

Policy development in the hospitality industry



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Brief 199613 POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Question 1: In the context of the CDM Regulations and the refurbishment of a floor of bedrooms in a multi storey hotel, critically outline the purpose and content of the ' Health and Safety Plan' and ' Health and Safety File'. Discuss the relationship between the two components and how the Health and Safety File will be of benefit to contractors in the future. Critically assess the merits of the Building Regulations application process and construction technique utilised for Mcdonalds modular drive through restaurants.

The following will evaluate the best way of refurbishing a floor of bedrooms in a multi storey hotel so that the renovated building complies with all relevant health and safety legislation and regulations. The requirement to meet all the relevant health and safety legislation and standards means that the designers and the builders of renovations are as legally responsible as the hotel owners for all breeches of those requirements. Failure to meet regulatory standards could leave the constructors liable for civil prosecution or prone to litigation by the hotel owners, the hotel staff besides the hotel guests. Prosecution or litigation that could take years after the original renovation was actually completed (Youell, 2003 p. 99).

The best way to develop a renovation plan that will receive planning permission from the appropriate local authority is to know exactly which health and safety regulations the proposed renovation needs to fully comply with. If the hotel is exempt from any of the health and safety regulations or the hotel owners believe that it is exempt from those standards it is always best to double check. Besides ignorance of the law is not an excuse for

breaking it, and it will not protect contractors from legal action been taken against them. Of more immediate concern for contractors tasked with renovations a failure to abide to all building or health and safety regulations could result in the refusal of planning permission. After all it will only cause delays if the renovation plans are refused planning permission or if such breeches of the health and safety standards are missed at that stage and leave the design firm as well as the hotel owners liable to prosecution or litigation. Renovation work that does not reach the required health and safety standards might not be good enough to last over the long-term without the need to be repaired or eventually replaced due to its low quality (Youell, 2003 p. 99).

Therefore to ensure that the renovation proposals receive planning permission and are legally sound a Health and Safety Plan as well as a Health and Safety File are necessarily developed and maintained to safeguard the building contractors and the hotel owners from both accidents and legal proceedings. The purpose of the health and safety plan is to ensure that the hotel will be fully compliant with the health and safety regulations that it is required to meet so as to function legally as a hotel. To make a fully functioning health and safety plan not only needs a strong knowledge of relevant regulations; it also requires the blueprints or plans for the hotel itself. An understanding of the hotel's layout is essential with regard to making the health and safety plan practical and well designed. The objective of the health and safety plan is to make sure all the safety measures within the hotel are clearly accessible thus allowing both hotel staff and all hotel guests to remain safe in any emergency situation. The content of the health

and safety plan would include the design layout and the exact location of fire fighting equipment, first exits, fire alarms, and any available first aid facilities. The plan should also include where hotel employees and guests meet, should the hotel have to be evacuated, especially in the event of a fire taking hold of the premises. Consideration should also be given to the fitting of smoke alarms, fire alarms, and sprinkler systems (Youell, 2003 p. 99).

Besides considering fire safety procedures, and first aid measures the health and safety plan should include measures to maintain hygiene standards in the kitchens, toilets, dining areas, and the guest bedrooms. Good hygiene standards are needed to ensure that the hotel remains clean, tidy, and free of dirt, allowing the hotel staff and all guests to avoid food poisoning or infection. The plan needs take into account the location of the kitchens, rubbish bins, and toilets in relation to the bedrooms used by guests. Poor hygiene standards and food poisoning could prove to be very bad for the future of the hotel, as it may bring it to the attention of environmental health officers that have the power to close it down until the hotel meets the minimum required regulatory standards (Bloomsbury, 2005 p. 124). Another factor for maintaining the good hygiene of the hotel is the straightforward one of guests not wishing to return to dirty and unclean accommodation (Bloomsbury, 2005 p. 155).

The purpose of the Health And Safety File is to record how the hotel complies with all relevant regulations before, during, and after the proposed renovations. The file is meant to ensure that the hotel sticks to the measures it set out in the Health and Safety Plan. The file should record the health and safety performance of the hotel with regard to the maintenance of

equipment, facilities, as well as all the procedures that enhance safety standards or good hygiene. The Health and Safety File should also keep a note of all the training that the staff at the hotel is given in respect of maintaining and implementing safety measures and all hygiene standards. The hotel staff should ideally be given training to use fire fighting equipment when it is safe to do so, to provide first aid when needed, and carry out practice fire safety drills. When necessary staff will need to be given extra training should they not perform their duties to a high enough level to comply with the standards set out in regulations. The Health and Safety File should also ensure that all hotel guests have access to information about the location of fire safety equipment, first aid facilities, and the assembly point in case of the hotel being evacuated (Youell, 2003 p. 99).

