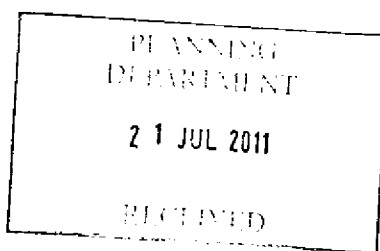


M.P.

Our Ref: DHA/LS/TGH/WHBC 190711



19 July 2011



Planning Development Control  
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council  
The Campus  
Welwyn Garden City  
Hertfordshire  
AL8 6AE

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21 JUL 2011

Dear Sirs

562011/1408FP

**NORTH CAR PARK,  
THE GALLERIA, COMET WAY, HATFIELD, HERTFORDSHIRE, AL10 0XR**

On behalf of Land Securities Galleria Limited, please find enclosed a retrospective planning application for the retention of the existing car wash canopy and the use of a total of 11 car parking spaces in the North Car Park as an ancillary car wash and parking facility for shopping centre customers.

To this end, four copies of all the relevant forms, plans and certificates are enclosed, together with a cheque for the sum of £335.00, made payable to Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council in respect of the requisite planning application fee.

The application proposals have been prepared by taking into account the relevant provisions of the saved policies of the adopted Welwyn Hatfield District Local Plan (2005) and Supplementary Planning Guidance entitled Parking Standards (2004).

**The Application Drawings**

For the avoidance of any doubt, the proposed planning application comprises of the following:

- Drawing No. 1750/SK1//P01 - Site Location Plan
- Drawing No. 1750/SK2/P01 - Block Plan
- Drawing No. 1750/SK3/P01 - Canopy Plans & Elevations
- Photographs 1, 2 & 3 - Car Wash Area
- Sustainability Checklist
- Supporting Planning Statement - Covering letter dated 19 July 2011

**The Site and the Surrounding Area**

The application site comprises a small area within the North Car Park, which is divided in the middle in an east-west direction by the existing vehicular access road arrangements associated with the North Car Park.

To the north of the access road, there is a total of 5 car parking spaces and to the south of the access road, there is a total of 6 car parking spaces. The car parking spaces combined together with the access road intersection has a total site area of 203.5 sqm (0.02 hectares).

## **Planning History**

There is no specific planning history in relation to this part of the application site save for the fact that its authorised use in connection with The Galleria Outlet Centre is for the provision of customer car parking, comprising a total of 11 car parking spaces as part of the wider car parking facilities for the shopping centre, which total 1,748 car parking spaces.

## **The Application Proposals**

The proposed retrospective planning application seeks the retention of the existing car wash canopy, which is a free standing structure supported by two metal posts secured within the ground on the north side of the access road over the existing car parking spaces and the use of this area for the purposes of washing customer cars. The car parking space to the far western end of this area houses all of the car wash equipment including lockers and bins. The remaining 4 car parking spaces are clear for the parking of cars to be washed and the car wash canopy extends over 4 of the existing car parking spaces.

To the south of the access road, there are a further 6 car parking spaces, which are used in connection with the car wash facility for customers, but this area is simply used for the parking of customer cars who have elected to have their car washed whilst shopping at The Galleria.

## **Planning Assessment**

In terms of the saved policies contained within the adopted Welwyn Hatfield District Local Plan (2005), there are no specific planning policies, which deal with ancillary or dual uses associated with existing car parks in out of centre shopping locations and therefore each case would need to be considered on its individual merits.

However, it would be appropriate to have due regard to saved Policy M14 of the adopted Local Plan (2005) and Supplementary Planning Guidance entitled Parking Standards (2004) with regard to car parking standards.

## **Background**

The existing car wash facility, which is operated by a company called Car Valet (UK) Limited, is a very common ancillary use and facility found within shopping centres and retail parks.

Car Valet has over 50 sites across the UK, predominantly operating from shopping centre car parks and retail parks. They are one of the largest car wash and valeting companies in the UK. They have been operating at the application site for some 5 years.

All Car Valet sites operate with a manager and assistant who liaise regularly with Centre Management to ensure a smooth operation. In addition, their area managers regularly visit the sites for quality control. Car Valet operates solely from designated valeting areas within shopping centre car parks.

Some of Car Valet's other operations in the region include The Harvey Centre, Harlow, The Howard Centre, Welwyn Garden City, The Maltings, St Albans and Castle Mall, Norwich. Others include The Oracle, Reading, Lakeside, Thurrock and Cascades, Portsmouth. More details can be viewed by visiting their website at [www.carvaletuk.co.uk](http://www.carvaletuk.co.uk).

## **Use**

The proposed use involves the washing of customer cars to The Galleria during their shopping trip. Those customers wishing to have their car washed would park their car in the designated 6 car parking spaces to the south side of the access road. They would purchase a car parking ticket in the usual way and hand their car keys to the car wash attendant.

Whilst the customer is conducting their shopping trip, the car wash operators would move the customer car from the designated 6 car parking spaces on the south side of the access road to the north side within the designated car wash area. The customer car would be washed in accordance with the car wash option selected by the customer and the attendant, after completing the wash, would park the customer car back into the designated 6 car parking spaces on the south side of the access road.

During very busy periods, there will be instances, where the designated 6 car parking spaces to the south side of the access road are full. The car wash operators work very closely with the Centre Management and their car parking attendants and where high demand is witnessed for car washes, the car parking attendants will ensure that car parking spaces close to the car wash area within the North Car Park are kept free for customers wishing to have their car washed.

