

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL  
PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE – 9 JUNE 2005  
REPORT OF THE CHIEF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER

2005/0478

SITE OF 194, 196 AND 198 ST ALBANS ROAD WEST, HATFIELD

ERECTION OF 16 TWO BED FLATS WITH ASSOCIATED CAR PARKING AND  
LANDSCAPING FOLLOWING DEMOLITION OF THREE EXISTING DWELLINGS

APPLICANT: Wheatley Homes Ltd

(Hatfield Central)

**1 Introduction**

- 1.1 Members will recall that a proposal for development at this site was considered at the March 2005 meeting of this committee. This application has been submitted for the same site.
- 1.2 The proposal comprises two main residential buildings. The first and largest will be located such that it wraps around the corner from St Albans Road West into De Havilland Close. It will have residential accommodation on two floors with six flats on each of the floors (total in this building: 12 flats). The second and smaller building is to be located to the north east end of the site next to a footpath which divides the site from No 2 De Havilland Close. That building will comprise two flats each on two floors again, total: 4 flats.
- 1.3 To the rear of the flats the site will be laid out for car parking and landscaped amenity space. Within the space will be a low refuse and cycle storage building. The frontage will also be laid out with landscaping.
- 1.4 The majority of the main building will be 9.5m in height, approx. At each end the height reduces to 8.7m, approx. The smaller separate residential building also has a height of 8.7m approx. The storage building is approx 4.1m in height. The overall size of the site is 0.24ha and 16 flats are being proposed which gives a density of development of 67units per hectare.
- 1.5 As indicated above, these proposals follow earlier ones for development at the site. The main change is the reduction in the number of units proposed. Previously there were to be 20, giving a density of 83 units per hectare. The additional flats were to be provided within the roofspace. As a result, dormer windows that were previously shown have been removed, however, otherwise the scale and bulk of the buildings remains generally unchanged with overall ridge heights being no different. To the rear of the buildings, greater height stairwells (which were required to allow access to the roofspace) and gable end designs (to allow the accommodation in the roofspace) have now been omitted.

## **2 Planning History**

- 2.1 As indicated, an application was dealt with at the March 2005 meeting of this committee for the development of 20 flat units on this site. That was refused on the basis of the height and bulk of the buildings proposed, dominance and loss of residential amenity issues.
- 2.2 Prior to that a further previous application was made on the combined plots of 194-198 St Albans Road West for the development of 22 flats (2004/1219). This application was withdrawn.

## **3 Planning Policy**

- 3.1 Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review, 1991-2011  
Policy 2 – design and provision of development
- 3.2 Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, April 2005  
R1 – re use of developed land  
M5 developer contributions  
D1 – quality of design  
H2 – windfall development  
H6 density of development  
H8 dwelling type and tenure  
Supplementary Design Guidance  
Supplementary Planning Guidance – Parking Standards

## **4 Representations Received**

- 4.1 The County Council Highway Authority has raised no objection to the proposals subject to a number of conditions relating to visibility splays and the details of the new junction to be created
- 4.2 Hatfield Town Council expressed concern that the proposals do not include security gates to control access to the parking area.
- 4.3 The Welwyn Hatfield Access Group ask that the application be considered subject to the requirements of the Local Plan access policies.
- 4.4 The Councils Tree Officer raises concern with regard to the proximity of two preserved trees to the rear of the building and to parking spaces.
- 4.5 Four neighbouring residential occupiers have written in response to consultation on the proposals. Three of these (one responding on behalf of two local occupiers) are in objection and, in summary, are as follows:
- Loss of privacy
  - Increased traffic

- Unsuitable in terms of character/ loss of open character of area
- Increased pollution
- Lack of clarity or confusion resulting from the submitted Design Statement
- Buildings remain too dominant as unchanged on the frontage from before
- Disruption and inconvenience during development in an area which has had significant development in the recent past

One of the letters received indicates that the occupiers have no objection to the proposals and consider the proposals will greatly improve the local environment. They seek assurance with regard to glazing and the retention of hedging.

## **5 Discussion**

5.1 As with the previous proposal the issues to be considered in this case are:

the principle of flatted development and the density of development being proposed;

the impact of the proposals on the visual character of the area;

impact on adjoining residential properties;

the adequacy of parking and amenity spaces.

### **5.2 Principle**

5.3 In terms of the principle of development the site is located within an established residential area of the town and well within the development envelope established in the Local Plan. The proposals increase the density of development on the site, increasing the number of units from three to 16. Members will be aware of the national and local policies which seek to maximise the use of land within our settlements. In addition, this proposal provides two bed units. This fits well with policies which seek to increase the number of smaller units available generally. The density of development at the site would be over 50 dwellings per hectare at 67 per hectare as indicated above. Whilst this is above the guideline figure set out in national and local policies (which seek between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare) those figures are established as a guideline seeking to achieve higher densities where traditionally they have been much lower.

