

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL  
PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE – 14 MAY 2009  
REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR (STRATEGY AND DEVELOPMENT)

S6/2009/0431/DC4 & S6/2009/0444/LB

7 – 15 PARK STREET, OLD HATFIELD, AL9 5AT

CONVERSION OF FORMER RESOURCE CENTRE INTO 1 X 2 BED, 1 X 3 BED AND 1 X 4 BED DWELLING HOUSES. DEMOLITION OF SIDE EXTENSIONS, INTERNAL ALTERATIONS AND ASSOCIATED PARKING AND LANDSCAPING

APPLICANT: Welwyn Hatfield Council

(Hatfield East)

**1 Site Description**

- 1.1 The application site is located on the west side of Park Street. The site comprises a group of terrace properties which have been internally altered to form one building. The site has a prominent position within the Old Hatfield Conservation Area and is adjacent to other listed buildings. The buildings within the site are built up to the edge of the footpath, similar to the other surrounding buildings within Conservation Area.
- 1.2 Numbers 7, 9 and 11 are a collection of three timber framed houses that are all Grade II Listed Buildings. The list description gives the main range and (probably) the south cross wing as 15th century and the north cross wing as 17th century, which is likely as the main framing size is heavy and the open hall with crown post roof form points to a medieval date, perhaps earlier.
- 1.3 Number 15 Park Street is a modern house that is attached to number 11 and forms part of the terrace. Although number 15 is not part of the original listed building it is attached to number 11 both externally and internally.
- 1.4 The surrounding area is characterised by historic buildings on narrow roads. Some of the surrounding roads have controlled parking. Some nearby commercial areas have off road parking and there is a nearby public car park.

**2 The Proposal**

- 2.1 The proposed development would involve the subdivision of the existing building, to create three dwellings that would have a layout reflective of the original properties. This would be done by creating a unit at number 7 (plot 1), numbers 9 and 11 would form a unit (plot 2) and number 15 subdivided to create a unit.
- 2.2 The front elevations of the buildings would remain as existing. To the southern flank elevation some modern flat roofed additions would be removed. To the rear of the elevation alterations would be made to the fenestration of plot 2.
- 2.3 The existing area to the rear would be subdivided to create two gardens to the rear of plots 2 and 3 and a courtyard area to the rear of plot 1. The existing

vehicular access would be retained and parking space for four cars would be created to the south western corner of the site.

### **3 Planning History**

- 3.1 1042 – 69 11 Park Street - Change of use from shop and flat above to 2 storey dwelling – Approved.
- 3.2 677 – 69 11 Park Street - Change of use from dwelling and shop to dwelling and hotel – Approved.
- 3.3 1171 – 60 7 – 9 Park Street - Extension to kitchen and livingroom accommodation – Approved.
- 3.4 1478 – 57 13 – 19 Park Street - Erection of a block of 3 houses – Approved
- 3.5 S6/0231/75/DC 7 - 15 Park Street - Change of use from a guesthouse to house in residential multiple occupation – Approved.

### **4 Planning Policy**

#### 4.1 National Planning Policy

Planning Policy Statement 1: Sustainable Development  
Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing  
Planning Policy Guidance 13: Transport  
Planning Policy Guidance 14: Development on Unstable Land  
Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment  
Planning Policy Guidance 16: Archaeology and Planning

#### 4.2 East of England Plan 2008

SS1: Achieving Sustainable Development  
SS2: Overall Spatial Strategy  
T9: Walking, Cycling and other Non-Motorised Transport  
T14: Parking  
ENV6: The Historic Environment  
ENV7: Quality in the Built Environment

#### 4.3 Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005

SD1: Sustainable Development  
GBSP2: Towns and specified settlements  
R3: Energy Efficiency  
R5: Waste Management  
R29: Archaeology  
M14: Parking Stands for New Development  
D1: Quality of Design  
D2: Character and Context  
D3: Continuity and Enclosure  
D4: Quality of the Public Realm  
D8: Landscaping  
H2: Location of Windfall Residential Development  
H5: Conversion of Commercial or Vacant Buildings to Residential Accommodation  
H10: Accessible Housing

4.4 Supplementary Design Guidance, February 2005

4.5 Supplementary Planning Guidance, Parking Standards, January 2004

## **5 Representations Received**

5.1 These applications have been advertised by site notice, newspaper notice and neighbour notifications. No representations have been received.

