All materials used externally shall match those of the existing building.

Reason: To ensure that the development does not harm the character and appearance of the existing building or visual amenity of the locality.

- 3 No development shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority a scheme of landscaping and boundary treatment. All planting, seeding and turfing comprised in the approved scheme of landscaping shall be implemented during the first planting season following occupation of the buildings or the completion of the development, whichever is the earlier. Any trees or shrubs removed, dying, being seriously damaged or diseased within 10 years of planting shall be replaced in the next planting season with trees or shrubs of similar size and species, unless the Authority gives written consent to any variation. Any boundary fences or walls or similar structures as may be approved shall be erected before first occupation of the building to which they relate.

Reason: Pursuant to Section 197 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and to protect and enhance the appearance and character of the site and locality.

- 4 No development shall take place until details of a woodland management scheme (including a timetable for the works proposed in the scheme) have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority, and the work shall be carried out in strict accordance with those details and the approved timescales.

Reason: To ensure that the development does not harm the character and appearance of the existing building or visual amenity of the locality.

- 5 The use shall not be commenced, nor the premises occupied, until the area shown on the submitted layout as vehicle parking space has been provided, surfaced and drained. Thereafter it shall be kept available for such use and no permanent development, whether or not permitted by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (or any order amending, revoking or re-enacting that Order) shall be carried out on the land so shown or in such a position as to preclude vehicular access to this reserved parking space.

Reason: Development without provision of adequate accommodation for the parking of vehicles is likely to lead to hazardous on-street parking.

- 6 No building shall be occupied until the area shown on the submitted plan as turning area has been provided, surfaced and drained. Thereafter it shall be kept available for such use and no permanent development, whether or not permitted by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995

(or any order amending, revoking and re-enacting that Order), shall be carried out on the land so shown or in such a position as to preclude vehicular access to this reserved turning area.

Reason: Development without provision of adequate turning facilities is likely to give rise to hazardous conditions in the public highway.

- 7 The noise attenuation measures and completed internal noise levels set out within Supporting Statement date stamped 5 July 2007 shall be carried out before the first occupation of the extension hereby permitted, and retained at all times thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of the aural amenity of the occupants of the building.

- 8 No external lighting shall be installed in connection with the development hereby approved unless details have first been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority, and the work shall be carried out in strict accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interests of visual and rural amenity.

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