



# Statement of Community Engagement

## Comet Hotel, Hatfield

August 2016

Prepared by: Jack Appleton

Reviewed by: Catherine Norris

Alder King Planning Consultants

Pembroke House, 15 Pembroke Road, Clifton, Bristol BS8 3BA

Email: [jappleton@alderking.com](mailto:jappleton@alderking.com)

Tel: 0117 317 1174



## Contents

1.0	Introduction .....	1
2.0	Planning Policy.....	1
3.0	Pre-Application Discussions.....	2
4.0	Public Consultation .....	5
5.0	Response to Pre-Application Discussions and Public Consultation .....	8
6.0	Conclusion .....	9

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Alder King Planning Consultants have been instructed by Fusion Hatfield Hotels Ltd to prepare a full planning and listed building consent application for the proposed redevelopment of the Comet Hotel, Hatfield AL10 9RH.
- 1.2 The planning application is made following the refusal of a previous planning application on the site (6/2015/1997/MJA), which sought to redevelop the site for a 99 bedroom hotel, 361 beds of student accommodation and 127 car parking spaces on the site. The reasons for refusal of the planning application related to the impact of the development on the listed building, adjoining residential amenity and the amenity of future residents. The planning application provides a revised scheme for the redevelopment of the site which seeks to respond to address the reasons for refusal by reducing the amount and scale of development on the site, providing a smaller scale new hotel (serviced apartments, 56 beds) and student accommodation (308 beds) supported by 100 car parking spaces.
- 1.3 The approach that has underpinned both of the planning proposals is to regenerate the Comet Hotel site by securing a viable future for the Grade II Listed Comet Hotel, through refurbishment and extension (Use Class C1) and providing much needed high quality student accommodation (Sui Generis) in a sustainable location.
- 1.4 Extensive pre-application discussions with Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council have been undertaken to inform the planning proposals. In addition to this, the design of the scheme has been informed by consultations with Members of the Development Consultative Forum (DCF, September 2015), Hatfield Town Council (August 2016) and the local community and with local stakeholders (September 2015 and August 2016). Taken together, these discussions have provided welcome and constructive feedback which has been used to inform our planning application. These are set out in detail in this statement relating to both the revised application and the current application.

## 2.0 Planning Policy

- 2.1 The NPPF confirms the benefits of early engagement on planning application proposals during the pre-application period. Although there is no requirement on the development to enter into these discussions, it is encouraged as good practice. Benefits include the potential to improve the effectiveness of the planning system including creating improved outcomes for communities (para 188). Paragraph 188 – 190 and paragraph 195 of the NPPF states:

*“Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community.”*

- 2.2 Local planning authorities have a key role to play in encouraging other parties to take maximum advantage of the pre-application stage. They cannot require that a developer engages with them before submitting a planning application, but they should encourage take-up of any pre-application services they do offer. They should also, where they think this would be beneficial, encourage any applicants who are not already required to do so by law to engage with the local community before submitting their applications.

- 2.3 The more issues that can be resolved at pre-application stage, the greater the benefits. For their role in the planning system to be effective and positive, statutory planning consultees will need to take the same early, pro-active approach, and provide advice in a timely manner throughout the development process. This assists local planning authorities in issuing timely decisions, helping to ensure that applicants do not experience unnecessary delays and costs.
- 2.4 The participation of other consenting bodies in pre-application discussions should enable early consideration of all the fundamental issues relating to whether a particular development will be acceptable in principle, even where other consents relating to how a development is built or operated are needed at a later stage. Wherever possible, parallel processing of other consents should be encouraged to help speed up the process and resolve any issues as early as possible [...]
- 2.5 Applicants and local planning authorities should consider the potential of entering into planning performance agreements, where this might achieve a faster and more effective application process.”
- 2.6 In respect of design evolution with local planning authorities, the NPPF states at paragraph 62 that:  
  
*“Local planning authorities should have local design review arrangements in place to provide assessment and support to ensure high standards of design...In general, early engagement on design produces the greatest benefits. In assessing applications, local planning authorities should have regard to the recommendations from the design review panel.”*
- 2.7 Paragraph 195 sets out that where appropriate applicants and local planning authorities should consider the potential of entering into a planning performance agreement.

## 3.0 Pre-Application Discussions

### **Refused planning application 6/2015/1997/MJA**

- 3.1 The applicant, Fusion Hatfield Hotels Ltd, acquired the Comet Hotel three years ago with the intention of improving and developing this landmark site.
- 3.2 Several options were explored including a collaboration scheme with the University of Hertfordshire, owing to the site’s proximity to the De Havilland campus. These proposals comprised a new business school building and a new 5 star hotel for those attending the business school, together with new, high quality student accommodation.
- 3.3 Other discussions were held with two national operators to convert the Comet Hotel into a restaurant.
- 3.4 For various commercial reasons, neither of these schemes were progressed and the decision was taken to progress a new, high quality scheme for the development of the site with Fusion Hatfield Hotels Ltd as the sole applicant.
- 3.5 An initial meeting was held with the Council in July 2014 in order to discuss the early plans and sketches. The Council subsequently provided a letter giving general advice on the proposals and identified key issues.

This letter discussed the principle of the continued use of the site for a hotel and confirmed that proposals for student accommodation would need to be justified through a demonstration of need.

- 3.6 In terms of the listed building, it was confirmed that any new development to replace the existing hotel extension (to be removed) would need to enhance the setting of the listed building and demonstrate how the development would form a cohesive development within the immediate area. It was suggested that the redevelopment of the site offers the opportunity to provide enhancements to the listed building. The feedback also highlighted the need to consider neighbouring amenity (in terms of new built form and through the introduction of a new student population), amenity of future occupants, highway safety & parking and the effect of the development on existing trees and landscaping.
- 3.7 On 22 April 2015, the applicant team met with Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council Planning Department. This meeting focused on the principle of the proposed development and the merits of the proposed design whereas later discussions progressed the scheme in finer detail.
- 3.8 At this meeting, the applicant committed to entering into a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) which has the effect of committing the applicant and the Local Planning Authority to adopt a collaborative approach to taking forward the planning application, tied by certain actions and timescales prior to and during the course of the application. The preparation and signing of the PPA ensured key planning issues were highlighted early in the process allowing issues to be addressed and resolved prior to the submission of the formal application. A copy of the PPA (with particulars redacted) is attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 3.9 On 22 May 2015, the applicant team met again with Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council Department, on this occasion with members of the Planning and Heritage teams. Two options for the development of the site were tabled at the meeting which provided 1) Option 1: 125 bed hotel and 402 student bed, 2) Option 2: 80 bed hotel and 450 student beds.
- 3.10 All parties agreed that the significance of the existing listed building was diminished by the poor quality existing built development to the south. Any scheme for the redevelopment of the site should aim to improve upon the setting of the listed building by removing poor quality additions and improving the setting of the listed building.
- 3.11 To that end, the Council responded to the proposed development scheme as follows:
- Support the principle of student development being set back and acting as a backdrop to the listed building;
  - Felt that the new build elements of the scheme were too tall, within this context;
  - Considered that a design approach should echo some of the characteristics of the existing building without diluting its prominence;
  - Would like to see the greater use of reflectivity in the building;

- Would like further attention to be placed on the design of the development at the junction with the A1057 (St Albans Road W) to the north;
- Support the retention of trees and a sensitive approach to the public realm/car parking.

3.12 A further meeting with the Council was held on 19 June 2015 where another design solution for the site was tabled in response to the Council's comments. This proposal provided:

- A rationalised footprint of the new build element to promote a symmetry of form;
- A change to the use of materials, to use glazing with vertical brick strips with deep recess behind a pilaster screen to create shadow across the elevation;
- Student accommodation along the edges of the site, at Comet Way and at St Albans Road West with the aim of helping to 'frame' the listed building by acting as a backdrop to the listed building.

3.13 Following this meeting written pre-application advice was received from the Case Officer (by letter dated 30 June 2015). Comments fell into three broad areas, namely – Listed Building and Heritage Design Considerations – The Comet; Principle of Student Accommodation; and General Design. The pre-application letter is provided in **Appendix 2**. This established, amongst other matters, that the principle of development on the site was acceptable.

### **Revised planning application**

3.14 Following refusal of the planning application, the consultant team met with Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council in February 2016 to discuss the way forward. The potential for a planning appeal against the decision was discussed and/or a revised scheme to address the reasons for refusal. Officer's views on the reasons for refusal were sought, including the manner in which these could be overcome in a revised design proposal. The applicant team agreed to explore whether a revised scheme was possible and to meet with the Council again to present the revised proposals.

3.15 After an extensive period of design revision, the consultant team presented revised proposals for the redevelopment of the site to the Council in May 2016. The scheme reduced the maximum height across the site from five to four stories, with a breaking up of the mass of the 'rear block' to provide a more domestic scale of development. This led to a consequential reduction overall bed numbers across the site. Within this context, in order to ensure that the hotel proposition was viable, serviced accommodation was proposed which provided a maximum stay of 90 days for residents. At the meeting, the Council welcomed the overall reduction in development across the site and confirmed that the use and form of the development was broadly acceptable. Officers deferred to the Conservation Officer to provide further advice on the appearance of the development, including materials in order to move the scheme forward.

3.16 The Conservation Officer provided a response in June 2016. He retained his objection to the height of the hotel extension maintaining that it should be provided at a lower height than the listed building. Regarding materials, he felt that the treatment provided through the approved scheme was more appropriate because

it allowed the listed building to be seen against a plain backdrop. The brick provided through the proposals were considered to provide too fussy a backdrop and result in a loss of the pre-eminence of the listed building.

- 3.17 The consultant team revised the proposals in response to the Conservation Officer's concerns, providing increased glazing through the use of floor to ceiling windows and reducing the use of brick across the site. A meeting with the Council was held in July 2016 to present the revised proposals. At this meeting it was explained that the hotel extension could not be reduced in height. Additional hotel rooms could not be provided within the Grade II Listed building, without affecting the historic fabric. In order to ensure it continued use as a hotel was viable, the extension was required at a minimum height as proposed. Otherwise, the management of the hotel and student users on site was discussed and it was agreed that details would be provided to support the resubmission. The approach to public consultation was also agreed, including potentially providing local councillors the opportunity to visit the site, meeting the Town Council and the local community.

## 4.0 Public Consultation

### Refused planning application 6/2015/1997/MJA

#### *Development Consultative Forum*

- 4.1 The applicant team presented the scheme to the Development Consultative Forum (DCF) in September 2015. The DCF is made up of local Members and attended by the general public. The Council encourage applicants of larger schemes to present their proposals to the Development Consultation Forum during the pre-application period to give councillors and the public the opportunity to seek more information and understanding about proposed large scale planning applications. On Tuesday 25 August 2015, the Council erected notice on the Comet Hotel site to notify interested parties of the Development Consultative Forum Meeting to be held on 9 September 2015. The DCF Report was produced by Planning Officers and circulated to Members of the DCF. A copy of this report is provided at **Appendix 3**.
- 4.2 The panel for the DCF Meeting comprised two Planning Officers, a Heritage Officer and three Members. A number of Members were also present in the audience for the meeting together with several members of the local community. The Planning agent for the University of Hertfordshire also attended the meeting to speak as an interested party. The applicant team presented the proposals for the Comet Hotel and answered questions from interested parties. A copy of the presentation made is provided at **Appendix 4**.
- 4.3 Primarily questions came in response to the level of car parking that was proposed for the site together with the control of anti-social behaviour from student users of the site. Local residents reported that students attending the University of Hertfordshire tended to park in local streets, causing congestion, and engaging in nuisance behaviour. They were very keen to see that this behaviour was not repeated on the Comet Hotel site.
- 4.4 The University of Hertfordshire also spoke to object to the proposals, on the basis that it would compromise the University's wider development proposals for the area. The applicant team responded to say that the Council had accepted the principle of student development on the Comet Hotel site and research from CBRE

confirmed that there is sufficient demand in the area for both the University's development proposals and the Comet Hotel site.