## **6 Consultations Received**

6.1 **Hertfordshire County Council – Transportation Planning and Policy** – No objection subject to conditions. It was noted that there is an existing gate positioned close to the public footpath. To ensure pedestrian safety this should be set back by at least 6m to allow cars to park off the public highway whilst gates are being opened.

6.2 **Hertfordshire Archaeology** – The application site lies within Area of Archaeological Significance (AAS) no.17 as identified in the Local Plan. The position of the proposed development is such that it should be regarded as likely to have an impact on significant archaeological remains. I recommend, therefore, that the following provisions be made, should you be minded to grant consent:

1. the archaeological recording of the standing structures in their present form prior to conversion/development,
2. the archaeological monitoring and recording of all alterations/additions to the fabric of the standing structure
3. the archaeological evaluation of the proposed development via a topsoil strip under archaeological supervision (and the recording of any archaeology thereby revealed)
4. the archaeological monitoring of all groundworks associated with the proposed development - including foundations and service trenches and conversion of the structures
5. a contingency for the rapid archaeological investigation of any remains encountered during the monitoring programme
6. the analysis of the results of the archaeological work and the production of a report.

6.3 **BEAMS** – The principle of the conversion for the most part seems a logical and sensible subdivision, that falls into place reasonably easily, dictated by the frame structure/ chimney stacks, existing staircases, and so long as you are satisfied from a planning point of view (neighbour amenity, restricted garden sizes & car parking provision)-is acceptable.

It was recommended that ideally a complete schedule of works and specification information should be provided within a detailed historic building appraisal. However, it was also suggested that this could be carried out through the discharge of conditions if the application is to be recommended for approval.

## **7 Hatfield Town Council Representations**

7.1 The Committee objected to the application considering the property a valuable part of Hatfield's History. To convert the property into individual units will mean the original building will be lost forever. As owners of the property Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council should make every effort to reinstate the building back to its original state. Following the Old Hatfield Charette in the autumn of 2008, the reinstatement of the property offers a real opportunity to be part of Old Hatfield developments. A brief history of the property dating back to 1715 is enclosed for your information.

## **8 Discussion**

8.1 This application is presented to the Planning Control Committee because the applicant is Welwyn Hatfield Council and an objections has been received from Hatfield Town Council.

8.2 The main issues to be considered are:

**1. The appropriateness of the proposed change of use to accommodate three dwellinghouses including impact upon residential amenity of adjoining occupiers.**

**2. The proposal's impact upon the character and appearance of the locality and the Old Hatfield Conservation Area.**

**3. The proposed developments impact upon the historic fabric of the Listed buildings.**

**4. Other Material Considerations.**

**1. The appropriateness of the proposed change of use to accommodate three dwellinghouses.**

8.3 The application site is within a residential area. Although there are some offices and other uses within the locality, the predominant use and appearance of the surroundings is residential. The development would consist of reusing the existing buildings and therefore make use of previously developed land. The application site used to be a guesthouse/boarding house at the time of the 1975 application.

8.4 When considering the previous uses from before 1975, the proposed residential use of three dwelling would not result in a significant intensification of use. When considering the size of the proposed units, the proposed development would not result in an adverse increase in noise and disturbance.

8.5 The proposed development would mostly maintain the external envelope of the existing building. The resultant dwellings would not appear more dominant than the existing building. Due to the proposed development not involving an increase in the size of the building, the adjacent properties would not suffer an adverse loss of light or overbearing impact.

8.6 The proposed development would not result in any further overlooking and a sufficient distance would be maintained from the rear boundary. An existing

balcony to the rear would be utilised to create a first floor sitting out area for the residents of plot number 2. This balcony is an existing area to the rear, which is enclosed to the south. This area would mostly overlook the rear garden of the plot that it would serve. An area close to the rear elevation of plot 3 would be screened by the existing building. Overlooking to the rear of the neighbouring properties would not be significantly worse than that of the windows in the rear elevation. Any future occupants would have an acceptable level of privacy.