The demand for the proposed car wash facility is dependant upon two main factors, which are inter-linked. The first is in relation to the number of car-borne shopping trips made to The Galleria and the second is in relation to the weather. There is a strong correlation that on dry and sunny days, there is a greater demand for the car wash facility as opposed to wet and windy days. The car wash operators and the car parking attendants between them operate a very flexible system involving the North Car Park.

The proposed car wash facility is therefore an ancillary, complementary or perhaps even a parasitic use because it is feeding off customer cars that would be parked by shoppers to The Galleria in any event. It is not a destination facility in its own right.

## **Hours of Operation and Staff Numbers**

The proposed car wash facility operates the same hours as The Galleria given its ancillary relationship and function to the shopping centre. The proposed car wash facility employs between 2 to 6 full time or part time equivalent staff. This is very much dependant upon climate and demand, which varies from the weekday to the weekend.

## **Design Considerations**

The only design considerations in respect of the proposed development relate to the retention of the car wash canopy to the north side of the access road together with the equipment lockers and display panels.

The proposed canopy has a width of 16 metres and depth of 10 metres. The canopy is mounted on two metal posts, which result in the canopy having a maximum height of 8.5 metres reducing to 6 metres around the perimeter. The general scale and form of the canopy maintains a very subservient relationship to the surrounding buildings and features.

The canopy itself is a light grey fabric material, which is attached to a galvanised steel frame supported on two galvanised steel posts fixed into the ground. The car wash canopy is open on all sides and therefore has a very light and airy feel about it and the colour scheme respects the existing nearby light grey buildings associated with The Galleria.

The screen and display panels together with the two equipment lockers situated along the perimeter of the car wash area help to provide a degree of enclosure and focal point amongst the existing hard and soft landscape features together with the pedestrian and vehicular access arrangements.

### **Amount, Layout, Scale, Landscaping and Appearance**

The proposed development involves the use 5 car parking spaces for the purposes of washing customer cars and 6 car parking spaces for the purposes of receiving customer cars.

The proposed development involving a total of 11 car parking spaces would not alter the layout, ingress and egress arrangements of the North Car Park. In fact the 6 car parking spaces to the south side of the access road would remain exactly the same. The layout of the 5 car parking spaces to the north side of the access road would also remain the same but with the introduction of the canopy and associated structure, display panels and equipment lockers would mean that only 4 car parking spaces would be capable of being used. Hence, a reduction of one car parking space.

The existing hard and soft landscape features associated with the authorised car park would not be altered by the proposed development as all existing features would be retained.

The appearance of the proposed development has been considered above under the heading of Design Considerations. That said, the proposed structure is a lightweight design incorporating colours that would not detract from the appearance of the surrounding area.

### **Car Parking and Highway Safety**

The proposed development would admittedly result in the loss of one former useable car parking space. However, the remaining 10 car parking spaces would still be available for car parking, albeit for customers having their cars washed.

In the context of the total number of 1,748 car parking spaces available within The Galleria, none of which have ever reached saturation point, it is very improbable that the loss of one car parking space would result in any overflow car parking or implications for the safety of other road users or pedestrians.

Allied with the above, the proposed development would not alter any of the pedestrian or vehicular access arrangements either to or within the North Car Park and to this end the safety of pedestrians and other users of the car park and highway would not be affected.

In order to put the use and activity associated with the proposed car wash facility into context, The Galleria has a throughput of customer cars averaging about 10,000 per day. The average number of customer cars washed at the car wash facility is in the order of 20-25 cars per day with an absolute maximum of 30 cars per day. This equates to a maximum of 0.3%.

### **Residential Amenity**

The proposed car wash facility is too remote from the surrounding residential properties and their respective boundaries in order to result in any harmful impact. With the proposed car wash facility being located centrally within the North Car Park towards the northern end and adjacent to the main ingress and egress off Comet Way, much of the noise associated with the comings and goings of cars would be no different to the use of the remainder of the car park.

## **Daylighting, Sunlighting, Overlooking and Privacy**

The proposed development would have no implications insofar as matters of daylighting, sunlighting, overlooking and privacy are concerned as these matters were long established in respect of the original consent for The Galleria.

## **Centre Management and Shared Facilities**

The applicant in capacity of owner and manager of The Galleria is responsible for the provision, care and maintenance of all the shared services and facilities and these would continue to be provided to the highest standards and in compliance with any regulations.

To this end, matters such as servicing, fire escapes, emergency access, staff and customer parking, public access together with inclusive access, sustainability and general well being would all be co-ordinated through the Centre Management in order to maintain the highest standards of health and safety.

## **Conclusion**

In my assessment of the proposed development, I have demonstrated in all respects that the application proposal would not be in conflict with any relevant saved policies of the adopted Local Plan. Section 38 (6) of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) states that where a proposal is in accordance with the Development Plan and there are no other material considerations to indicate otherwise, there should be a presumption in favour of the proposed development. In view of this statutory requirement, I would hope that your Council would support my client's development proposals and grant planning permission.

I trust that all the application papers and plans are complete and once the planning application has been registered, I will endeavour to contact the relevant Officer to ascertain his views and a timescale to a decision. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to call me if you have any queries and I will endeavour to assist in any way I can.

Yours faithfully



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Encls.