*Public consultation*

- 4.5 In August 2015, occupiers of commercial and residential properties neighbouring the site were invited to a public consultation event to be held on 10 September 2015. An advert for the public consultation appeared on the public notices page of the Welwyn Hatfield Times on Wednesday 26 August, notifying interested parties from a wider catchment about the public consultation.
- 4.6 The public consultation event was held on Thursday 10 September 2015 at Howe Dell Community Hall running from 18.00 - 19.00hrs. The exhibition included information about the developer and the proposed development which included plans, photographs and visuals. Representatives from Fusion Hatfield Hotels Ltd as well as members of the design and planning team were available to discuss the proposed development and answer any questions. A copy of the exhibition material is provided at **Appendix 5**.
- 4.7 The public consultation was attended by approximately 25 individuals, including residents of Ashby Close and Selwyn Drive, the wider area, local businesses and councillors. Attendees were offered the opportunity to provide written feedback on the proposals on the day or by email following the event. In total five responses have been received (Attached at **Appendix 6**).
- 4.8 Of the responses received, three provided balanced feedback expressing both support for some aspects of the proposals such as the refurbishment of the Grade II Listed Hotel whilst expressing concerns about other aspects. One of the responses highlighted that the scheme as a whole had a lot of merit and one was against the development as a whole.
- 4.9 As with the DCF meeting the issue of student parking was the most consistent concern at the consultation and formed part of two of the responses. There was concern that the "zero parking" student development would not work and the restriction on residents having cars could not be enforced in practice, and ultimately would lead to an increase in students parking in nearby roads. It was explained that this issue would be controlled through a Green Travel Plan, the leases of residents and strengthened by existing on-street parking restrictions (see Paragraph 5.2).
- 4.10 Several responses also raised concern raised in relation to the neighbouring amenity of the residential properties to the west. However, these generally conceded that this could be dealt with through additional planting to screen views at this boundary.
- 4.11 Concern was raised that the development could be used to expand the University resulting in an increase in student numbers. It was explained that the developer has no links to the University. The purpose built student accommodation would meet an existing need (CBRE - Welwyn Hatfield Student Supply and Demand Report, March 2015) and would draw students away from the private rental sector into purpose built student accommodation.



## Revised planning application

### *Councillor Engagement*

- 4.12 Discussions were held with Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's political leadership to inform of the revised proposals. The approach of seeking to respond to the original reasons for refusal and avoid an appeal hearing was welcomed.
- 4.13 The three ward councillors for Hatfield Villages Ward, in which the site is situated, were also contacted to inform them of the revised planning application and to welcome their input on the proposals. Again, the approach of seeking to find a mutually agreeable solution for the site was welcomed and it was undertaken to keep the ward members fully updated throughout the process.

### *Presentation to Welwyn Hatfield Town Council*

- 4.14 On 8th August 2016, Fusion Hatfield Hotels Ltd and the consultant team presented the revised proposals to Hatfield Town Council. A copy of the presentation is provided at **Appendix 7**.
- 4.15 The meeting was well attended by town councillors. The Mayor opened the meeting, introducing the consultant team. Cllr Broach provided an update on the planning position of the scheme, since the past meetings. Cllr Jack Benson asked where alternative Fusion Students' schemes were, noting that Hatfield was not a large town like some of the other locations mentioned such as Bristol. Cllr Juggins asked questions about the design of the scheme and matters relating to presentation at the previous planning committee. Cllr Knott asked for details about bin collection. Cllr Brandon questioned the reduction in the hotel use and was interested in proposals for transport, green travel and fire provision. The team answered all the questions in turn, inviting the town council to attend the public consultation if they would like any further details about the proposals.

### *Public Consultation*

- 4.16 The public consultation event was held on Wednesday 17 August 2016 at Comet Hotel (the application site) from 12.00 to 19.00hrs. Local councillors and stakeholders were invited to a 'stakeholders preview' from 11.00 to 14.00hrs. Local residents and occupiers of adjoining commercial premises were then invited to the event from 14.00 to 19.00hrs. The exhibition included information about the developer and the proposed development which included plans, photographs and visuals. Representatives from Fusion Hatfield Hotels Ltd as well as members of the design and planning team were available to discuss the proposed development and answer any questions. A copy of the exhibition material is provided at **Appendix 8**.
- 4.17 All parties that were invited to the previous public consultation were invited once again to the public consultation in addition all parties that made representations on the planning file of the refused planning application. An advert for the public consultation appeared within the Welwyn Hatfield Times, notifying interested parties from a wider catchment about the public consultation.

- 4.18 The public consultation was attended by approximately 19 individuals, including residents of Ashby Close and Selwyn Drive, the wider area, local businesses, local town and district councillors. Attendees were offered the opportunity to provide written feedback on the proposals on the day or by email following the event. In total three responses have been received (provided with particulars redacted at **Appendix 9**).
- 4.19 All of the responses received welcomed the revised proposals for the regeneration of the Grade II Listed Comet Hotel. When asked whether any comments could be offered on the design of the development relating, for instance, to the quality, layout, landscaping or parking proposals one individual said “*no, appears to have taken account of comments*” and another that the “*hotel extension is a great improvement on the current building*”. Two parties commented that a hedge around the boundary should be provided. Two of the three parties agreed that the car free element of the scheme should be enforceable via the students’ contract, with one respondent unsure of their opinion on this. Finally all parties agreed that the scheme was an improvement on the refused planning application. Only one additional comment was provided, which noted that “*serviced apartments is a really good idea, instead of a conventional hotel of which there are several in the area.*”

## 5.0 Response to Pre-Application Discussions and Public Consultation

### Refused planning application 6/2015/1997/MJA

- 5.1 The applicant team welcomes the comments made during the pre-application period, from Welwyn Hatfield District Council, occupiers from neighbouring properties and, commercial businesses, members, councillors and the general public. We have sought to address the comments raised by providing further information on our client’s proposals and by redesigning the scheme. This has given rise to the following changes:
- A reduction in the height of student accommodation across the site, with all blocks being lowered by 1.19m;
  - The hotel extension is lowered by 0.19m. This has resulted in the hotel extension only being 1.9m taller than the listed building, and providing a backdrop to enhance the silhouette of the listed building and screen the student buildings behind;
  - The student accommodation to the south of the site is now just 540mm higher than the ridge of the lowest neighbouring residential property and 300mm lower than the highest ridge; and
  - The four storey building backs onto the end property on Ashbury Close. The ridge of this end property is 840mm higher than the neighbouring properties. At the third floor, before the step back, the height of the building is comparable to this ridge. The fourth floor is then stepped back to increase the distance away by 1.5m to maintain the 25m distance, and which is then 2.7m higher.
- 5.2 In response to concerns raised about the impact of the development on parking in the locality, we are pleased to provide a detailed Transport Assessment and Green Travel Plan to accompany this application for planning permission. Our detailed proposals for the control of the parking impact of the development is set out in these documents.

## Revised planning application

5.3 The applicant team welcomes the comments made during the pre-application period of the revised planning application, from Welwyn Hatfield District Council, occupiers from neighbouring properties and, commercial businesses, members, councillors and the general public. We have sought to address these comments together with the reasons for refusal of the previous planning application in the following ways:

- We have reduced the overall bed numbers on the site by 100 beds;
- The reduction in bed numbers has, in turn, reduced the parking requirements and mean that an additional surplus allowance of 28 spaces is available to visitors of the student accommodation;
- We have reduced the height and massing of the buildings on the site, ensuring that the tallest building on the site is now 4 stories;
- A revised design and appearance of the buildings has also been provided to give the development a more domestic appearance appropriate to the reduced amount and size of the development on the site;
- We have increased distances of the building from the rear boundary which adjoins neighbouring residential properties in Asbury Close and Selwyn Crescent;
- The directional, oblique windows along the rear boundary are retained and developed as part of the design.

## 6.0 Conclusion

6.1 The applicant, Fusion Hatfield Hotels Ltd, and the applicant team welcome the comprehensive and very constructive feedback received during the pre-application period from the Council, local residents, commercial operators, members and councillors.

6.2 From gestation of the original scheme to the revised planning proposals now provided, the applicant has made significant changes to respond to the direct comments made by all parties as well as for technical reasons and design development working with the Council. The revised proposals have gone to significant lengths to respond to the matters raised and we look forward to our proposals being considered as part of the revised planning application.

## **APPENDIX 1**

## **PLANNING PERFORMANCE AGREEMENT**

This Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) is made                      day of July 2015 between

- 1) Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, AL8 6AE ("WHBC")
- 2) Fusion Hatfield Hotels Ltd, Fusion House, The Green, Letchmore Heath, Watford, WD25 8ER ("Developer")

### **1. Recitals**

- 1.1 WHBC is the local planning authority for development within the area in which the Development (set out in Schedule 1) is located.
- 1.2 The Developer intends to submit a Planning Application for the Development to WHBC.
- 1.3 The Developer has entered into pre-application discussions with WHBC regarding the Development.
- 1.4 The Planning Application will be an application for planning permission (and any related applications for listed building consent) submitted to WHBC for the Development accompanied by such of the Application Documents (specified in Schedule 2) as are required by the local planning authority. Reference to a Planning Application in this PPA is to an application or applications that will be submitted to WHBC by the Developer and WHBC have registered it/them on the statutory register as valid planning application(s).
- 1.5 Given the complexity of the proposals and the range of issues involved, it is acknowledged by the Developer and WHBC that comprehensive pre-application discussions will need to be entered into, to ensure that the statutory determination periods are accorded. Nevertheless both parties will ensure that the application(s) is considered having regard to the timetable set out in this PPA and compliance with relevant statutory procedures.
- 1.6 This PPA seeks to agree requirements and timescales for the pre-application process and requirements and timescales for the consideration and determination of the Planning Application for the purposes of providing the parties with a level of certainty as to the process and timescale to be followed; and
- 1.7 This PPA is made pursuant to Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 and Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003.
- 1.8 This PPA shall not fetter or constrain WHBC in exercising its statutory duties, rights, powers discretions and responsibilities as local planning authority. This PPA shall not prejudice the outcome of the Planning Application or the impartiality of WHBC as a Local authority in any way.

1.9 This PPA shall not restrict or inhibit the Developer from exercising their right of appeal under Section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

## **2. Term**

2.1 This PPA shall apply from July 2015 and shall remain in force until the Decision Date or Conditions are Discharged (see Schedule 6) unless terminated earlier pursuant to clause 4.

2.2 Upon its expiry or earlier termination this PPA shall automatically terminate.

## **3. Amendment and Review**

3.1 The PPA shall be subject to review as may be agreed between the Developer and WHBC and any agreed variation of its terms shall be evidenced in writing signed by both parties.

## **4. Breach and Termination**

4.1 Provided always that any breach is within the control of the party that is in breach, if either party considers that:

- a. the circumstances that brought about this PPA no longer apply;
- b. the principles and intentions of this PPA are not being followed; or
- c. there is a material failure by the other party to comply with the terms of this PPA;

it shall draw their concerns to the attention of the other party. The other party will then have a period of not less than 10 working days within which to comment on and/or address the concerns. If the concerns are not addressed, the first party may then terminate the agreement at any point following the expiry of that period.