#### Accessibility and Parking Provision

- 8.7 The application site is located within close proximity to a range of shops and services. The site is located within zone 2 as designated by the parking standards of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005. The A1000 which serves several bus routes and Hatfield train station are within less than 500m walking distance to the site. The site is considered to be easily accessible and within an appropriate location for residential use.
- 8.8 The proposed parking area would provide 4 off road spaces for the residents. The parking standards of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 require a provision of 4.5 spaces. The proposed parking provision would not be a significant shortfall from the maximum standard. When considering the emphasis within Policies T14, T4, T8, T9 and T13 of the East of England Plan to reduce car use and apply maximum parking standards as an absolute maximum, the proposed off road parking space would be sufficient.
- 8.9 As the site is located within an accessible location, an acceptable provision of parking space would be provided and there would also be an appropriate provision of space for future occupants. The site location allows for alternative modes of transport and the proposed plots would be sufficient to accommodate cycle parking. The proposed development would meet the requirements of Policies M14 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and T14 of the East of England Plan 2008 and is considered to be acceptable in terms of parking.

#### Density

- 8.10 Policy H6 states that in central areas and areas with good accessibility by modes of transport other than the car, residential development will be expected to be close to or exceed 50 dwellings per hectare provided that the development will not have an adverse impact on the character of the surrounding area and can satisfy the design policies of the Plan.
- 8.11 The proposed development would result in a density of 44.7 dwellings per hectare. Considering the site's location is very accessible, this density is considered to be appropriate for the location and is reflective of the other dwellings within the locality.
- 8.12 The proposal is therefore considered to comply with the requirements of Policy H6 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

#### Amenity Space

- 8.13 The proposed alterations to the rear of the building would involve subdivision to form courtyard areas to the rear of all of the proposed houses. The courtyard areas would be at a low ground level similar to the finished floor levels of the proposed dwellings. Ramped access would be created to the higher ground

areas to the rear. To the rear of plots 2 and 3 garden areas would extend to the western boundary of the site.

- 8.14 The proposed subdivision would reorganise the area to the rear of the existing building to create garden spaces for each unit. Plots 2 and 3 would have garden depths of approximately 16m. The proposed dwelling at plot 1 would have a smaller courtyard area to the rear measuring approximately 5.5m in width by 4.5m in depth. It has been acknowledged that plot 1 would have a modest amenity space. However this area would be private and useable. Furthermore, the site is within close proximity of public open space, parks and public footpaths, which would ample recreation space of any future occupants.

## **2. The proposal's impact upon the character and appearance of the locality**

- 8.15 The proposed development would involve very few alterations to the existing external envelope of the building and it therefore would not become more dominant or prominent when viewed from the surrounding areas. The proposed alterations would involve the removal of some modern additions to the existing structure, however the overall appearance of the resultant dwellings would not have an adverse impact upon the character and appearance of the locality.
- 8.16 The proposed alterations to the building would involve the removal of a dormer window to the rear and the removal of single storey flat roofed extensions to the southern flank of the dwelling. These are both additions to the building and are not important features in the overall appearance and setting of the building.
- 8.17 The existing character and appearance of the buildings would be retained. The proposed alteration visible from the front of the property would be minimal and would not have any detrimental impact. The resultant building would not appear more prominent or have an adverse impact upon the appearance of the surrounding streetscene.
- 8.18 The application would therefore meet these requirements of Policies D1, D2 and H2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

## **3. The proposed developments impact upon the historic fabric of the Listed buildings**

- 8.19 The application site is currently vacant and therefore not being maintained. The proposed development would bring the buildings back into use and allow their repair and maintenance. As stipulated within PPG15 (Planning and the Historic Environment), new uses may often be the key to a building's or area's preservation. The change of use of a building can allow for its continual upkeep and prevent a historic building from running into disrepair. Although it is important that any works are carried out sympathetically, in principle the proposed works do not need to harm the historic structure and would return much of the building to reflect its previous layout. To ensure that the works are carried out correctly, the materials and methods can be agreed through the discharge of conditions.
- 8.20 The existing building is currently not in use and may be at risk of falling into disrepair. Furthermore, the proposed development would alter some elements of the building that are considered to be inappropriate alterations that have been carried out historically.
- 8.21 The proposed internal works would close some openings that appear to have been created possibly prior to the building being Grade II Listed. The proposed

development would not make alterations to the front (principle) elevation of the buildings and the proposed changes to fenestration would be minimal.

8.22 It has been noted that the site comprises listed buildings that have a significant importance within the surrounding conservation area. The proposed development would maintain the existing form of the development and would not involve any substantial or prominent extensions.

