

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL – DEVELOPMENT CONTROL
DELEGATED REPORT

APPLICATION No:	S6/2007/1495/FP
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NOTATION:

The site is located within the Hatfield Aerodrome, Inset 3, as outlined in the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE:

The masterplan for the redevelopment of the Hatfield Aerodrome site, as adopted in the relevant Supplementary Planning Guidance dated November 1999 states that the *“creation of a District Centre is a key component of the overall development”* and that the *“area will become the heart of the scheme creating a sense of place within a high quality, safe environment”*. It is intended that the District Centre will contain, amongst other elements, appropriate shopping, food and drink, and health care uses, to serve the population of the new residential development.

The land covered by this designation is some 9.8 hectares adjoining the west side of Comet Way, located partly behind Waters Garage and Harpsfield Broadway, and stretching westwards to Mosquito Way, to include the listed hangar building. To the north of the District Centre site is the Commercial Area and the listed Administration Block and Canteen Block, whilst to the south are the Bishop Square offices and the recently rebuilt Beales Hotel.

Units 3, 4 and 5 are situated in block 1 and block 2 of the new District Centre. The units surround Comet Square which lies at the heart of this scheme.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL:

The proposal is for an amendment to reserved matters approval reference S6/2005/675/DE for a mixed use development of a District Centre comprising shops, food and drink uses, hotel, health centre, day nursery, 267 residential units including affordable and key worker housing, bus interchange, servicing, car parking and landscaping (reserved matters application following outline permission S6/2003/1137/OP) at Comet Square, Hatfield District Centre, land at former Hatfield Aerodrome, Comet Way, Hatfield.

The proposed amendment is to allow for alterations to units 3, 4 and 5 and for the subsequent change of use of units 4 and 5.

Under the provisions of the current planning permission unit 3 is designated as a Class A1 convenience unit of 12,000 sq.ft (1,114.8 sq.m), unit 4 is designated as a Class A2 unit with a floorspace of 2,500 sq.ft (232 sq.m) and unit 5 is a Class A3 unit of 2,500 sq.ft (232 sq.m).

Aldi stores Ltd are seeking to occupy unit 3 and it is anticipated that the store will act as the anchor for the District Centre. Aldi have however stated that to enable them to operate successfully they require an additional 2,000 sq.ft to conform with the company’s established format of trading from units of 14,000 sq.ft (1,300 sq.m) gross. This equates to 9,150 sq.ft (850 sq.m) of retail floor space, with the remainder to be used for servicing, storage and welfare purposes. Overall, the additional 2,000 sq.ft of convenience floorspace that is proposed will provide just 969 sq.ft (90 sq.m) of additional retail sales.

This application seeks an amendment to the reserved matters application to enable the expansion of unit 3 to provide a total floorspace of 14,000 sq.ft (1,300 sq.m), which will lead to a reduction in the size of units 4 and 5 to 1,150 sq.ft and 1,850 sq.ft respectively. Permission is also sought to sub-divide unit 5 to create two units; unit 5 (1,000 sq.ft) and unit 5a (850 sq.ft).

As a result of this the applicant is proposing to change the use of unit 4 from Class A2 to Class A3, to allow the unit to be used as a Coffee Republic and for the use of unit 5a to change from Class A3 to Class A2, to enable the unit to be used as an estate agent. It is proposed that unit 5 will remain as a Class A3 use.

PLANNING HISTORY:

S6/1999/1064/OP – Outline planning permission for the redevelopment of the Hatfield Aerodrome site in accordance with masterplan (including District Centre).

S6/2003/1137/OP – Full permission for 200 flats and Nursing Home, also outline permission for District Centre including shops, food and drink uses, hotel and health centre, day nursery, residential uses including affordable and key worker housing, bus interchange, servicing and car parking.

S6/2005/675/DE - Mixed use development of district centre comprising shops, food & drink uses, hotel, health centre, day nursery, 267 residential units including affordable and key worker housing, bus interchange, servicing, carparking and landscaping (reserved matters application following outline permission S6/2003/1137/OP).