4.2 The PPA shall also be terminated where:

- a. the Developer submits an appeal under Section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 in relation to the Planning Application (for whatever reason);
- b. the Planning Application is called in by the Secretary of State.

## **5. Joint Working**

5.1 All Parties shall act with fairness and good faith in respect of all matters related to the pre-application process and the handling of the Planning Application and will work jointly in complying with their respective obligations under this PPA.

## **6. Developer's Obligations**

6.1 The Developer agrees to use its reasonable endeavours to:

- a. follow the agreed Pre-application Progress Plan (set out in Schedule 5);
- b. submit the Planning Application to WHBC for the Development (set out in Schedule 1) by the Commencement Date (set out in Schedule 6);
- c. submit such of the Application Documents (set out in Schedule 2) as are required by the local planning authority, in the format(s) requested with the Planning Application when it is submitted to WHBC;
- d. comply with the Performance Standards (set out in Schedule 3); and
- e. comply with the Performance Deadlines (set out in Schedule 6).

## **7. WHBC's Obligations**

7.1 Without prejudice to its other obligations as local planning authority, WHBC agrees to use its reasonable endeavours to:

- a. designate a planning officer(s) who alone or as part of a team be responsible for overseeing or carrying out the functions in accordance with this PPA;
- b. follow the agreed Pre-application Progress Plan (set out in Schedule 5);
- c. comply with the Performance Standards (set out in Schedule 4); and
- d. comply with the Performance Deadlines (set out in Schedule 6).

## **8. Fees**

8.1 In consideration of this PPA, and in addition to the application fees payable under Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications, Deemed Applications, Requests and Site Visits) Regulations 2012 upon submission of the Planning Application, the Developer agrees to pay:

- (a) WHBC's pre-application charges of £24900 inclusive of VAT to assist WHBC in providing the level of service required to meet its obligations under this PPA, to be paid in the following time periods:
  - a. £8300 within 15 working days following the signing of this PPA;
  - b. £8300 within 2 months following the date of signing this PPA;
  - c. £8300 within 4 months following the date of signing this PPA.

8.2 The Developer shall have 15 working days following receipt of the valid VAT invoice referred to in clause 8.1 to query any matter identified. Any sums not subject to a query shall be paid by the Developer at the end of the 15 working day period.

- (a) If the Developer does not respond within the 15 working day period, all such matters shall be deemed approved and the Developer shall pay the full amount claimed at the end of such period.
- (b) WHBC reserves the right not to progress any of its obligations under this PPA unless the necessary payment has been received in full by WHBC.

8.3 WHBC may require external consultants to provide independent advice in relation to the following matters:

- a. Transport appraisals
- b. Legal – re obligations/advice
- c. Noise

- d. Landscaping
- e. Conservation – Heritage
- f. Conservation – Biodiversity
- g. Archaeology
- h. Policy
- i. Land contamination
- j. Client services (refuse)

8.4 Should such external independent advice be required the Developer agrees to the commissioning of the appropriate consultant(s). The Developer shall consult with WHBC on the commission and take into account any views expressed. The Developer shall pay for the cost of the consultant(s).

8.5 The Developer agrees in principle to pay the reasonable and proper legal costs incurred by WHBC for work associated with the drafting and engrossments of any legal agreement(s) necessary for the determination of the Planning Application.

## **9. Confidentiality**

9.1 WHBC is governed by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 in how it handles the information that it holds. WHBC will treat as confidential the pre-application information it receives from the Developer up until the point that the scheme is reported to the Council's Strategic Planning Committee or otherwise made public by the Developer.

## **10. Force Majeure**

10.1 Neither party shall be liable for any delay in or failure to perform its obligations under this PPA if such delay or failure results from a force majeure event provided that each party shall use all reasonable endeavours to continue to perform its obligations for the duration of such force majeure event.

## **11. Prevention of Corruption, Fraud and Conflicts of Interest**

11.1 The Developer shall not offer or give or agree to give to an officer of WHBC any gift or consideration as an inducement or reward for doing or refraining from doing any act that would prevent any officer performing his or her proper duties as an officer of WHBC.

11.2 Where the Developer is convicted of corrupt conduct of any kind including such offences under the Bribery Act 2010, the Local Government Act 1972 or any other legislation regulating corrupt or fraudulent practices, WHBC has the right to terminate the PPA with immediate effect.

11.3 The Developer shall ensure that neither WHBC and/or its officers are placed in a position where there is or may be an actual conflict or potential conflict between



performing its obligations under this PPA and exercising its statutory duty as a local planning authority.

**12. The Contracts (Rights of Third Parties) Act 1999**

12.1 No person who is not a party to this PPA shall have any right to enforce any term of this Agreement under the Contracts (Rights of Third Parties) Act 1999.

**13. Governing Law**

13.1 This PPA and any dispute or claim arising out of or in connection with it shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the law of England and Wales.

## **SCHEDULE 1**

### **The Development**

Address of the application site: St Albans Road West, Hatfield AL10 9RH

Description of the Development: A detailed planning application for student accommodation, extensions to hotel and restaurant together with ancillary facilities including car parking and landscaping

## **SCHEDULE 2**

### **The Application Documents**

The parties to this PPA agree that the Planning Application shall be accompanied by the following documents:

The statutory national list of planning application requirements:

- Completed form
- Site location plan
- Other plans/information necessary to properly describe the development
- Ownership certificate (including Agricultural holding certificate) & notice
- Design and access statement
- Appropriate fee

The statutory and local list of planning application requirements (subject to further discussions with WHBC):

- Documents and drawings:
- Existing and proposed floor plans;
- Existing and proposed elevations;
- Existing and proposed sections and floor levels;
- Existing and proposed roof plans;
- Parking plan / car parking / cycle parking plans;
- Bin stores / recycling facilities including tracking plans for service vehicles;
- Topographical survey;
- Plant proposals
- Noise Assessment
- Archaeological Desk Based Assessment;
- Biodiversity Survey / Report (Phase 1 Ecology Assessment and Bat Roost Potential Report);
- Character Analysis and Appraisal;
- Energy Statement;
- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy;
- Heritage Statement – Listed Building Appraisal;
- Planning Statement and supporting additional information;
- Site Waste Management Plan (tracking diagrams for refuse vehicles);
- Statement of Community Involvement (including consultation with the Development and Consultation Forum);
- Schedule of works;
- Statement of Justification;
- Structural Survey;
- Transport Statement/assessment and Framework Travel Plan;
- Arboricultural Assessment and Landscape Plan
- Summary Document.
- S106 Heads of Terms Document

These documents should be provided in paper as well as an electronic copy. Electronic copies shall not include any confidential information, such as signatures, private phone numbers, children under the age of 18 or vulnerable adults.

## **SCHEDULE 3**

### **The Developer's Performance Standards**

The Developer agrees to use its reasonable endeavours to achieve the following performance standards at all times:

- a. To carry out such public consultation as may be reasonably requested by WHBC as soon as reasonably practicable, in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement. Such public consultation might include a presentation to the Council's Development Consultation Development Consultation Forum, the timing of which should enable amendments to be made to the application prior to submission, if required and agreed to by the Developer.
- b. To consult with the Environment Agency, WHBC Noise, Landscaping, Conservation, Biodiversity, Policy, Open Space and Structural Assessment of Building etc in respect of the Planning Application and not to submit the Planning Application to WHBC unless and until it has obtained the written response of the said consultees in respect of the Development.
- c. To wherever possible address any concerns raised by any consultee prior to the submission of the Planning Application to WHBC.
- d. To include a Statement of Community Involvement with the Planning Application, explaining the pre-submission consultation process, detailing the feedback received from consultees and setting out how the Developer has taken account of the responses to consultation.
- e. To provide WHBC with such reasonable additional information as may be requested within 5 working days of such written request from WHBC (or such other time period as may be agreed) in order to enable WHBC to discharge its responsibilities.
- f. To provide to WHBC at least 3 working days prior to any meeting (or such other time period as may be agreed) all substantive and relevant documents which are relevant to that meeting and which relate to any relevant action points or agenda item identified.

## **SCHEDULE 4**

### **WHBC's Performance Standards**

In addition to its statutory obligations, WHBC agrees to use its reasonable endeavours to achieve the following performance standards at all times:

- a. Respond substantively to all emails, letters and telephone calls within 5 working days of receipt. Where circumstances beyond the reasonable control of WHBC prevent its compliance with this Performance Standard, WHBC shall in each case notify the Developer of such circumstances.
- b. Notify the Developer no later than 10 working days prior to any meeting of the Development Management Committee at which any report or matter relevant to the Development will be discussed and or considered and to provide the Developer with a copy of any report to the Development Management Committee at that time.
- c. To provide to the Developer within 5 working days, following approval, of any meeting, the minutes or action points arising from that meeting.
- d. To keep a record of time spent and costs incurred in considering and dealing with the pre-application submissions, the planning application/s and discharge of conditions. To refund any surplus contributions that remain unused after the aforementioned applications have been determined.

## **SCHEDULE 5**

### **Pre-Application Progress Plan**

The parties to the PPA have agreed to progress the pre-application process to the timetable set out in Schedule 6 below. This will be subject to monitoring and mutual adjustment as necessary by the parties.

## SCHEDULE 6

### Performance Targets

<p>The parties to this PPA shall use their reasonable endeavours to achieve the following performance targets.</p>		
<b>A</b>	<p>The Commencement Date: The date on which the PPA is signed</p>	<p>day of July 2015</p>
<b>B</b>	<p>The pre-application period shall run from the Commencement Date from the date that the planning application is received, underpinned by three-weekly meetings between the Developer and relevant Council Officers</p>	<p>day of July 2015 to 31st day of July 2015</p>
<b>C</b>	<p>The Council shall return pre-application advice on the key planning matters.</p>	<p>within five working days of submission of proposals or five working days of any meeting held to discuss them, whichever is the later.</p>
<b>D</b>	<p>The Start Date: the date on which a valid Planning Application is received by WHBC</p>	<p>31st day of July 2015</p>
<b>E</b>	<p>The Determination Date: the date the Planning Application is to be reported to committee or considered under delegated powers by WHBC</p>	<p>08 day of November 2015</p>
<b>F</b>	<p>The Decision Date: the date the planning decision is issued by WHBC</p>	<p>08 day of December 2015 Not later than 20 working days after committee or delegated determination of the application by WHBC subject to completion of a relevant s106 planning obligation.</p>
<b>G</b>	<p>Conditions Submitted Date: the date conditions are submitted to WHBC for Discharge</p>	<p>31 day of January 20016</p>



<b>H</b>	Determination of Conditions Date: the date the Discharge of Conditions Application(s) are determined	01 day of April 2016
----------	--	----------------------

Signatures (One signed copy for each party)

Signed by the parties or their duly authorised representatives:

Signed by \_\_\_\_\_ and duly authorised for and on behalf of The Developer

Authorised signatory

Date:

Title

Signed by \_\_\_\_\_ and duly authorised for and on behalf of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

Authorised signatory

Date:

Title

## APPENDIX 2

Reply To: address as below  
Our Ref:  
Direct Tel: 01707 357211  
Fax: 01707 357255  
Email: [planning@welhat.gov.uk](mailto:planning@welhat.gov.uk)

Ms Catherine Norris,  
Alder King Planning Consultants,

30 June 2015

Dear Ms Norris

**ADDRESS: Ramada (Comet) Hotel, 301 St Albans Road West, Hatfield, AL10 9RH**  
**RE: Pre-Application Discussion and documents June 2015, extension to hotel and construction of student accommodation**

I write, following our meeting of 19<sup>th</sup> June and the minutes sent by yourself and received by us on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2015, with regard to your pre-application proposals for the above site. Please find enclosed an amended Planning Performance Agreement, which we are now ready to sign and have sealed.

