

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE – 17th DECEMBER 2007

REPORT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES MANAGER

(Author: Nick Moys, Principal Planning Officer (Major Projects))

SNETTERTON: PROPOSED HOTEL/RESTAURANT, THE FLAME RESTAURANT, ADJACENT A11

Applicant: MR & MRS LEER

Reference: 3PL/2007/1568/F

Summary – This report concerns a planning application for a hotel/restaurant development adjacent to the Snetterton Heath employment area. It is recommended that the application is approved.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** This report concerns an application for full planning permission for the development of a 54 bedroom motel and associated restaurant on the site of The Flame Restaurant at Snetterton. The proposed development would be accommodated in a series of interconnected one and two storey blocks of contemporary design. Access to the development would be gained off an existing roundabout, linking directly to existing slip roads onto the A11. Parking for 94 cars would be provided on site, together with space for coach parking. The application is supported by a Design & Statement, Traffic Report and Needs Assessment.
- 1.2** The application site, which extends to 0.83 hectare, is located immediately adjacent to the A11 trunk road at Snetterton. The site was formerly occupied by a petrol filling station and Little Chef restaurant. The filling station has been cleared from the site, but the restaurant building remains and is currently occupied by the Flame Restaurant. Nearby uses include warehousing, industrial units, the Sunday Market and the Snetterton Circuit.

2. KEY DECISION

- 2.1** This is not a key decision.

3. COUNCIL PRIORITIES

- 3.1** The following Council priorities are relevant to this report:
- A safe and healthy environment
 - A well planned place to live and work

4. CONSULTATIONS

- 4.1** Snetterton Parish Council is opposed to the application on the grounds that the development would be too close to the A11 and an existing gas main, and that insufficient information has been provided about traffic.

- 4.2 The Highway Authority has raised no objection to the application, subject to a condition requiring parking to be provided.
- 4.3 The Highways Agency has raised no objection to the application.
- 4.4 National Grid has not objected to the application, and has confirmed that the risk posed by the adjacent gas main is considered to be negligible.
- 4.5 The Council's Tree & Countryside Officer has raised no objection to the application subject to detailed landscaping proposals being submitted.
- 4.6 The Council's Contaminated Land Officer has raised no objection subject to conditions requiring further site investigation.
- 4.7 The Council's Environmental Health Officer has raised no objection subject to conditions relating to foul drainage.

5. **SITE HISTORY**

- 5.1 Planning permission was granted in January 2007 for a 20-bedroom motel and restaurant.

6. **POLICY**

- 6.1 The application site falls outside the Snetterton Heath Employment Area, as defined in the Breckland District Local Plan. Saved Local Plan Policy TRA.5 is relevant to this application.
- 6.2 Relevant national planning policy includes PPG 13 *Transport*, PPS 6 *Planning for Town Centres* and the *Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism*. There is no national planning policy specifically on motorist service areas, although draft guidance has been issued recently for consultation by the Highways Agency,

7. **ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 The principal issues raised by the application concern: i) the extent to which the proposals would accord with planning policy, and ii) the likely impact of the development on the character and appearance of the area.

7.2 **Policy**

- 7.3 The application site lies outside the Snetterton Heath Employment Area, as defined in the Local Plan, in an area where planning policy generally seeks to resist new commercial development. However, the site has a long standing use as a restaurant, and the principle of a hotel development here has been established by the permission granted earlier this year. In order to further justify the proposal, evidence of the need for additional hotel accommodation has been submitted in support of the application.

7.4 The proposed development aims to provide hotel accommodation and a restaurant to serve travellers using the adjacent A11 trunk road. Draft guidance issued recently by the Highways Agency suggests that drivers should not have to travel for more than 15 miles or half-an-hour between service areas. The nearest comparable motel/restaurant facilities adjacent to the A11 are located in Thetford (approximately 14 miles away) and at Thickthorn, Norwich (approximately 15 miles away). The nearest hotel facilities are located on the edge of Attleborough, whilst the closest motorists' restaurant is situated between Attleborough and Wymondham. Being located midway between comparable facilities at Norwich and Thetford, it is considered that the application site is well-located to provide additional motel/restaurant facilities on this section of the A11.

7.5 In addition to the need in relation to the trunk road, it is generally accepted that there is a shortage of hotel accommodation in the locality, particularly in the budget sector. Whilst no evidence has been submitted to show that this need could not be met by other more sequentially preferable sites, the proposed development would nevertheless help to meet in part the local need for additional hotel accommodation, particularly in relation to activities at the nearby Snetterton Motor Racing Circuit.

7.6 Visual Impact

7.7 The application site occupies a prominent 'gateway' location immediately adjacent to the A11 and on one of the main approaches to the Snetterton Heath Employment Area. The existing restaurant building is architecturally uninspiring, and the proposed development therefore offers an opportunity to significantly enhance the appearance of the area.

7.8 It is considered that the design of the proposed development would relate well to its predominantly commercial surroundings and would create an appropriate 'landmark' building. The design of the scheme is contemporary in style, with visual interest provided by a varied roofline, staggered elevations and the use of a range of external materials and finishes. A distinctive drum-shaped building would link the hotel to the restaurant and provide the main entrance development. Landscaping and tree planting is proposed around the perimeter of the site and within the parking areas, to further enhance the appearance of the development. Overall, it is considered that the proposed development would make a positive contribution to the appearance of the area.

8. RECOMMENDATION

8.1 It is recommended that planning permission be granted subject to conditions relating to materials, landscaping, parking, drainage and contaminated land.