



**Mr. Mark Ketley
Planning Department (West Area)
Northumberland County Council
Hadrian House
Market Street, Hexham
Northumberland NE46 3NH**

1 Lynwood Close
Ponteland
NE20 9GJ

1st February 2010

Dear Mr. Ketley,

Planning Application CM/20090794. 45 Bell Villas; Change of Use of existing building to a Nursing Home; Extensions and New Roof, etc.

I wish to formally object on behalf of The Ponteland Civic Society in respect of the above Planning Application.

We consider that, with a proposed complement of 47 separate bedrooms, this development would be too large for the size of the site and can not reasonably be expected to maintain or improve the scale and appearance of the original building.

Whilst the individual residents' rooms may appear to be small – particularly on the 3rd floor – we presume that the floor areas and ensuite provisions etc., will in all cases comply with the relevant standards, and would ask that you confirm this. It is also important that fire escapes, fire doors, etc., are provided according to the regulations.

We are concerned that the new extension proposed for the rear of the building will intrude towards the residential properties on Eland Haugh and, taken in conjunction with the increased height due to an additional storey, present an unduly overbearing appearance and overlooking of the residents.

Whilst we do not regard the concept of a 3rd storey as being out of the question, we do consider that the proposed front elevation, with the increased height and slope of the roof line, would present an appearance out of character with the existing buildings at Bell Villas.

It is not, in our view, a positive point that the proposed roofline might match that of the nearby Cecil Court or Fratelli's building. The latter, in particular, has a very dominating roof which covers a full-area second floor and which, in our view, should not have been granted Planning Permission in that form. I would further point out that both these buildings are outside the Conservation Area.

Regarding the proposed use of Velux-type windows, we have serious doubts as to whether these will enhance the external appearance of the 3rd floor when viewed from the main road. The proposed dormer windows of an earlier Planning Application would perhaps have been more sympathetic.

We note the proposed provision of 23 car-parking spaces, together with the justification that this figure complies with or exceeds various Standards. However, Ponteland – with Darras Hall in particular – is an area of rather inadequate public transport and where high car ownership is normal. We therefore doubt that this provision will always be adequate and could result in unwanted parking on Eland View to the rear. This would be to the detriment of residents, who have already been troubled in this way due to the adjacent childrens' nursery. We note the argument that “a large proportion of employees (of the Nursing home) could live locally and not require a car” but we consider that this is unlikely to be the case where healthcare professionals are concerned.

We also have been informed, by one of our Members, that there have been past problems of blockages in the foul-water sewer running west from the area of Bellville House. We therefore request that no planning permission be granted for this development until an appropriate survey has been carried out of the available sewerage capacity.

In conclusion, I would mention that it is with some regret that we feel it necessary to object to this Application, since some use does need to be found for this particular building. However, we have to conclude that the overall effect of the proposed changes does not provide any improvement on the previous proposals for a Bijou Hotel. One might also observe that so many changes have been permitted in the past that very little is now left of the original buildings except for parts of the façade.

Yours sincerely,

Philip Ham,
Chairman, Ponteland Civic Society.