Our comments on the indicative scheme presented at the meeting as Option 3 are set out below but are informal and are made without the benefit of a site visit. They are also made pending a detailed assessment of the Grade 2 Listed Building.

Policies set out in National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012) seek retention and enhancement of heritage assets. Great weight is given to the conservation of heritage assets and their significance can be harmed by alterations both to the asset and to its setting. The criteria which need to be satisfied by any development proposals for alteration or extension of a listed building include respecting the character, appearance and setting of the building (in terms of design, scale and materials), retention of architectural and historic features and retaining the building's historic form and integrity.

I note the progress that has been made in understanding the fabric and form of the original building and confirm that a full heritage assessment will be required and that this should inform the development of firmer proposals for the building and its setting. A heritage assessment would also be required as part of an application for Listed building Consent, which should be submitted to run concurrently with any planning application.

My initial comments regarding the listed building are that any proposal should enhance and better reveal the significance of the asset by reflecting/replicating the earlier features (for example the glass tower and the porte-cochere), securing a suitable use and appropriate treatment of its setting. With regard to the setting, the Conservation Officer has expressed a strong preference for the silhouette of the existing building to be maintained and better revealed by development on the site. He feels that any new building behind should be lower than those suggested so far and that the treatment should be much simpler with a more horizontal rather than a vertical emphasis. There may be a role for glazing on the front of such a building if it enables the silhouette of the listed building to be enhanced, something that a deep overhang at eaves level may obscure. The original use of the building as a road house (restaurant and hotel) is preferred and it is considered that any hotel function on the site should be clearly linked to the listed building. This is also key in making the site legible to future users.

The treatment of the forecourt will inevitably be an important aspect of the setting of the listed building. The site is currently open to the highway frontages and there is a certain amount of street furniture on the adjacent highway land. There is plenty of opportunity to enhance the forecourt area and to improve views into the site. A landscaping plan for hard and soft landscape elements would be expected to accompany a planning application.

#### Principle of the Proposed use

Regarding the student accommodation considerations include the principle of the proposed use. The University of Hertfordshire and the Royal Veterinary College both have students who require accommodation. Some accommodation is provided on campus and some in the private rented sector in the towns within the Borough. The University of Hertfordshire is increasing the amount of on-campus accommodation which may ease pressures on the private rented sector. However, there is likely to remain a demand for suitable accommodation in the private rented sector.

The pre-application site is on the south side of St Albans Road, opposite the De Havilland Campus of the University of Hertfordshire. The proposal is to provide accommodation for up to 400 students, principally for overseas and postgraduate students.

The site is within the town of Hatfield. The principle of development is in accordance with Policy GBSP2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005, which seeks to concentrate new development within towns and specified settlements. The Council has supported on-campus provisions but recognises the need to strike a balance between on-campus and private rented sector provisions. The indicative layouts shown in the submitted document show bedsit and studio accommodation with shared kitchens. The proposal would not be contrary to the Policies of the District Plan provided mechanisms are in place to retain the accommodation for students within Class C2 and subject to satisfying the other policies of the Local Plan. Proposals for more general needs housing either as flats or bedsits within Class C3 or an Hostel/HMO in Class C4 are considered in terms of the other Policies in the District Plan, which would include a requirement for provision of affordable housing (Policy H7) and are unlikely to be suitable uses in for the proposed site configuration.

At this stage in the pre-application process I am not proposing to make detailed comments as the assessment of the heritage assets on the site may necessitate alterations to the overall scheme. However, I will make general response to the design concepts, scale and bulk of the proposals and the constraints of the site. I will also flag up other relevant planning issues, although these are already highlighted in the Pre-application Performance Agreement.

#### Design

The Policies of the NPPF and the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 attaches great importance to high quality and inclusive design as a key aspect of sustainable development which should contribute to making places better for people. Paragraphs 61 and 64 of the NPPF require design to address the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment and to improve the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.

The existing hotel accommodation on the site is two-storey as is the listed building. The proposed development in Option 3 is shown as considerably higher density and higher rise; three, four and five storeys. The site and existing street frontages to St Albans Road and Comet Way are screened by mature deciduous trees so that the centre and rear part of the site has a leafy character. I have concerns about the following aspects of the design:

- The four storey block on the St Albans Road frontage would be deep and very close to the site boundary with a resulting bulk inappropriate to the scale of the existing building on the site and on adjacent sites. Its positioning would be likely to result in the loss of mature screening provided by existing trees and shrubs. The result would be an unduly prominent and bulky element in the street-scene. The height of the building on the site should be stepped away from this frontage.
- Similarly the five storey block on the Comet Way side of the site is considerably higher than the existing buildings and should be reduced. The positioning of the block should not result in a significant loss of screening. The two mature willow trees will need to be properly assessed as they make a considerable contribution to the street-scene at present. Efforts should be made to retain these.

- I am pleased to see the block parallel to the rear boundary of the site moved further from that boundary. This should reduce the visual impact on residential dwellings behind. I would reserve my position on whether the distance is sufficient as I have not had the benefit of a site visit. I would expect the trees along that boundary to be retained and enhanced to achieve a full screening of the bulk of the building and to provide privacy of the rear amenity areas and windows in the elevations of the houses in Ashby Close and Selwyn Crescent.
- The introduction of open courtyard spaces for amenity areas is welcomed.
- Parking provision for the hotel and the student accommodation should be kept clearly separate as in the layout for Option 3. Reduced parking provision for student accommodation may be acceptable subject to adequate levels of disabled parking provision and a Green travel Plan. It is probable that the County Council will require contributions to sustainable transport via a S106 agreement.

### Other Planning and Relevant Considerations

These include:

- Access and servicing
- Amenity space – on site provisions
- Landscaping – retention and enhancement
- Biodiversity
- Archaeology
- Noise
- Land Contamination
- Waste and Recycling –storage and collection
- Energy
- Flood Risk and Drainage

Please refer to Schedule 2 of the Planning Performance Agreement, which sets out the information that the Council shall require to be submitted with a planning application.

### Energy

You have enquired about the Council's requirements with regard to energy efficiency. The relevant saved policies of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 are R3 (Energy Efficiency) and R4 (Renewable Energy Sources). The Council will seek to encourage good practice with regard to energy efficiency and will expect developments to include measures to maximise energy conservation in the design of buildings, site layout and provision of landscaping. The Council will also expect developments to incorporate the best practical option for energy supply and to make use of passive solar gain in the design and layout of the site. The incorporation of renewable energy sources will also be encouraged subject to considerations of visual impact, atmospheric pollution and noise. The suggested method of using Combined Heat and Power on the site would be acceptable subject to the above provisos.

### S106

Further to Policy IM2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 the Council will seek planning obligations from developments where they would place additional demand on local social and environmental infrastructure. These can be provided directly on the development site or off-site by means of a financial payment to the local authority. As mentioned above the County Council are likely to require contributions to sustainable transport via a S106 agreement. In addition, the Heads of Terms set out in the Council's Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning document (2012) will be considered. The relevant ones for this development are considered to be contributions to Green Space and Outdoor Sports and Waste & Recycling. More information on the Borough Council's position are available through the following link:

<http://www.welhat.gov.uk/article/1048/Planning-Obligations-Section-106-legal-agreements-and-unilateral-undertakings>.

Information about the S106 contributions that the County Council may require can be found at <http://www.hertsdirect.org/your-council/hcc/resandperf/hertsprop/planningobs/>.

### Development Consultation Forum

The DCF meets on an ad hoc basis and is held at a Council venue. There are none scheduled at present and the lead in time is approximately six weeks as elected members diaries become very full. Please advise whether you feel this fits in with your anticipated timescale for submitting an application.

I am in the process of compiling a list of contacts for the disciplines listed in the PPA and will forward this when it is ready. I trust this letter answers your enquiries so far.

Yours sincerely

June Pagdin  
Senior Planning Officer  
Development Management South Team

## APPENDIX 3



WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
DEVELOPMENT CONSULTATION FORUM – 9 SEPTEMBER 2015  
REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR (GOVERNANCE)

REFURBISHMENT OF COMET HOTEL, REDEVELOPMENT OF HOTEL EXTENSION  
AND CONSTRU OF STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

COMET HOTEL, 301 ST ALBANS ROAD WEST, HATFIELD, AL10 9RH

APPLICANT: Fusion Students

(Hatfield West)

**1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This is a report to brief members in preparation of the Development Consultation Forum for the refurbishment of the Comet Hotel, redevelopment of the hotel extension and construction of student accommodation at the Comet Hotel, 301 St Albans Road West, Hatfield.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 The Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 identifies the site as within the settlement of Hatfield. The site is located on the south west side of the junction of Comet Way and St Albans Road West. The site is triangular in shape and the original Comet Hotel building faces north east onto the roundabout junction of Comet Way with St Albans Road. To the north is St Albans Road and beyond that is the Bishop Square office development and the University of Hertfordshire De Havilland Campus. The site is bounded to the south east boundary by a line of mature, deciduous trees and Comet Way itself. The rear of the site is the bounded by the rear gardens of two-storey residential properties in Ashbury Close and Selwyn Crescent. The Comet Hotel is a Grade II listed building.
- 2.2 The two vehicle entrances to the site are from St Albans Road and the North-bound carriageway of Comet Way. There are bus stops outside the site on St Albans Road West and on Cavendish Way outside the Galleria.
- 2.3 The applicant/agent has sought the informal views of officers regarding a scheme to
- refurbish the listed Comet Hotel building for use for bedrooms, dining, bar and function rooms in association with the hotel
  - demolish the 1990's hotel extension and construct a new hotel extension with 99 bedrooms and 127 car parking spaces (97 on the forecourt, including three disability spaces, and 30 in the courtyard at the rear of the hotel extension)

- construct new car-free student accommodation for around 360 students in 292 rooms (217 single and 75 double studio rooms), a gym, social space, TV room, a laundry and study rooms

A response was provided by officers on the amended scheme on the 30 June 2015. The officer's letter informed the applicant that;

- *The general principle of student accommodation is likely to be considered acceptable subject to controls over the future use;*
- *The bulk and mass of the proposal raised concerns over the height and intensity of the proposed student accommodation blocks and the potential adverse impact on the setting of the listed building, St Albans Road and Comet Way frontages and the nearby residential properties*
- *Impact of the proposal on the adjacent residential properties in Ashbury Close and Selwyn Crescent in terms of bulk, light and privacy need to be addressed;*
- *Refurbishment of the Listed Building should include enhancement and reinstatement of some original features. Listed Building Consent is likely to be required. The preferred use of the Listed building is a continuation of use as a hotel with associated restaurant/bar.*
- *The scale, massing and style of the proposed hotel extension should create a sympathetic backdrop to enhance the setting of the Listed Building;*
- *The horizontal emphasis of the original building should be replicated throughout the site. The treatment of the elevations facing towards St Albans Road West and Comet Way are required to introduce some interest;*
- *A good robust landscaping scheme would be required to be submitted with any future application to help to enhance the building in its setting;*
- *The Council's adopted parking standards were referred to but the information provided was insufficient to work out the exact amount of parking required; car-free developments usually require a Green Travel Plan. A Transport Assessment would be required to be submitted with any future application;*
- *The applicant was advised that any application would be required to deliver an appropriate proportion of the development's energy from decentralised and renewable or low carbon sources;*
- *The applicant was advised that, as the proposal would be a major development, the LLF would require a Sustainable Urban Drainage System and*
- *In accordance with the Council's adopted policies, the development will result in the need for planning contributions to mitigate the impact of the development on the locality.*

2.4 The applicant has considered the pre-application advice given by officers and has sought to address the objections/issues raised through a revised scheme. The vehicular access to the site would be retained as existing from both Comet Way and St Albans Road West. The revisions have resulted in the following:

- A reduction to the height and overall scale and mass of the hotel extension in order to create a backdrop for the Listed Building. Design elements include a simple, reflective glazed facade and replication of the horizontal emphasis of the listed building;
- Landscaping of the forecourt including low hedging around site, reduction of the area covered by parking on the site frontage and creation of amenity area for the hotel;
- Alterations to the design and scale of the student accommodation to the rear of the site. Reduction in height from four to three storeys and breaking up of the block into four linked blocks: one on St Albans road frontage would have the fourth floor stepped back and clad in glazing, two to the rear would be three floors high, the fourth block on Comet Way frontage would be five storeys high with the fifth stepped in and clad in glazing;
- Alternative design and materials for the student blocks have been introduced. A previous scheme had pale green cladding with a horizontal emphasis. The most recent option showed multicoloured materials with a vertical emphasis. Although architectural style and the colour of cladding and finish materials are subjective matters it is felt that a horizontal emphasis and complimentary colour would be appropriate for buildings within the setting of the listed building;
- Angling of the windows in the rear elevation to direct views to the south, away from the rear boundaries of residential properties; and
- Provision of 30 overflow parking spaces for the hotel (when functions are held) between the hotel and the student accommodation blocks.