5.4 When reporting the previous proposal I indicated to Members that, simply because the density is in excess of the guideline figures, that it is an insufficient basis on which to refuse permission. Regard must be had to what harm would be caused if a higher density than the guideline figure were to be allowed. In this case I cannot foresee any. To assist Members I have also undertake some calculations with regard to other typical densities of development in the area. The Lindens, nearby on the other side of the road represents a density of 87 units/ha, a typical area of De Havilland Close is at 64/ha, whereas the bungalows to the south of the site represent 20 units/ha (all approx). Given the variety of densities of development already exhibited in the area, some of which exceed that now proposed my conclusion has to be that the proposals are acceptable in that respect.

### **5.5 Character.**

- 5.6 The introduction set out above gave a flavour of the character of the area. It would be fair to say that it is mixed, in terms of the type of residential property in existence, and in terms of the type of uses which are visible. From many locations on and around the site, whilst these are not immediately adjacent, the large commercial buildings of the Galleria are visible. To the east of the site views are possible toward the commercial development associated with the Fiddlebridge Lane Industrial Estate.
- 5.7 In terms of residential development then there are the bungalows to the south side of St Albans Road West. However, to the west of the site is the conventional detached two storey property of 200 St Albans Road. To the north and east are the two storey terraced properties on De Havilland Close, some of which comprise flats. To the north east, and further along De Havilland Close, there are three storey terraced residential units. South west of the site are the flats which comprise the Lindens.
- 5.8 Given this mix of units in the area, and the bulk of existing buildings close by, by virtue of their height and terraced nature, it is difficult to see on what grounds an argument of out of character or overdevelopment could be substantiated. Where the site abuts the two storey properties of De Havilland and St Albans road the proposed development will be two storey in nature. It is acknowledged that ridge heights will be greater because of the depth of the buildings but changes in ridge and building heights have clearly been acceptable in the past.
- 5.9 In the central part of the site the ridge height will be higher. Three storey development has taken place on De Havilland Close and, with the backdrop of the scale of the Galleria buildings nearby, it is considered that overall the impact on character is an acceptable one.
- 5.10 With regard to the preserved trees on the site, the TPO was applied following the earlier application. It relates to three trees at the site. Tree Officers accepted, as part of the previous application, that one of the trees was in a poor condition, at its base, and could be lost. The relationship between the buildings, parking spaces and the trees was the same for the previous application and no concerns were raised.
- 5.11 In the current case the situation can be eased by the loss of two spaces, ensuring that the parking spaces are further from the trees. The applicant has undertaken to do this and in any event it can be controlled by condition. It is not proposed that the building be moved further from the tree as this will require it to move nearer the frontage. Whilst the future need to control the tree, through pruning, is accepted, its impact will be on bedrooms rather than living rooms and therefore it is not considered that the pressure will be unnecessarily intense.
- 5.12 Impact on adjoining residential units**
- 5.13 The closest adjoining residential properties are at 200 St Albans Road West and 2 De Havilland Close. No 200 is a conventional detached property with a blank elevation that faces toward the site. The flank wall of the flat block closest would be 4m from the side of no 200 and would extend to the rear by approx 4m. The only windows to be provided in this flank elevation are minor ones to bathrooms which can be obscure glazed.
- 5.14 Where the block wraps around to the De Havilland Road frontage, the rear of the block there has windows and balconies that will face toward the rear garden of no 200. However, these will be over 20m distant. In addition, the balconies, at just over 1m depth, are not considered to be ones where extensive sitting out could take place. Given this, and the intervening amenity space on which planting can be implemented, it is not

considered that the proposed building form has an unacceptable dominating or loss of privacy impact on no 200.

- 5.15 To the north of the site is no 2 De Havilland Close. This is separated from the application site by a foot way and a wide side garden to no 2. This means that the buildings, at their closest are some 9m apart. No 2 is located further from the De Havilland frontage than the building proposed here. The building proposed adjacent is the smaller of the blocks at two storeys in height. The side of the block facing no 2 again has only bathroom windows.
- 5.16 No 2 does not contain any flank windows at first floor. The relationship of the existing and proposed buildings are such that it would not be possible to have views from the rear of the proposed to either the front or rear windows of the existing. Any overlooking of the rear garden of no 2 would be akin to the normal overlooking between adjacent properties. The balconies to the rear of the proposed building are located on the side away from the existing, and are shielded from it by the stair access enclosure.
- 5.17 Whilst the front of the proposed building will be up to 12m closer to the road than the front of the two storey element of no 2, it is not considered that this results in a dominating impact. This is because of the separation between the buildings, and because the views from no 2 at ground floor at the front are restricted by its own garage (which extends over 7m from the front of the main part of the dwelling).
- 5.18 To the rear of the site is a garage court and, beyond that more of the De Havilland Close houses (nos 32 to 38). Windows and balconies to the new units do face in this direction, but the closest garden to the existing dwellings (no 32) is some 40m distant. The proposed cycle and refuse storage building is located adjacent to the garages of the garage court.