There should be a strong relationship between the Health and Safety Plan and the Health and Safety File. The two items should compliment each other, as together they provide the means to plan and implement safety and hygiene standards at the hotel. The Health and Safety Plan sets out how the safety and hygiene standards will be achieved, whilst the Health and Safety File is intended to record what is actually happening at the hotel in terms of complying with regulations. The Health and Safety File by itself could be very useful to any contractors that need to carry out any building or renovation work at the hotel, as a means of checking the record of the hotel in meeting regulatory requirements. Contractors would be able to consult the Health and Safety File if they have any queries regarding the equipment, facilities, as well as the safety and hygiene procedures used by the staff at the hotel. If the Health and Safety File has been kept up to date consulting it will allow

the contractors to know whether or not the hotel has been adhering to the regulations it is legally supposed to do at all times. Knowing if the hotel is not complying with regulation would give the contractor the opportunity to suggest building alterations or changes in safety and hygiene procedures that if implemented mean the hotel does comply with all relevant regulations (Bloomsbury, 2005 p. 155).

There are ways of ensuring that a company only has to pay minimal attention to completing Health and Safety Plans and Files without breaking the regulations or ignoring the spirit of the law. The fast food company MacDonaldis has probably devised the best way of minimising the planning permission required whilst adhering to the statutory safety and hygiene standards set out in regulations and legislation. As a company MacDonaldis has made its fortune and its reputation by the mass standardisation of its restaurants, equipment, staff training, marketing image, and finally but by no means least its food products. People know what they are going to get when they go into a MacDonaldis anywhere in the world, and more of them like it than dislike it ([www. LHC. ORG. UK](http://www.LHC.ORG.UK)). MacDonaldis believe that the standardisation process is definitely a successful strategy when it comes down to gaining rapid planning permission and complying with safety and hygiene standards. Planning authorities will be made aware by the company that their restaurants are pr-designed to pass safety and hygiene standards, whilst all new staff will be fully trained to make sure that standards are always adhered to (Mason, 2005 p. 44). The senior management are well aware of the benefits of standardisation, if one design passes safety and hygiene standards it is adopting that design for all its restaurants as that

makes financial, marketing, and practical sense to do so (www. LHC. ORG. UK).

MacDonalds have developed modular drive through restaurants as a method of constructing new outlets quickly at the same time as passing the Building Regulations application process. As a company MacDonalds has always set out to have all its ordinary and drive through restaurants designed to look exactly the same as each other as well as also having the same features and equipment. For MacDonalds having restaurants that look the same everywhere they are constructed has been a highly successful branding strategy and exercise that has allowed the firm to expand impressively across the globe. To be more precise it is a global franchise which, has expanded due to its high profits and relatively low capital costs (Mason, 2005 p. 44). However the merits of using modular designs go beyond marketing ploys and serve pragmatic purposes. When MacDonalds set out to design its modular drive through restaurants it certainly took the Building Regulation application process into account. The modular drive through restaurant was designed to meet safety and hygiene standards in as many countries as possible, so that they could be constructed in as many places as the company would like. The low cost of construction when combined with the ease of gaining planning at the same time as being able to pass all safety and hygiene standards makes buying into the MacDonalds franchise a good investment. The prefabricated structures have the advantage of not requiring a high degree of planning permission than buildings wholly constructed on site (www. LHC. ORG. UK).

MacDonalds have found that with experience that prefabricated designs that already fully meet planning requirements and regulations will undoubtedly gain full building permission quickly wherever the proposed restaurant is located. The rapid gaining of building permission allows MacDonalds to have all its new drive through restaurants trading sooner rather than later. The new drive through restaurants thus quickly re-coup their modest construction costs and go into profit. Profits are not only made quickly; they are also made over a long-term basis as well. The use of prefabricated designs and materials therefore allows MacDonalds to expand its total number of restaurants at a much lower capital cost than many of its competitors. The beauty of the modular drive through restaurant design is that it is cheap and durable, yet it could also be quickly modified if it needed to be (Mason, 2005 p. 44). The modular design allows for standardised equipment to be fitted, equipment that could be easily updated modified or completely replaced should building regulations alter, or if the company purchases improved equipment. The modular design is meant to be really simple to construct, maintain and keep clean. The simplicity of the kitchen areas is intended to make it easier to train staff to cook and prepare food as well as cleaning areas to maintain hygiene standards. The training of staff does not take long as all processes and procedures, as well as equipment and food is standardised. The simplicity of the whole operation means that food is prepared, cooked, and served faster (Bloomsbury, 2005 p. 117). Simplicity and standardisation keep costs low, product prices highly competitive, and the company's profits high. Providing that all staff are trained and keep to the procedures they are taught the company should

always be able to maintain safety and hygiene standards whilst never having to wait long for planning permission (www.LHC.ORG.UK).