2.5 This Development Consultation Forum for the development:

- Enables Councillors to obtain more information and understanding about proposed scheme before a decision is made.
- Does not bind members or the Council to a decision on a planning application (as not all information will be to hand and if consultations have been carried out these won't have been received or finalised).
- Avoids members getting drawn into negotiations or debate on the merits of the proposed scheme but allows members to use the Forum as a fact finding exercise to ask questions and identify major planning issues.

### **3. Financial Implications**

3.1 There are no financial implications arising from the consideration of this scheme at the Development Consultation Forum which is aimed at establishing the planning issues but not making a decision on the planning application.

### **4. Site Description**

4.1 The site is a triangular-shaped parcel of land facing onto the roundabout junction of Comet Way and St Albans Road West in Hatfield. It contains the original

Comet Road House which is shaped in a geometric representation of an aircraft and faces onto the roundabout. It is a Grade II Listed, two-storey, brick clad, flat-roofed building with a strong horizontal emphasis, designed by E B Musman and built in the 1930's. It has been listed because of its Art Deco architectural merit and the historic significance of its association with Hatfield New Town and the De Havilland factory and airfield. There have been additions and alterations to the interior and exterior (including loss of the glass roof lantern) but the original geometric form remains. The hotel was extended to the rear with a brick addition. It was extended again in the 1990's by the Ramada extension which is positioned to the west of the original building. This extension is part-two/part-three storeys high and clad in pale grey panels with a flat roof. In total the hotel currently has 128 bedrooms.

- 4.2 The street frontage of the site is open with a tarmac surface, which is used for parking. In the centre of the front car park is the 1930's carved pillar showing symbols of Hatfield's historic origins and supporting the model aircraft. A narrow strip of grass separates the site from the public footways, bus stop and pedestrian crossings. There is a further parking area on the south east part of the site which is inter-planted with trees.
- 4.3 The site is relatively flat on the St Albans Road frontage and the hotel extension is screened from the road by a line of hedges and trees on the boundary. The land to the south eastern boundary rises up to Comet Way so that the site level lies below that of the road. On this side it is bounded by a grass bund with a number of trees and undergrowth on and which forms a soft boundary between the site and Comet Way. None of the trees on the site are covered by Tree Preservation Orders but there are several mature conifers and deciduous trees on the western boundary and on the east part of the site side there are several mature trees including two weeping willows.
- 4.4 The site is located close to the Galleria Shopping Centre and the University of Hertfordshire De Havilland Campus and Bishops Square Employment Area. It is well connected to pedestrian routes with surface level pedestrian crossings over the adjacent roads but is visually and functionally separated from the surrounding uses by the busy roads. It is also separated by close-boarded fencing from the rear gardens of residential properties in Ashbury Close and Selwyn Crescent. The rear gardens of houses in Ashbury Close
- 4.5 The site includes the following constraints:
- A Grade II Listed Building
  - Flood Risk: The main flood risk issues at the site is the management of surface water runoff and ensuring that drainage for the development does not increase floor risk either on site or elsewhere.

## **5. The Proposal**

- 5.1 The proposed development is located within the settlement of Hatfield Town as designated on the proposals map of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.
- 5.2 The pre-application proposals comprise the following elements:
- Alterations to the Listed Building

- 99 bedroom hotel (some rooms in the listed building and 90 in the extension);
- Car parking provision for 127 spaces;
- Proposed vehicular access to the site from Comet Way and St Albans Road West;
- Landscaped space and garden/amenity area to the front of the Listed Building;
- Student accommodation for about 360 students in single and double studio units; and
- Ancillary student social facilities including a social space, gym, TV room, a laundry and study rooms

The proposal comprises three main elements: The Listed Building, the hotel extension and the student accommodation buildings.

- 5.3 The Comet Hotel: Proposals for the listed building include replication of the roof lantern, relocation of the reception to the original entrance and repositioning of the laundry store. The original internal layout has been adapted already but the remaining room layouts, kitchen position and the original guests' staircase would be retained. The exception being that small upper-floor bedrooms would be combined into larger rooms and the front function room partly extended into the corridor. Nine bedrooms would be provided on the first floor.
- 5.4 The Hotel Extension: The proposal for the hotel extension include a two-storey glazed link building leading from the rear of the listed building to the new three storey element. The three storey part would be linear and perpendicular to the link and flat roofed. Its front elevation would be glazed to provide a reflective backdrop for the listed building.
- 5.5 The proposed student accommodation is in four flat-roofed linked blocks to the west of the listed building and set back level with the glazed elevation of the hotel extension. The block facing St Albans Road West would be four floors high, stepped back and glazed at the third floor level. The two linked buildings on the western side of the site would be three storeys high and have directional windows facing south, away from the rear gardens of the residential properties behind. The fourth block on the south east side of the site would be five storeys with the fifth stepped in and glazed.
- 5.6 The layout of the buildings would create two courtyards: one between the hotel extension and the student block, which is shown as accommodating overflow hotel parking, and one to the south which is shown as a student social courtyard. The space between the student blocks and the site boundaries would contain planting. The existing sub-station on the rear boundary would be retained as it serves the residential properties to the west.
- 5.7 The applicants consider they have used a simple palette of materials and fenestration in order to provide a backdrop for the listed building and to reduce the bulk and the impression of scale of the new buildings. The choice of materials includes glazing and cladding as contrasts to the listed building.
- 5.8 The proposal would retain the existing hedges and fences along the boundaries with planting within the boundaries. In addition, enhanced landscaping would be proposed to create a robust and more mature perimeter planting scheme.

- 5.9 The proposal would provide vehicular access from both Comet Way from the south and St Albans Road West. The site would include 127 parking spaces including 97 in the forecourt area, 3 of these would be disabled spaces adjacent to the entrance to reception. There would be thirty further car parking spaces behind the hotel in the first courtyard.
- 5.10 The principal pedestrian access to the student accommodation would be through a new entry point from St Albans Road West. The entrance to the building would be identified by recessed doors below a first floor overhang. There would also be pedestrian access along the vehicle access to the overflow parking area. Surface treatment and landscaping would be needed to separate pedestrians from vehicles in this courtyard. Provision for bicycle parking for the student accommodation would also be required.
- 5.11 A S106 Agreement would be required to be submitted with any revised planning application. Heads of Terms may include sustainable transport, parking control, green space and waste and recycling.

## **6. Planning History**

- 6.1 S6/1987/0465/FP- Erect new conference room and covered walkway. Approved 3.7.1987.
- 6.2 S6/1992/0233/FP and 0252/LB – Alterations and extensions, new bedroom block, 51 bedrooms, 2 meeting rooms single storey extension for laundry, new lobby and refurbishment, additional car parking. Approved 6.8.1992.
- 6.3 S6/1998/0447/FP – Demolish staff accommodation block and erect two storey extension - 26 bedrooms and 26 car parking spaces. Approved 15.1.1999.
- 6.4 S6/1998/0879/FP and 0880/LB – New entrance canopy and lobby. Withdrawn
- 6.5 S6/2000/0861/FP and 0860/LB – Single storey extension to form linen room to new block. Approved 31.7.2000.
- 6.6 S6/2014/1895/FP – Change of use to car wash valeting (sui generis) on six car parking spaces and erection of canopy. Approved 12.11.2017.

## **7. Policy Implications**

- 7.1 The main planning policies that officers consider are relevant to the proposals are set out below.

### 7.2 National Planning Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework 2012

### 7.3 Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 (Saved Policies)

SD1 Sustainable Development  
GBSP2 Towns and Specified settlements  
R1 Maximising the Use of Previously Developed Land  
R2 Contaminated Land

R3 Energy Efficiency  
R4 Renewable Energy Sources  
R5 Waste Management  
R7 Protection of Ground and Surface Water  
R10 Water Conservation Measures  
R11 Biodiversity and Development  
R17 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows  
R19 Noise and Vibration Pollution  
M1 Integrating Transport and Land Use  
M2 Transport Assessments  
M3 Green Travel Plan  
M4 Developer Contributions  
M5 Pedestrian Facilities  
M6 Cycle Routes and Facilities  
M14 Parking Standards for New Development  
IM2 Planning Obligations  
D1 Quality of Design  
D2 Character and Context  
D3 Continuity and Enclosure  
D4 Quality of the Public Realm  
D5 Design for Movement  
D6 Legibility  
D7 Safety by Design  
D8 Landscaping  
D9 Access and Design for People with Disabilities  
H9 Special Needs Housing  
CLT17 Care in the Community  
OS3 Play Space and Informal Open Space

- 7.4 Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, Supplementary Design Guidance, February 2005
- 7.5 Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, Supplementary Planning Guidance, Parking Standards, January 2004 and Interim Guidance
- 7.6 Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, Supplementary Planning Document, Planning Obligations, February 2012

## **8. Main Issues**

- 8.1 The main planning issues in connection with the scheme are anticipated to be:
- The provision of sufficient detail within an application to illustrate that the principle of the development, is satisfactorily addressed;
  - The impact on the residential amenity of the existing properties and proposed occupiers; and
  - The impact on the Listed Building
  - The overall design and layout of the development;
  - The quality of design and landscaping;
  - Transport, accessibility and car and cycle parking provision;
  - Environmental impacts and sustainability;
  - The provision of a satisfactory completed and signed S106.

