

Cambridge City Council
Guildhall
Cambridge
CB2 3OJ

FAO: Amy Lack

23 September 2011

Dear Amy,

Ref: Planning Application 11/0988/FUL | Demolition of existing single storey leisure centre, and erection a three storey extension to provide 31 additional bedrooms and a new leisure centre. | **Doubletree By Hilton, Granta Place, Mill Lane, Cambridge CB2 1RT**

With reference to the above application Cambridge Past, Present & Future **strongly objects to the proposal** to develop the site with a higher building than existing for the following reasons:

- **The adverse impact on the Green Belt and Protected Open Space** [Local Plan [LP] Policies 4/1; 4/3] This is highlighted in the **Conservation Plan – Coe Fen & Sheep’s Green (2001)** (e.g. page 41, para 5.1.3 Conservation Policies and Guidance) “*prepare planning briefs for any significant new developments or extensions to existing buildings in the area to ensure that all the issues concerning the site’ interrelationship with Sheep’s Green and Coe Fen are taken into account. Require that these be of high quality and worthy of the location. Consider what impact tall developments even at considerable distance, will have on the skyline around these open spaces.*” We consider this document as essential within the planning process for this area and applicable to this application. To date the applicant has not yet provided such documentation. Despite the reduction in height **the proposed extension is of too big scale and height, massing and bulk** and would result in an adverse impact on the nearby Protected Green Space and the Green Belt; not only when viewed from the immediate vicinity but also from further away within the green corridor/Green Belt - see also Old Press/Mill Lane AAP – page 26 – where the Doubletree Hilton Hotel has been clearly identified as a Negative Landmark . To date no detailed planning brief has been provided nor any assessment highlighting alternative hotel development opportunities within the city. There is no need to extend the hotel at this very sensitive and special site as other viable hotel sites are present in Cambridge and indeed such land use is proposed nearby as part of the [Old Press/Mill Lane Area Action Plan](#) (issued 2010 – see page 34-35 and 38-42, particularly paragraph 6.3.8) and could easily be managed by the same hotel chain/ management and share local facilities.
- **The adverse impact on the Central Conservation Area;** as the proposal neither enhances, nor successfully contrasts the Conservation Area [LP Policy 4/11]. The proposed development does not make any serious attempt through high quality built fabric nor any substantial landscape mitigation to integrate well with its surroundings – this is unacceptable and wholly inappropriate. There is no strategy how the existing hotel

structure would be improved in time and no real commitment by the applicant to contribute positively to the setting of the historic River Cam corridor and Conservation area.

- The Cambridge **Landscape Character Appraisal** [LCA 2003] **categorises this stretch as the River Corridor ‘Commons’** (map p 28) and its significance is highlighted as being of a **‘defining character in relation to Views, Green Corridor and Environmental Features’** (p 23). It also highlights that **“these tracts of land are one of Cambridge’s most important resources as they provide a green bridge right across and through the heart of the City”** (p32) . The proposed extension does not meet the demands as set out by the LCA. The development makes flagrant attempts to mitigate its impact and quite the opposite clearly stating within its Design and Access Statement (additional information dated 28-7-11) with its first bullet point to **“retain and enhance existing views to the River Cam to the South West”**. This is the wrong approach and the common good of the Green Belt land, Protected Open Space and City Wildlife Site should be placed first. The original small mill or subsequent “Garden House character” is not retained – indeed the bulky development of the 1970s is being extended despite high public dislike and totally inadequate integration with its sensitive setting.
- **Overdevelopment of the site** - the development proposal is still too close to the River and the River Corridor and may have an adverse impact on the flood plain [LP Policy 4/15].
- **Adverse impact on an already congested and high conflict area at local junctions** – a) along Granta Place/ Laundress Lane/ Mill Lane and crossing over the Cam and b) Mill Lane with Trumpington Road and Pembroke Street. The increased transport impact of drop-off and the later re-collection of hotel guests and visitors/ public (including greater than before usage of the leisure spa) will result in increased traffic and is unacceptable at this prominent location [LP Policies 4/11; 8/2; 8/3]. Already during recent summer month the problems have exacerbated creating a poor environment for pedestrians (locals and tourists) as well as cyclists using this area at high frequency for commuting and leisure activities along the river and commercial enterprises such as adjacent pub and university centre.

Should the development go ahead we would like to see:

- It is considered that **the proposals are still of poor design** and do not meet LP Policies 3/4; 3/14; 4/15 etc. Although improvements in design have been made, following presentations to the Design and Conservation Panel over recent years, the design is still too visually intrusive on this green space, and river corridor of local importance, particularly in the winter months. Any light spillage from the hotel rooms, the leisure centre and other spaces is unacceptable (this includes light spillage from rooms and staircases) and will result in an adverse and undesirable impact on the Protected Open Space/Green Space and the Conservation Area. No attempt has been made to properly screen the existing building and the proposed extension using appropriate native plant species at low and higher levels (i.e. low formal box hedges and 2 medium-sized trees are not acceptable) all round to edge of the Green Belt. This special site requires a much more sensitively designed building warranting this prime location.
- **Planning Obligation / Section 106** contributions being made to improve the nearby Green Spaces and Commons **using high quality material throughout** – Sheep’s Green & Coe Fen. This should include improvements to the path infrastructure and a reduction in wear and tear; good planting buffers on the edges of the various Commons; improving the public open space at the edge of the River and Mill Lane/Granta Place area whilst

carrying out historic environment restoration and using appropriate materials and native species and improvements to revetments at the edge of the River Cam as well as sluice gates, weirs and punt routes etc.

- **A greater reduction in car parking provision** than that included in the plans and **a stipulation that there be no non-resident parking**. That means no parking for the general public should be provided and a much more detailed transport plan developed and active traffic management undertaken. Overprovision of parking should be addressed and reduced such as enabling further tree planting in this area, to replace car spaces, and should be provided to better mitigate on-site the adverse impact of the bulk and massing of this building particularly with the edge of Coe Fen. Lack of public/ visitor cycle parking is astonishing and needs to be addressed should leisure centre be also used by local people or the hotel receive local visitors.
- Leisure centre provision should **remain accessible to local people** (non-hotel users) as an important recreational facility.

We **strongly object to the proposed development** as the scale and massing will so adversely affect the surrounding special landscape.

If you have any queries regarding this letter please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards



Carolin Göhler

CC Alistair Wilson – Green Space Manager - Cambridge City Council

Cambridge Past, Present & Future —

a local charity working to keep Cambridge and its surroundings special by positively influencing planning developments, delivering environmental education and managing the green spaces and historic buildings in its care — **for the benefit of all.**

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