#### 5.19 **Highways, Parking and amenity space**

- 5.20 The now current Local Plan policy approach takes a more relaxed view, in relation to amenity space size than the previous Local Plan. This is in line with national and local policies seeking to maximise the use of land. Given this, the way in which residents use these spaces and the approach that the Council has adopted in other similar schemes, the amount of amenity space provided is considered acceptable.
- 5.21 Currently 20 parking spaces are shown to be provided for 16 units (see details above with regard to the TPO trees). In terms of car parking policy the site is located in zone 2 where the maximum requirements are 1 space per 2 bed flat. This gives a maximum requirement of 16 spaces which is clearly accommodated. If two are deleted to ease the impact on the trees, 18 will still remain.
- 5.22 When this matter was last dealt with Members were concerned that, if development did take place, the parking spaces available may be misused due to the proximity of the site to the Galleria. This fear can be overcome by the implementation of some form of entry control to the site, such as a vehicle entry barrier. The applicants have indicated that they are amenable to such a requirement, which can be ensured by the attachment of a condition to any consent.

## 6 **Conclusion**

- 6.1 The principle of residential development is established for this site. In terms of the scale and form of development this is considered to be acceptable given the context of the site and surroundings. The relationship with other adjoining uses is considered to be

acceptable, and the development proposals provide adequate amenity and parking areas. It is considered that the proposals should be granted planning permission.

## **7 Recommendation**

- 7.1 That the application be approved, subject to the following conditions:
- 7.2 1. SC01
- 7.3 2. SC09 – landscaping
- 7.4 3. SC19 – materials
- 7.5 4. SC21 – no additional first floor side windows
- 7.6 5. SC24 – parking space
- 7.7 6. The windows to be provided to the flank elevations of the buildings facing onto no 200 St Albans Road West and 2 De Havilland Close shall be fitted with obscure glazing prior to the first occupation of the units to which they relate and shall thereafter be retained with that form of glazing
- 7.8 7. Prior to the beneficial occupation of any of the units hereby permitted there shall be provided visibility splays of 4.5m x 33m for vehicles and 2m x 2m for pedestrians in both directions at the junction of the site access with De Havilland Close. In those splays there shall be no obstruction to visibility between 0.6m and 2m above the De Havilland carriageway. Once provided the splays shall be retained as such.
- 7.9 8. Prior to the beneficial occupation of the units hereby permitted any existing access points to the site must be closed off and the footway over these existing accesses reinstated.
- 7.10 9. Prior to the development of any of the buildings hereby permitted, the proposed access to the site shall be constructed, on site parking for the use of all contractors, sub contractors, visitors and delivery vehicles shall be provided and a means of washing of vehicle wheels exiting the site has been installed. The details of the parking areas and vehicle wheel washing method shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to their implementation. Once provided, these facilities shall be retained throughout the construction period of the site.
- 7.11 10. Prior to the commencement of development and notwithstanding the details shown on plan 2589-30 there shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority a plan showing the car parking layout for the site to allow adequate space around the TPO protected trees and a means of control over the vehicular access to the site. Once agreed the parking layout shall be implemented as such and thereafter retained and the means of control over vehicular entry shall be implemented prior to the occupation of any of the new residential units on the site and thereafter be retained in the form agreed, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
- 7.12 11. SC10 – tree protection measures.
- 7.13 12. SC13 – tree protection measures.

## **8 Informative**

- 8.1 Prior to the commencement of development on the site the Highway Authority will require the submission of additional drawings indicating the type of road access and junction details in accordance with its guide, Roads in Hertfordshire – A Guide for new developments. Construction on these elements of the development should not commence until appropriate approvals have been secured from the Highway Authority.

## **9 Reasons for the grant permission**

- 9.1 It is considered that the proposed development fits well with national and local policies which seek to maximise the use of already developed land and improve the number of smaller units of accommodation available. The proposals are considered to have an acceptable impact on the character and appearance of the area, on residential amenity and with regard to traffic, highway and parking issues.

Chris Conway, Chief Planning and Environmental Health Officer

Date: 26 May 2005