## **9. Risk Assessment**

9.1 Any associated risks will be considered as part of the normal decision making process for the planning application.

## **10. Equality and Diversity**

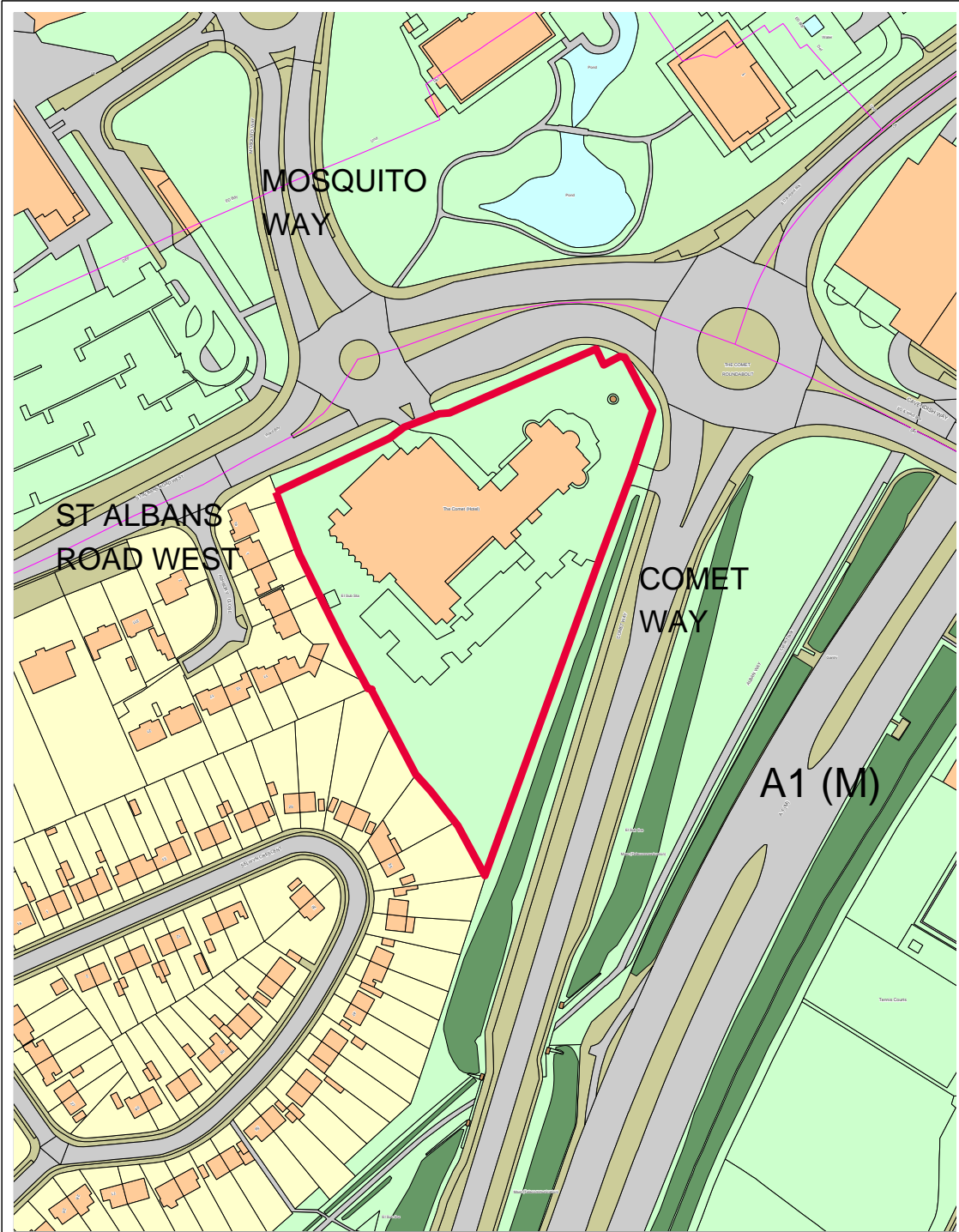
10.1 Any equality and diversity issues will be considered as part of the normal decision making process for the planning application. However, any specific issues should be raised during the Forum for consideration by the applicants as part of the planning application.

Name of author                      June Pagdin  
Title                                      Senior Planning Officer  
Date

Development Consultation Forum Leaflet

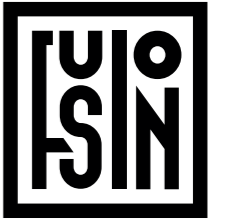
Planning Application S6/2015/0964/PA





 Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts. AL8 6AE	Title: <b>Comet Hotel, 301 St Albans Road West, Hatfield</b>		Scale: DNS
	Project: <b>DEVELOPMENT CONSULTATION FORUM</b>		Date: 2015
	Drawing Number:		Drawn: Andrew Windscheffel
© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council LA100019547 2015			

## **APPENDIX 4**



 **COMET HOTEL SITE, HATFIELD**  
**MEMBERS PRESENTATION**  
SEPTEMBER 2015

# FUSION STUDENTS

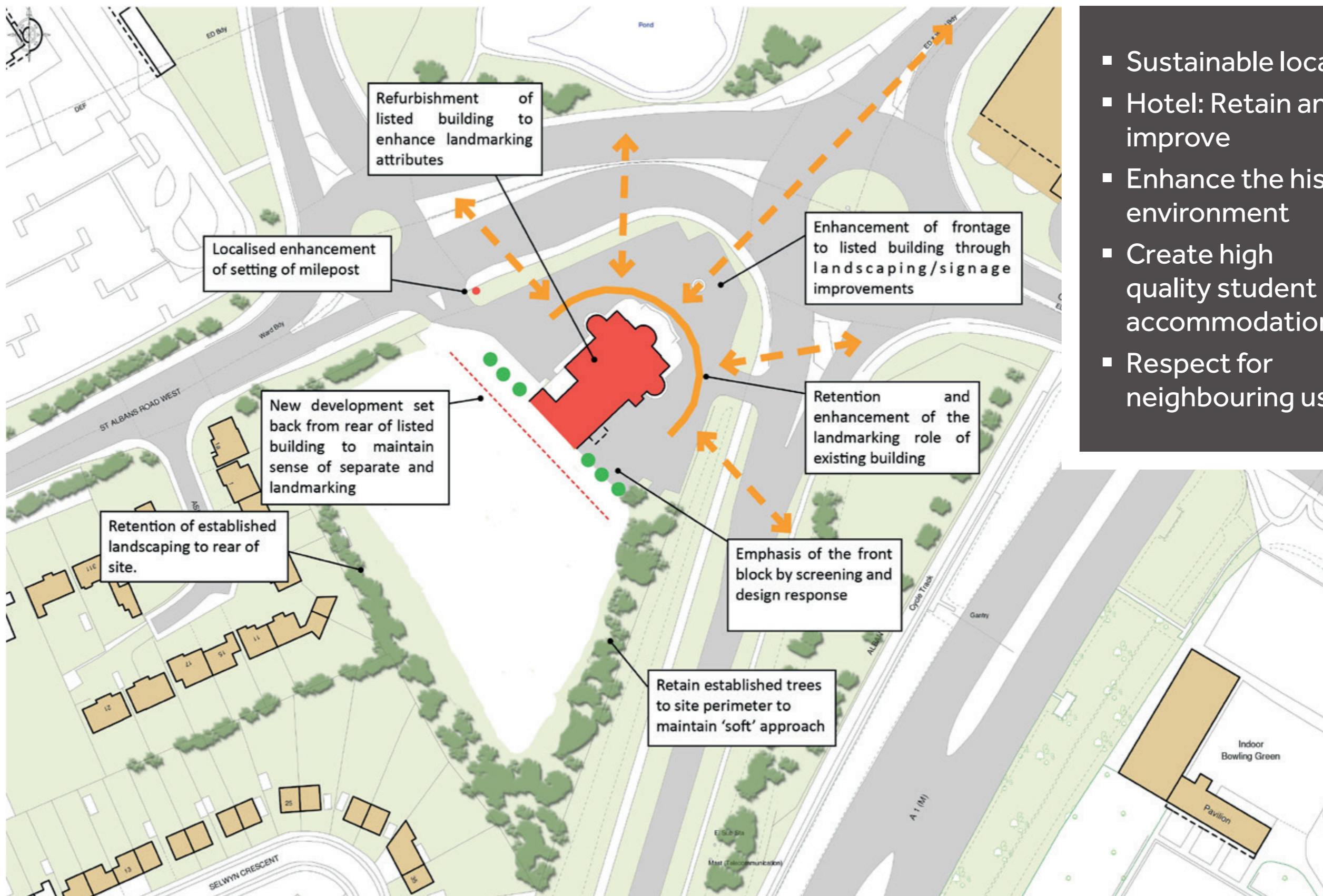


- Design, build and manage
- Postgraduate and overseas students
- High quality design
- High quality environment: Gyms, Concierge service and Cinemas
- Fully staffed and managed



