

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL – DEVELOPMENT CONTROL
DELEGATED REPORT

APPLICATION No:	S6/2008/1260/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.

This application concerns Unit 6 in Hatfield District Centre, which faces on to Parkhouse Court and is situated between Aesthetics (dentist) and Charlie’s (dry cleaner) and is opposite the crèche.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL:

This application is for the change of use of Unit 6, Parkhouse Court from an A1 use (retail) to an A2 use, to allow the unit to be used as a betting office. The unit is currently vacant and given that it is part of a new development, Ladbrokes PLC will be its first occupier.

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:

HATAER2 – Mixed Use

Hatfield Aerodrome Supplementary Planning Guidance, November 1999

REPRESENTATIONS

This application has been advertised by means of a site notice, posted on the 5th August 2008. Two representations have been received against the application: one from a resident and one from a retailer, who are both opposed to the nature of the proposed use, as they perceive it will have a detrimental impact on the District Centre.

DISCUSSION:

- 1. Impact on the vitality and viability of the District Centre.**
- 2. Other material planning considerations.**

Unit 6 is located within Hatfield District Centre, as defined in the Hatfield Aerodrome Masterplan (1999). The Section 106 Agreement relating to the land at Hatfield Aerodrome, Comet Way, Hatfield, sets out the agreed retail floorspace breakdown for the District Centre, and makes provision for a total of 1672sq.m of A1 retail floorspace and 279sq.m of A2 retail floorspace. These figures have however since been revised as part of the development process, and the amount of A1 retail floorspace in the centre has subsequently been increased and now stands at 1997 sq.m, whilst the amount of A2 retail floorspace has been significantly reduced and currently stands at 39 sq.m.

In March this year the Council was approached by Frontier Developments (the management company responsible for the District Centre) about the possibility of submitting a change of use application for unit 6, to allow it to be used as a betting shop. This, it was explained, was due to the fact that despite marketing the unit, no potential occupiers had come forward. Following this, the Council asked Frontier to undertake a further marketing campaign to demonstrate to us that no A1 operator was willing to take the unit. This was carried out, and as the findings proved negative, the Council conceded that an A2 use would therefore be the most viable option for this unit.

Whilst this proposal will increase the amount of A2 floorspace in the development above that outlined in the Section 106 Agreement, it is not on a scale that will impact on the viability of the existing uses in the District Centre. In addition to this, policy HATAER2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan (2005) states that the redevelopment of the Hatfield Aerodrome site should provide for a variety of landuses, and that any retail and leisure development should be limited in scale to that necessary to meet local needs. A range of uses was approved for the District Centre as part of the outline planning consent (application reference number S6/2003/1137/OP) and it is considered that this proposed change of use is in line with the approved mix of uses on the site.

Given that the nature of an A2 use is generally appropriate in a shopping area and that there is not yet any retail frontage policy for the District Centre it is considered that this proposal would therefore be acceptable.

The Council has considered the concerns that have been raised by residents and retailers of the District Centre with regards to the proposed use of this unit as a betting office and the

fact that this could contribute to anti-social behaviour in the District Centre, however this is not an issue that can be dealt with under Planning regulations.

CONCLUSION:

This application is acceptable given that it only seeks a minor change in the provisions of the reserved matters approval and Section 106 Agreement relating to the relocation/redistribution of uses within the scheme and does not propose 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 and it is not anticipated that the proposed change of use will have a detrimental impact on either the vitality or viability of the District Centre.

RECOMMENDATION: APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS

CONDITIONS:

1. 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).

2. Development should be carried out in accordance with approved plans/details (Site Plan G2120 and the Proposed Layout Plan HAT/02) received and dated the 22nd July 2008.
3. Details, including acoustic specifications, of all external plant and equipment, including extraction and air conditioning units, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to their installation. Any measures required by the Local Planning Authority to reduce noise from the plant or equipment shall be completed prior to the plant being brought into use and retained thereafter.

REASON: To protect the residential amenity of adjoining occupiers in accordance with Policy R19 and D1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

4. Unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, the use of the premises for the purposes hereby permitted shall operate only between the hours of 9am and 10pm Mondays to Sundays.

REASON: To protect the residential amenity of adjoining occupiers in accordance with Policy D1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE GRANT OF PERMISSION:

Reason for Grant of FP (Approvals only):

The proposal has been considered against development plan policy HATAER2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005, 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).

INFORMATIVES:

Please be aware that you are also required to submit applications to the Council for both the shopfront and signage at this unit, and that any future development will need to be in keeping with the character and design of the District Centre.

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