S6/2007/795/FP – Amendment to reserved matters approval reference S6/2005/675/DE to allow for the relocation/ swap of class A1 (shop) and class A3 (restaurant, bars and cafes) uses within the scheme, at units 8, 8A and 12A, Comet Square, Comet Way, Hatfield District Centre.

SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES:

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005:

D1 - Quality of Design
D5 – Design and Ease of Movement
HATAER2 – Mixed Use
HATAER3 – Requirement for a Masterplan

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, Supplementary Design Guidance, February 2005

REPRESENTATIONS

The Welwyn Hatfield Access Group requested that the application be considered in relation to Policies D3 and D5 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan (2005), Building Regulations Part M, BS8300 Code of Practice and BS5588 Part 8 Emergency Access.

This application has been also advertised by means of a site notice and no representations have been received.

DISCUSSION:

The main issues are:

- 1. Impact on the mix of uses proposed for Hatfield District Centre**
- 2. Impact on the aims and objectives of the Hatfield Aerodrome Masterplan**
- 3. Quality of design**
- 4. Impact on ease of movement**

The proposal accords with Policy HATAER2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan (2005) which states that the “*redevelopment of the Hatfield Aerodrome Inset Site, outside the Green Belt, should provide for a variety of landuses*” and that “*any retail and leisure development shall be located within the local centre for the site and will be limited in scale to that necessary to meeting local needs*”. The range of uses proposed for the District Centre has already been approved as part of the outline and reserved matters planning consent for the District Centre and we consider that this proposed change of use complements the approved mix of uses on the site.

The S106 Agreement outlines the maximum floor area permitted in relation to each of the Use Classes. In addition to this the S106 also confirms that development/ occupation should only be in accordance with this mix/ disposition of uses.

The proposed alterations and change of use of units 4 and 5 will result in an overall increase in the provision of A1 convenience floorspace and a reduction in both A2 and A3 uses. The Council accepts that whilst this alters the overall limits set by the S106 Agreement, it should only be viewed as a minor amendment to the scheme, as the S106 Agreement specifically allows for flexibility, meaning that no formal variation of the S106 is required. We therefore deem that this proposal is acceptable, as the proposed changes of use would improve the retail offer available for residents and the proposal is not on a scale that would have an adverse impact on other centres.

In addition to this the proposal also remains consistent with the overall aims and objectives of the Hatfield Aerodrome masterplan, as outlined in Policy HATAER3 and the provisions of the current consents for the District Centre.

Policies D1 Quality of Design and D5 Design and Ease of Movement are also relevant to this application (Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005), in addition to the material contained within the Supplementary Design Guidance (2005).

The proposal accords with Policy D1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan (2005), which requires all new development to be of a high quality of design, incorporate the design principles of the District Plan & Supplementary Design Guidance (2005), be appropriate to the setting and context of the area and be of the highest quality, and Policy D5 which requires all new development to take account of its impact on existing and proposed movement patterns.

CONCLUSION:

This application is acceptable given that it only seeks a minor amendment to the reserved matters approval relating to the relocation/ redistribution of uses within the scheme and does not introduce additional new uses, or any other changes to the consented scheme. It also remains consistent with the overall aims and objectives of the Hatfield Aerodrome masterplan and the provisions of the current consents for the District Centre.

RECOMMENDATION: APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS

CONDITIONS:

1. C.2.1 – Time limit for the commencement of development

The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: In order to comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act (as amended).

SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE GRANT OF PERMISSION:

Reason for Grant of FP (**Approvals only**):

The proposal has been considered against development plan policies (i.e. Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 policies HATAER2, HATAER3, D1 and D5), in addition to the Human Rights Act 1998, which indicate that the proposal should be approved. Material planning considerations do not justify a decision contrary to the Development Plan (see Officer's report which can be inspected at these offices).

DRAWING NUMBERS:

Site Location Plan number 478/17/1 5, Commercial unit class uses plan number G2120 G (05) 200 A and Commercial unit class uses plan number G2120 G (05) 200 date stamped the 11th October 2007.

Signature of author..... Date.....