# PLANNING MERITS

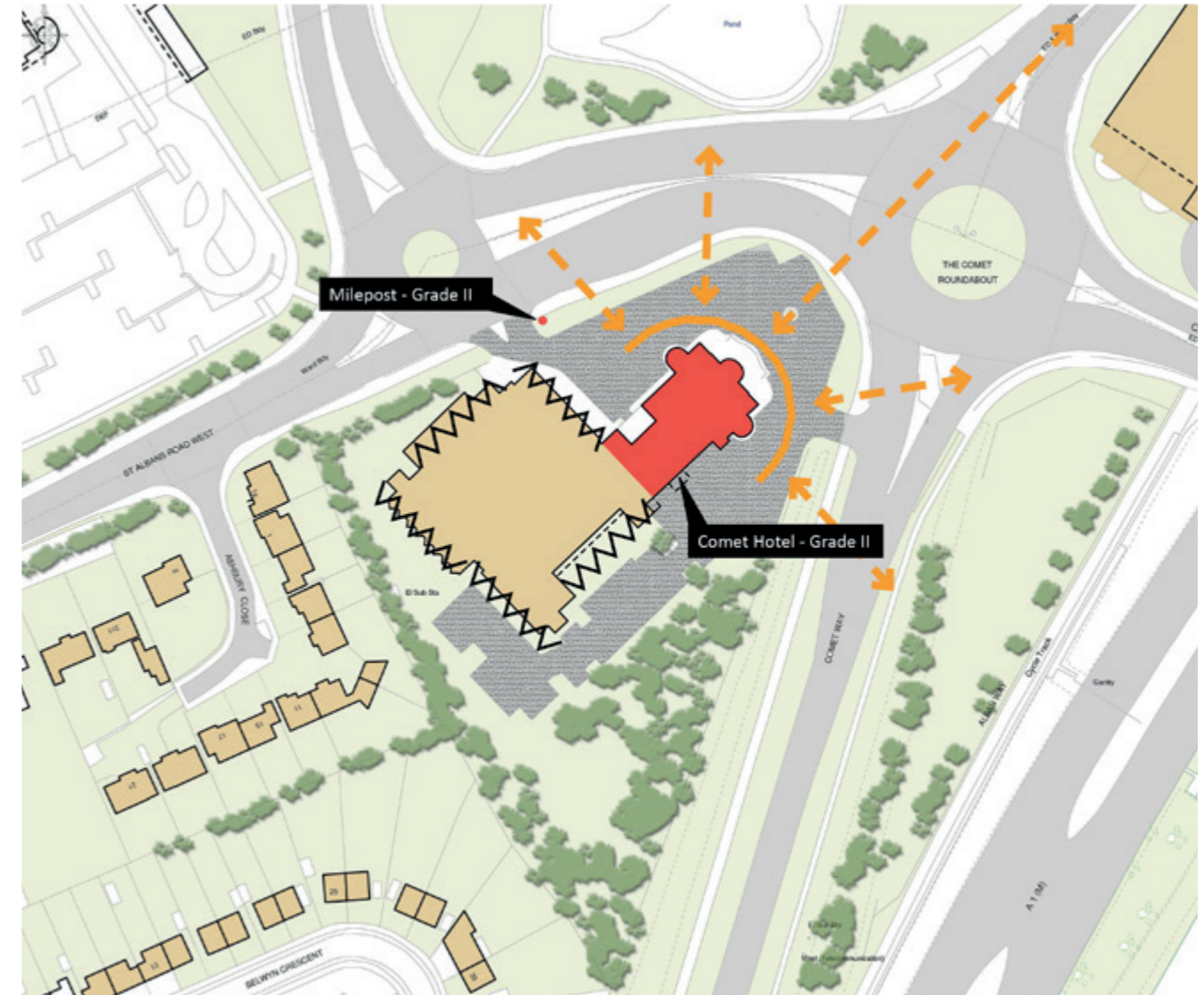
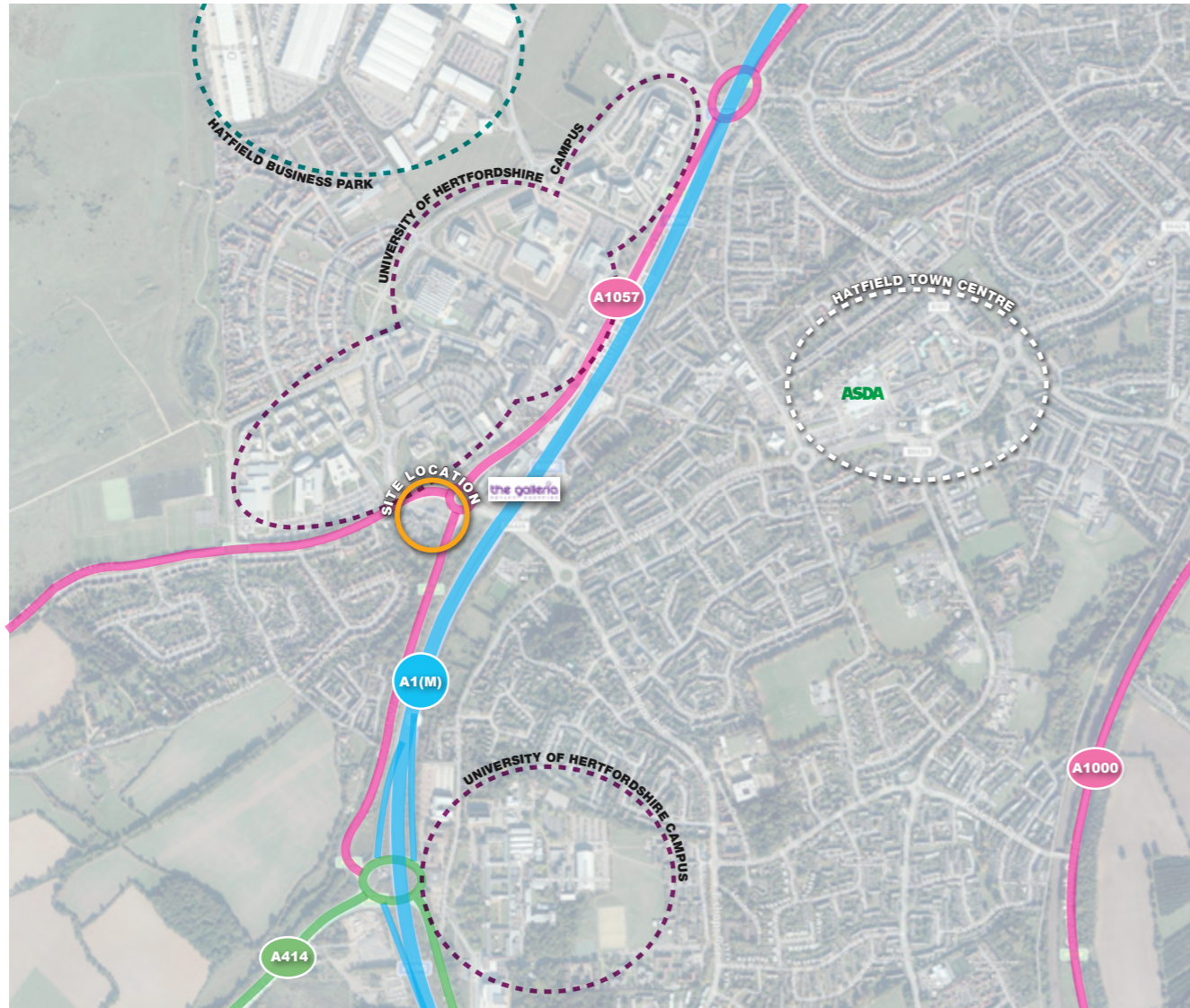
## Site Opportunities



- Sustainable location
- Hotel: Retain and improve
- Enhance the historic environment
- Create high quality student accommodation
- Respect for neighbouring uses



# SITE CONTEXT

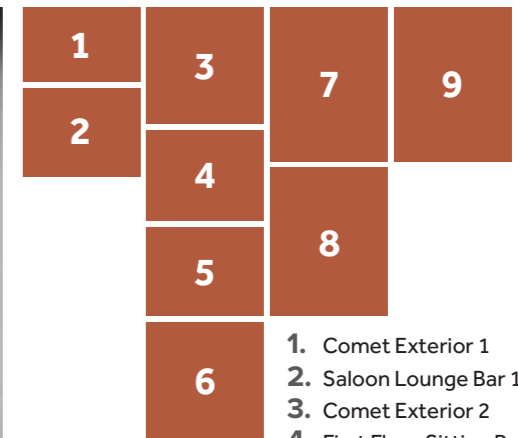
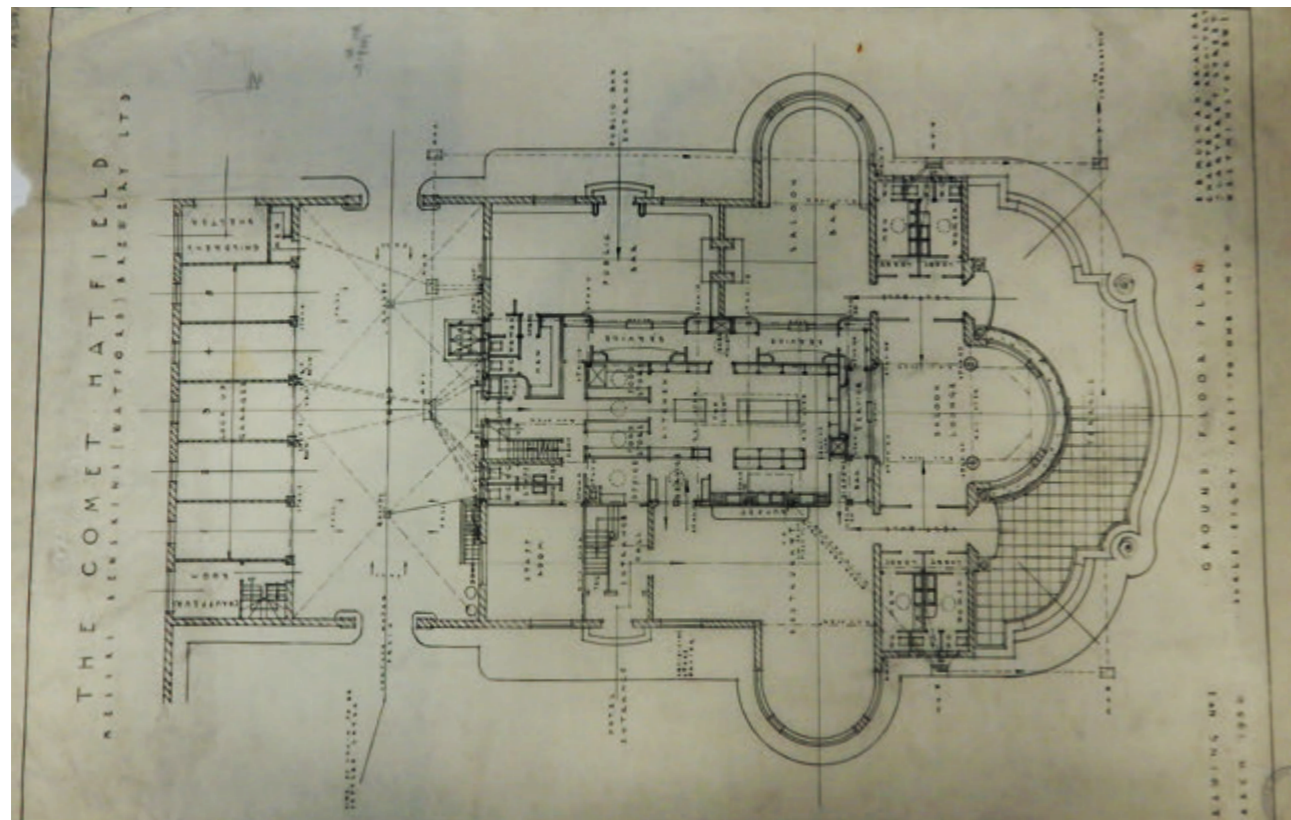


# HISTORICAL ASSESSMENT

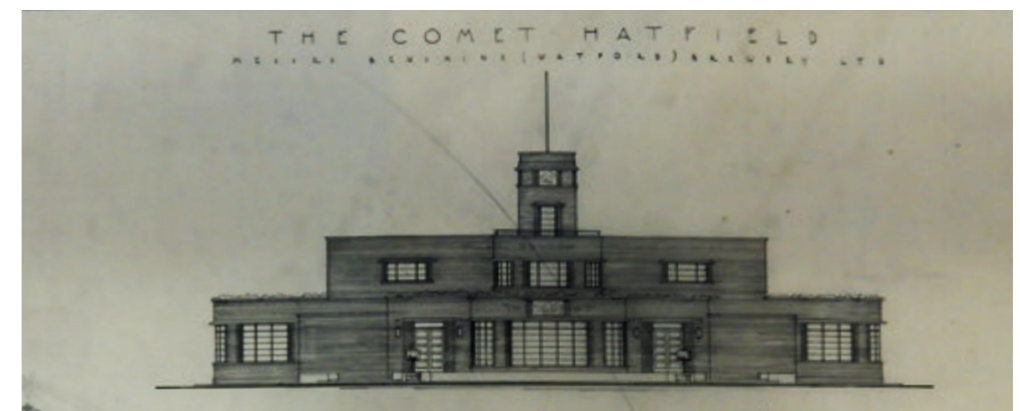
## SITE HISTORY

The Comet Hotel is a Grade II listed building, designed by Ernest Brander Musman (1888-1972) and constructed between 1933-1936 for Benskins (Watford) Brewery Ltd. The original building was built to represent the form of an aeroplane on plan. The building is steel framed with brick and stone dressings, and incorporates geometric shapes and sharp lines which are characteristic of the Art Deco architecture of the period.

The existing hotel comprises the original building along with significant later extensions (1980s/90s) and provides 128 rooms along with conferencing facilities. Little of the original Art Deco interior survives to this day.



