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Lead Project Officer  
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**Date:** 20<sup>th</sup> October 2023

**Ref:**

**Officer:** Jon Bird



Dear Mr Williams

**Re: Planning Application P/FUL/2022/06840 Knoll House Hotel, Studland, Dorset -  
Observations on additional and revised supporting information and amended plans.**

1. Officers of the Economic Growth and Regeneration Service have reviewed the additional information, and confirm our continued strong **support** for this application:
2. The context for the application is unchanged:
  - i. The area has a lack of both housing and tourist accommodation, with a high proportion of buildings that could be principal residences being used as second homes and holiday lets. Housing availability and affordability is a serious issue in the area.
  - ii. The area is environmentally sensitive and has official designations and protections, making development of any sort more complex than average.
  - iii. The current hotel complex is in need of upgrading for a variety of reasons.
3. The options in favour of new build remain unchanged:
  - i. In an environmentally sensitive area such as this, redeveloping an existing brownfield site is by far the least damaging option and requires the least - or ideally zero - loss of protected or valuable habitat. It is likely to be the only practical option for development in the area.
  - ii. A new build, even if built to no more than current Building Regulations, will be more energy efficient therefore producing lower carbon emissions, more accessible to users with impaired mobility and senses, and likely have better fire safety measures than any existing building. It appears the proposals to above and beyond the minima required.
4. The laws of physics remain unchanged:

- i. If only Brownfield land is to be used and capacity is to be increased without land take, taller buildings must be allowed: If building out is not allowed, then building up or down is the only way to go.
  - ii. One large-volume building, such as a terrace of houses or apartment block, has a smaller external surface area than a similar volume of smaller individual buildings, which will result in a reduced heat and energy demand. It also requires fewer materials to build, reducing Carbon embodied in the construction and maintenance of the building.
5. The demand for housing and tourist accommodation, especially higher-quality tourist accommodation continues to grow:
  - i. The VisitEngland Hotel Occupancy data for August 2023 indicates that SW England has the highest occupancy in the country (at 84%) especially within larger coastal hotels.
  - ii. The Visit Dorset Consumer survey carried out in March 2023 indicates that within this report sample hotels are the accommodation type most in demand for Dorset at 22%
  - iii. Regular feedback from the Great South West Tourism Partnership on how accommodation businesses are performing, indicates that there is continuously strong demand for high quality accommodation as the visitor markets for this level of accommodation are less likely to be affected by external factors which dictate trends in holiday bookings.
6. The amended application retains the spa, gym, and pool, all of which both improve the leisure offer and provide more specialist jobs than general tourist accommodation.
7. The amended application providing local jobs in construction in the short term, higher quality, more productive, less seasonal jobs in the proposed development in the longer term, and indirect jobs in both the supply chain and the wider visitor economy remains largely unchanged, although the economic opportunities are proportionately reduced by the reduction in guest capacity.
8. The amended application leading to increased guest spend in both the redeveloped site and the local economy remains largely unchanged, although proportionately reduced by the reduction in guest capacity.
9. The reduction in capacity may make a marginal difference to the c.300 people accessing - and therefore potentially degrading - the nearby heathland, but in an area that attracts up to 25,000 visitors a day in peak season, from a non-expert point of view this appears to be immaterial.
10. Architectonic matters such as scaling, mass, finishes, and whether the development has a contemporary or pastiche style are not normally concerns of Economic Development, however it is noted that one respondent to the consultation described the proposed development as potentially being a “transformative outcome at a gateway location”. From an Economic Development point of view, this would be most welcome.