Question 2: Explain how the analysis of a local authority Development Plan can help the senior management team of a national hotel chain identify a suitable site for a new budget hotel in a particular locality?

The majority of local authorities in Britain will have development plans to control where and whether new businesses or retail units would be constructed within the areas they control the planning for. Local authorities make up Development Plans as a means of generating wealth, creating jobs and regenerating run down districts and would wish to include such firms within their Development Plan. Development Plan would include the precise locations of where the new offices, hotels, and retail units would be sited. The Development Plan provides further useful information for the senior management to consider besides the proposed or the approved locations of other companies. For instance, every Development Plan should give the location of roads, motorways, railways, and rivers near or within the locality controlled by the local authority concerned. Other information that could be relevant to the locating of the new budget hotel could include local tourist attractions or places that would make hotels less attractive for potential guests, like waste ground, factories, or prisons. If the new budget hotel could be located near the most attractive features of the town or city it is a bonus in terms of marketing the hotel before it opens and expanding the number guests once it has opened. If the company has to locate the hotel in a less attractive site the company could consider pulling out of its construction or consider different ways of marketing it if it is actually built. The company

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would however wish to avoid being located in areas where it could not guarantee the safety of their guests and their staff, as more would have to be spent on security measures such as fencing or patrolled car parks. The company could find it useful to contact local people and possibly the Police to find out which parts of the town or city they need to avoid when picking the locality of their new budget hotel. Local authorities will make the Development Plan available for the public and businesses to examine which allows any firms that wish to open premises within the area to apply for a place within that plan. For the Senior Management of a budget hotel chain that would want to open a new hotel inside a particular locality being able to analyse the local authority's Development Plan would offer definite advantages when it comes to making the new budget hotel a long-term success ([www. LHC. ORG. UK](http://www.LHC.ORG.UK)).

The exact location of any new budget hotel could make all the difference between it being a successful part of the firm or it being a loss making failure. From a study of the Development Plan the Senior Management should be aware of the alternative sites available for the location of the proposed new hotel, as well as the placing of other new businesses within the development area. Senior Management should have a strong knowledge of the best places and the worst places to locate new budget hotels when it comes down to maximising the number of guests that stay there. Analysing the Development Plan would make Senior Management fully aware of the local authority intentions of which firms to allocate land to, for the construction of their new outlets, offices, or hotels. The most prestigious firms will want to locate in the most prime positions possible to fit in with

their corporate image, whilst a low budget hotel firm might not need to do the same. A low budget hotel does not have to obtain a prestigious land site, it does however have to be based if at all possible on land that is near to town or city centres, and ideally is easily accessible for as many potential guests as possible. The senior management would find it useful to locate the new budget hotel near the main roads, the railway, close to local businesses, and preferably with free secure car parking spaces available. Such a location would be a good selling point to business travellers and tourists alike. If they could gain an accurate analysis of the Development Plan then it increases the chances of securing a good locality for the new budget hotel (www. LHC.ORG. UK).

The hotel company could benefit from examining the Development Plan as it would allow them to know if they could use prefabricated designs that permit the construction to be finished earlier and thus earning revenue sooner. If the hotel chain already uses prefabricated designs and construction techniques then it will them greater flexibility when it comes down to the precise locality of the new budget hotel. Flexibility that stems from the savings in construction costs being able to provide a bit of leeway if the price of being in a better location is higher than first anticipated. A sound understanding of the development plan would enable senior management to have the locality and the rapid construction of the new budget hotel finalised as soon as possible. Such an understanding would thus grant the company more time to advertise the opening of the new hotel at an early stage to maximise the number of guests upon its opening. The evaluation of the Development Plan would also give senior management a precise idea of the

number of hotels within the town or city that are already built and those hotels that are planned. Knowledge of the hotels within the district gives senior management invaluable information when it comes down to the marketing, and pricing strategy for the new budget hotel which could make all the difference between success and failure. Knowing the nature, location, as well as the strengths and the weaknesses of all its rivals within the locality could certainly prove very beneficial to the senior management in selling the merits of the new budget hotel in relation to its competitors. Senior management could also take advantage of the company's brand name and its reputation. Marketing for the new budget hotel should emphasize that the locality will soon be able to benefit from the arrival of a low cost hotel that happens to provide high quality service (www. LHC. ORG. UK).

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