1. Comet Exterior 1
2. Saloon Lounge Bar 1
3. Comet Exterior 2
4. First Floor Sitting Room
5. Saloon Lounge Bar 2
6. First Floor Landing
7. Comet Entrance Hall
8. Comet Saloon Lounge 1
9. Comet Saloon Lounge 2



# PROPOSALS

## Masterplan



### LEGEND

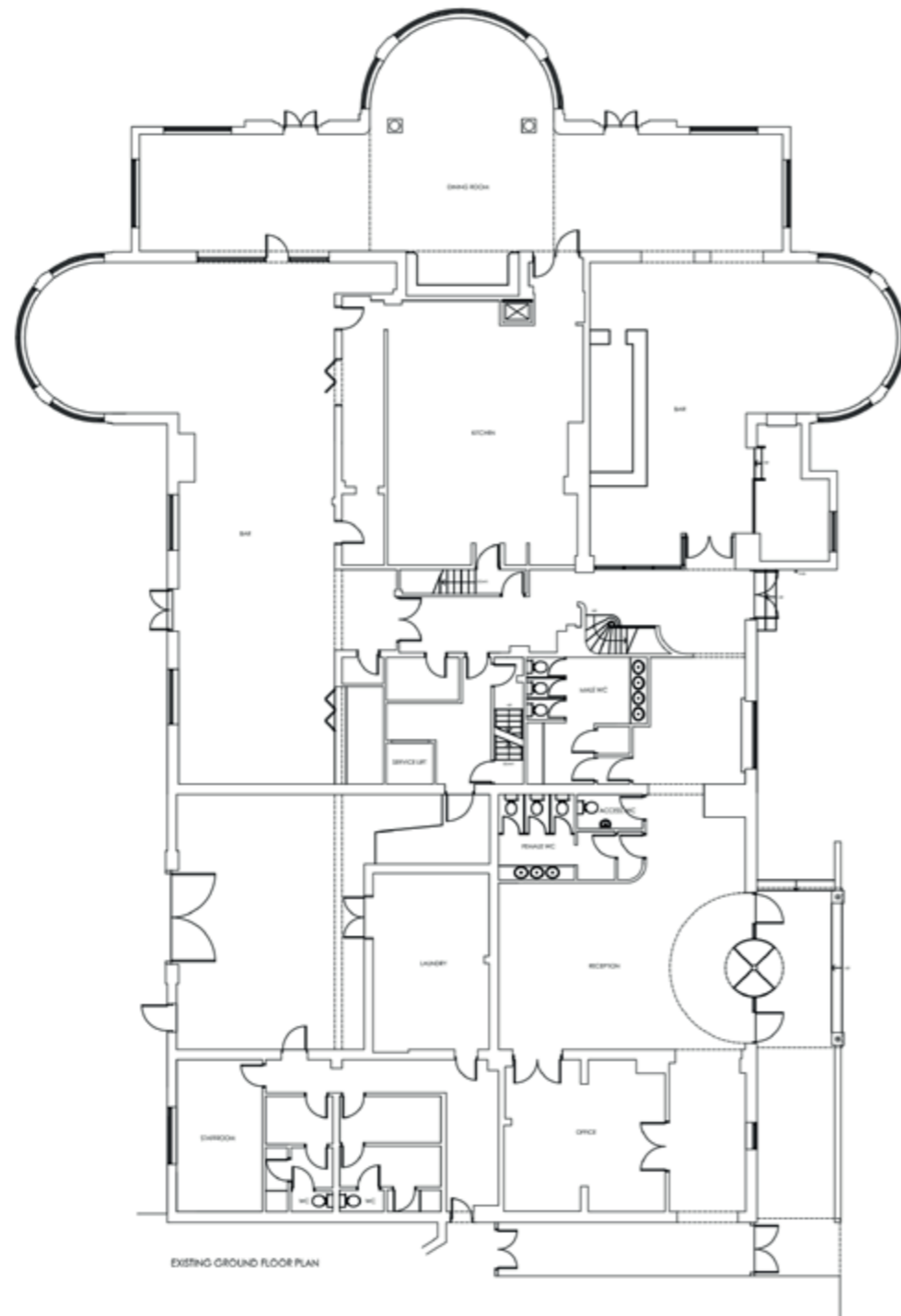
- HOTEL: **99 BEDS**
- STUDENT RESIDENTIAL: **363 BEDS**
- PARKING: **128 SPACES**





# PROPOSALS

## Hotel | Ground Floor



**EXISTING LISTED HOTEL GROUND FLOOR PLAN**

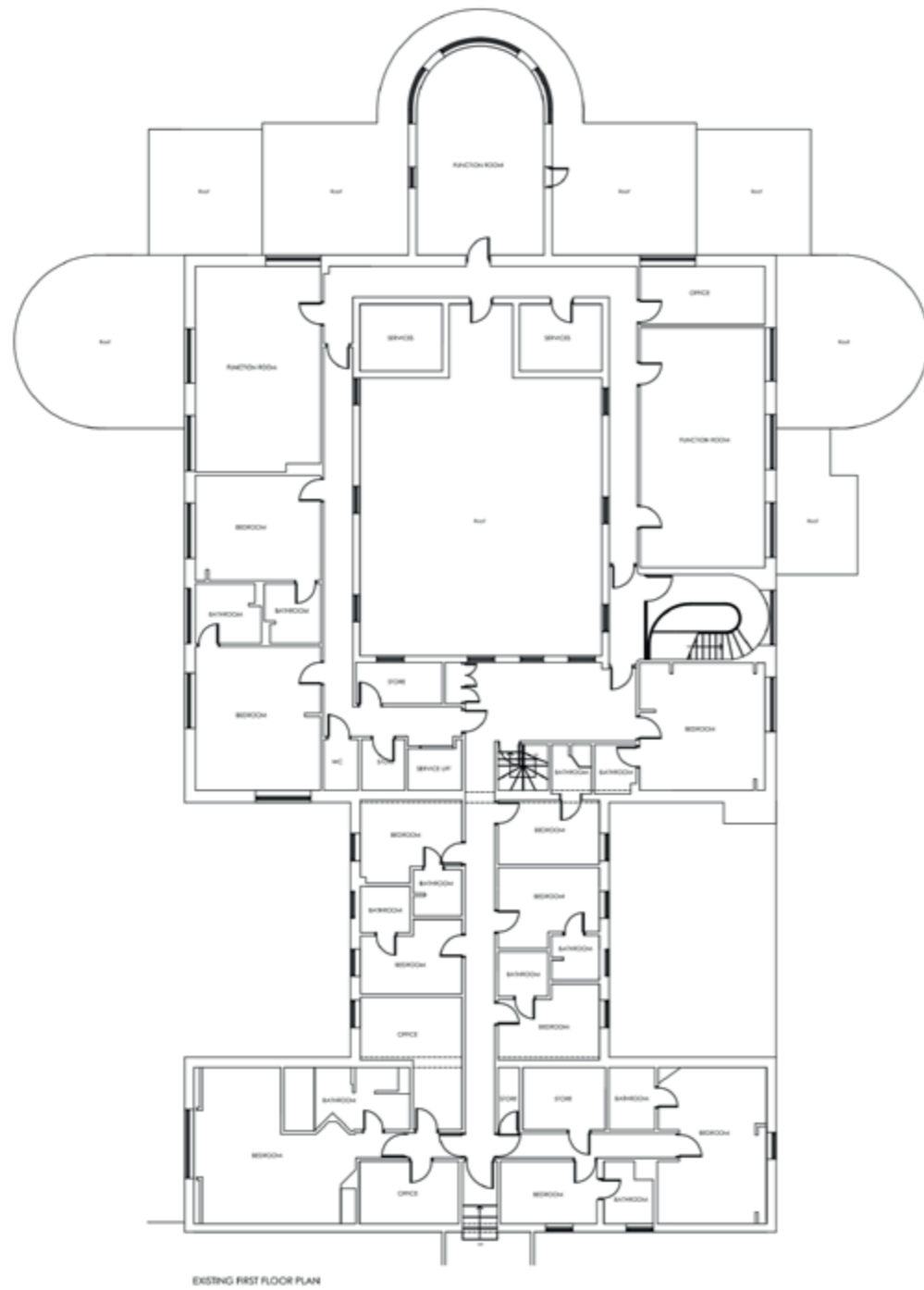


**PROPOSED HOTEL GROUND FLOOR PLAN**

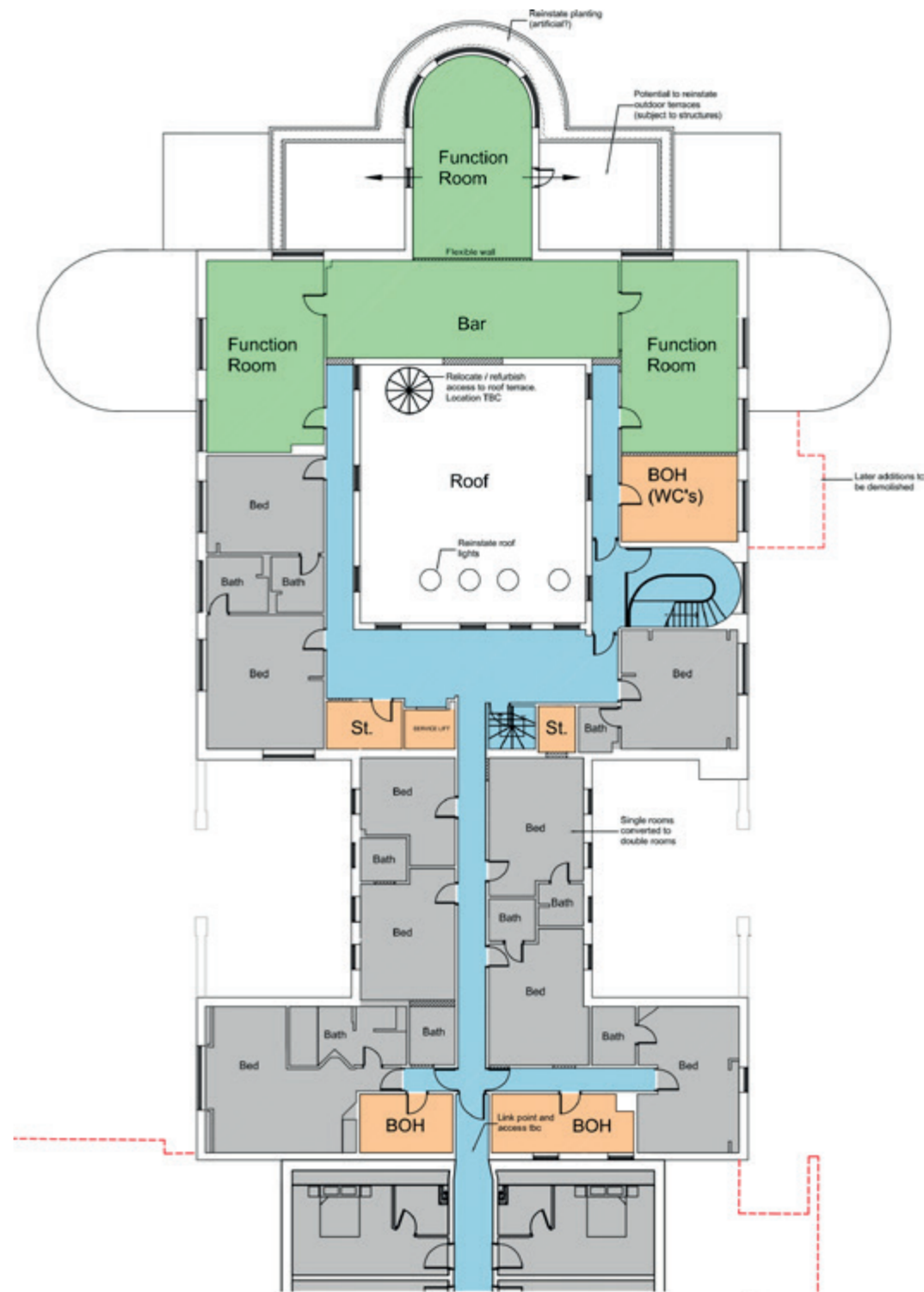


# PROPOSALS

## Hotel | First Floor



**EXISTING LISTED HOTEL FIRST FLOOR PLAN**



**PROPOSED HOTEL FIRST FLOOR PLAN**