8.23 Furthermore, one of the previous uses of the buildings were as residential dwellings and therefore the change of use would restore the buildings back to this earlier use. Additionally, PPG15 supports change of use of historic buildings subject to satisfying varying criteria. Paragraph 1.4 states

*“can secure the ...continued use and maintenance of historic buildings, provided that there is a sufficiently realistic and imaginative approach to their alteration and change of use, to reflect the needs of a rapidly changing world”*

and paragraph 2.18

*“it would be unrealistic to seek to prevent such change by the use of planning controls.”*

It is therefore concluded that, with reference to paragraphs 8.3 to 8.6 that the change of use complies with local plan policies, and in regard to all other planning considerations that the proposal is acceptable, the aims of PPG14 would be complied with.

8.24 The proposed development would respect the architectural merit and historic fabric of the Listed Building and subject to condition would be acceptable. The proposal would therefore comply with PPG15.

#### **4. Other Material Considerations.**

##### Chalk Mining

8.25 The application site is within an area of Hatfield that contains historic chalk mines. The site lies within the buffer zone for a moderately high risk area, however, as the proposed development would not result in any increased risk to future inhabitants, a risk assessment is not necessary.

##### Safety by Design

8.26 The preamble to Policy D7 states well-designed development can reduce the opportunity for crime and therefore the fear of crime. The site would retain a gated vehicular access, although this would have to be altered to accommodate the requirements of Hertfordshire Highways, the rear of the property could still be enclosed.

##### Disabled Access

8.27 The development is on relatively level ground and ramped accesses would be created to the rear to allow a level threshold to enter all properties. Some internal areas cannot be altered due to the historic layout. The proposed bin store is an acceptable distance from the residential units and the development would be

acceptable in terms of disabled access. One of the parking spaces be sufficient to accommodate disabled car parking.

### Archaeology

- 8.28 It had been noted by the County Archaeologist that the site has potential for accommodating some significant archaeological remains. Due to the site being within an area of archaeological significance and evidence that has been found nearby there is a high probability that the site may contain items of interest. Therefore, any approval would have to be conditioned to ensure that an appropriate survey is submitted and any necessary methods could be requested.

### Sustainable Development

- 8.29 The applicants have completed the Sustainability Checklist detailed within the Supplementary Design Guidance. This includes details such as using previously developed land and includes matters such as energy efficiency, minimisation of pollution and re-use of materials. Considering the proposal would comprise the redevelopment of an existing building, these measure are considered to be acceptable.

## **9 Conclusion**

- 9.1 The application site is within an accessible location that is considered to be acceptable for residential use. The proposed development would allow the restoration of an existing group of listed buildings. Due to the prominent position of these properties within the surrounding Conservation Area, the replacement of inappropriate fenestration would enhance the character and appearance of the locality. The proposed development would not have an adverse impact upon the residential amenity of the adjoining occupiers. Subject to conditions the proposal is therefore considered to comply with national, regional and local plan policies.

## **10 Recommendation**

- 10.1 It is recommended that planning application S6/2009/0431/DC4 be granted subject to the following conditions:
- 1 C.2.1 – Standard Time limit (Three Years)
  - 2 C.13.10 – Development in Accordance with Plans PL02a & 01 & PL01a and dated 2 March 2009.
  - 3 C.5.1 – Samples of Materials to be Submitted and Agreed.
  - 4 C.4.1 – Scheme of landscaping to be submitted and agreed (points b & e)
  - 5 C.8.20 – Cycle Parking Provision.
  - 6 C.8.12 – No occupation until spaces laid out.
  - 7 Notwithstanding the detail on the approved plans the entrance gates shall be set back a minimum of 6.0m from the edge of carriageway and shall open inwards into the site.

REASON: In the interest of highway safety so that a vehicle may be parked within the cartilage of the site without obstructing the public highway. In the



interest of highway safety and to ensure the development complies with Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 Transport.

8 C.8.13 - No unbound material shall be used on the proposed access within 10 metres of the highway boundary. Details of the proposed surface dressing shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, prior to the commencement of the development and implemented in accordance with those details

9 REASON: To prevent the tracking out of materials onto the highway in the interests of highway safety in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 Transport.

10 All areas for parking and storage and delivery of materials associated with the construction of this development shall be provided within the site on land which is not public highway and the use of such areas must not interfere with the use of the public highway.

11 REASON: In the interest of highway safety and free and safe flow of traffic in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 Transport.

12 No demolition or development shall take place within the proposed development site until the applicant, or their agents, or their successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, which has been submitted to the planning authority and approved in writing.

REASON: To enable the inspection for the investigation of archaeological remains in accordance with a written scheme of investigation in accordance with PPG16 and Policy R29 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

13. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved, details shall be submitted for approval in writing by the Local Planning Authority of the gates and boundary treatments proposed. Subsequently the approved details shall be implemented and not altered without prior written approval by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: In the interests of the visual amenity and to preserve the character and setting of the listed buildings in accordance with PPS1 and PPG15 and policy ENV6 of the East of England Plan 2008.

### **Summary of reasons for grant of permission**

The proposal has been considered against National Plan Policy PPS1, PPS3, PPG13, PPG14, PPG15 and PPG16 and development plan policies (i.e. East of England Plan 2008 SS1, SS2, T7, T8, T9, T14, ENV6 and ENV7 & Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 SD1, GBSP2, R3, R29, M14, D1, D2, D3, D4, D8, H2, H5 and H10), 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:**

1. INF9 – Chalk Mining

10.2 It is recommended that Listed Building Consent S6/2009/0444/LB be granted subject to the following conditions:

1 C.2.2 – Standard Time limit (Three Years)

2 C.13.10 – Development in Accordance with Plans PL02a & 01 & PL01a and dated 2 March 2009.

3 C.5.1 – Samples of Materials to be Submitted and Agreed.

4 Following the carrying out or completion of the building operations or alterations for which consent is hereby granted, all *making good* of the existing building shall be carried out in materials & finishes which closely match, like-for-like, those historic materials & finishing details used in the existing building or structure- to accord with usual conservation good practice & to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority. If there is any doubt regarding the approach to any proposed making good, or any alternative materials are proposed, a precise specification of the materials & finishes should be submitted to & agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To ensure that the special architectural & historic interest, character & appearance of the building are properly maintained, in accordance with PPG 15 & standard conservation good practice.

5 None of the components, members or elements comprising the structural timber frame & fabric – including the infill panel material, stave or wattle & daub or brick, stone & plaster- of the building shall be cut, damaged, altered or otherwise detrimentally changed- other than those parts specifically identified within the submitted detailed annotated working drawings & precise schedule of works relating to the timber frame. All such alteration works shall be in accordance with usual *conservation good practice* & forming part of the agreed specification, method statement & approach stated in the listed building consent. Sandblasting or any other abrasive cleaning is not acceptable.

REASON: To ensure that the special architectural or historic interest of the building or structure, its character & appearance is properly preserved, maintained & enhanced, in accordance with PPG 15 & standard conservation good practice.

6 Rainwater goods including gutters, downpipes & rainwater heads & any associated fittings, fixings or gratings. All rainwater goods shall be cast iron. As an alternative, cast aluminium may be acceptable, in certain circumstances, though this is to be specifically justified & agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority if it is proposed to specify cast aluminium. Plastic or uPVC rainwater goods are not acceptable.

REASON: To ensure that the special architectural & historic interest, character, appearance & integrity of the listed building or other historic building is properly maintained & to accord with PPG 15 & standard conservation good practice.

7 Prior to any building works or repairs being first commenced, a full & detailed, precise specification of all proposed materials (e.g. type & origin/ manufacturer & mix of lime & sand/ aggregate for mortars or plasterwork/ render, wood lath, brick, stone, tile, slate, thatch, timber or wood); method statement, clearly explaining the sequence of the proposed works & how the approach

accords with usual conservation good practice; & an itemised schedule of works (describing fully all repairs, re-instatements & replacement works) & agreed making good, shall be submitted to, & approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To ensure that the special architectural or historic interest of the building or structure, its character & appearance is properly preserved, maintained & enhanced, in accordance with PPG 15 & standard conservation good practice.

8 Prior to any building works being first commenced, detailed drawings of all proposed new &/ or replacement doors & windows, together with a detailed specification of the materials, construction & finishes, shall be submitted to & approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Details shall be provided which clearly show (as appropriate)- a section of the glazing bars , frame mouldings, door panels, the position of the door or window frame in relation to the face of the wall, depth of reveal, arch & sill detail.

REASON: To ensure that the special architectural or historic interest of the building or structure, its character & appearance is properly preserved, maintained & enhanced, in accordance with PPG 15 & standard conservation good practice.

#### **Summary of reasons for grant of permission**

The proposal has been considered against National Plan Policy PPG15 and development plan policies (i.e. East of England Plan 2008 ENV6 & 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).

Chris Conway, Director (Strategy and Development) (DM)

Date (21 April 2009)

Background papers to be listed (if applicable)



