

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL  
PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE – 29 OCTOBER 2009  
REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR (STRATEGY AND DEVELOPMENT)

S6/2009/0891/MA

PHASE 4, FORMER HATFIELD AERODROME, MOSQUITO WAY, HATFIELD, AL10  
9DY

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OF 164 DWELLINGS WITH ACCESS ROADS AND  
LANDSCAPING

APPLICANT: Taylor Wimpey and Bovis Homes Ltd

Hatfield Villages

**1 Site Description**

- 1.1 The application site is the area of vacant land which is the last part (Phase 4) of allocated residential land remaining to be developed on Hatfield Aerodrome. This land is bounded by Mosquito Way and Central Park to the west, the car parks of the Bishop Square offices to the south, the new District Centre (Parkhouse Court) to the east, and the David Lloyd Club (in the grade II\* listed Comet Hangar) to the north.
- 1.2 On the opposite side of Mosquito Way to the site is the de Havilland Campus of the University of Hertfordshire. The land is predominantly flat, with a bund and semi-mature landscaping along the south and west boundaries. The area of the site is approximately 2.8 hectares, and there is an existing point of vehicular access from the roundabout junction of Mosquito Way with Albatross Way.

**2 The Proposal**

- 2.1 The proposal is a reserved matters application for 164 dwellings, and includes access roads, car parking and open space. The application covers all matters reserved by the original outline application for the Hatfield Aerodrome redevelopment (ref: S6/1999/1064/OP), namely siting, design, external appearance, means of access, and landscaping in respect of the Phase 4 land.
- 2.2 The proposal includes 49 units of affordable housing (at a proportion of 30% of the total number of units), which includes 6 shared ownership units. Within this affordable element there are 27 1-bed flats, 11 2-bed flats, 7 3-bed houses and 4 4-bed houses. Within the proposed private ownership element of the scheme there are 4 1-bed flats, 54 2-bed flats, 34 3-bed townhouses, 17 4-bed townhouses and 6 5-bed townhouses.
- 1.1 The development would be served by the single point of vehicular access from the roundabout on Mosquito Way and would have two points of pedestrian and cycle access to the strategic footpath and cycleway running between Mosquito Way and Parkhouse Court. A total of 297 parking spaces (including garages) would be provided on the site.

- 2.3 Existing semi-mature landscaping along Mosquito Way and forming the boundary to Central Park would be retained and managed, whilst new tree planting would take place along the access road within the site and in the two proposed areas of open space. One of these areas, located centrally within the site, would be public open space incorporating play equipment, whilst the other would be privately managed for the benefit of the occupiers of the apartments fronting Mosquito Way.
- 2.4 The proposed housing is of essentially modern design, making use of a mix of two, three and four-storey heights with mainly monopitch roofs. Principal external materials to be used include red and buff brickwork, white render and coloured board cladding. The roof profile of one of the terraces picks up the 'serrated' theme of the listed hangar roof, whilst much of the development also makes use of themes found in the 1950s and '60s housing of the Hatfield new town.
- 2.5 It is proposed that the private housing on the site will meet a minimum of the old EcoHomes 'Very Good' standard, whilst it is a requirement that the affordable units should achieve Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3. As part of an innovation requirement for the achievement of housing grant, the developers have been working with the de Havilland Housing Partnership and plan to provide sustainable energy in the form of ground source heat pumps to seven of the affordable houses. Two of the small blocks of flats will be equipped with roof-mounted photovoltaic panels.

### **3 Planning History**

S6/1999/1064/OP – Outline application for mixed use redevelopment of Hatfield Aerodrome site in accordance with masterplan; Approved 29/12/00.

S6/2004/169/DE – Reserved matters application for 60 dwellings (on part of Phase 4); Withdrawn 26/7/04.

S6/2004/1081/DE – Reserved matters application for 60 dwellings (on part of Phase 4); Withdrawn 27/2/05.

S6/2007/611/MA – Reserved matters application for 164 dwellings; Withdrawn 25/6/07.

S6/2007/1338/MA – Reserved matters application for infrastructure roads (to serve development of 164 dwellings); Refused 6/12/07.

Reason(s): The submitted infrastructure road proposals, if approved in isolation, would prejudice the achievement of a high quality of design for housing on this phase of development, contrary to policies D1 and M1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and the associated Supplementary Design Guidance, and to the provisions of PPS1, PPS3 and PPG13.

S6/2007/1368/MA – Reserved matters application for 164 dwellings; Refused 17/12/07.

Reason(s): (1) The proposal would not result in a development of sufficiently high design quality for this prominent site and would therefore be contrary to the provisions of the Hatfield Aerodrome Supplementary Planning Guidance 1999, Policies D1, D2, D3 and D6 and Supplementary Design Guidance of the Welwyn

Hatfield District Plan 2005, and the relevant provisions of PPS1 and PPS3. (2)  
The proposed Block H, through its height, massing and location, would have a significantly adverse effect on the residential amenity of the closest flats in Clarkson Court through loss of light and overbearing appearance, contrary to the provisions of the Supplementary Design Guidance to the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

#### **4 Planning Policy**

4.1 PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development  
PPS3: Housing  
PPG13: Transport

4.2 East of England Plan 2008:  
  
Policy H2 – Affordable Housing

4.3 Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005:

SD1 Sustainable Development

R3 Energy Efficiency  
R4 Renewable Energy Sources  
R19 Noise and Vibration Pollution

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  
D11 Design Statements

H6 Densities  
H7 Affordable Housing  
H8 Dwelling Type and Tenure

OS3 Play space and Informal Open Space

HATAER1 Sustainable Development of the Site

M1 Integrating Transport and Land Use  
M5 Pedestrian Facilities  
M6 Cycle Routes and Facilities  
M14 Parking Standards for New Development

Hatfield Aerodrome Supplementary Planning Guidance, November 1999  
Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, Supplementary Design Guidance, February 2005  
Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, Supplementary Planning Guidance, Parking Standards, January 2004

## **5 Representations Received**

- 5.1 The application has been advertised in the local press and by site notice. Individual letters of notification have been sent to neighbouring commercial occupiers, and to the closest residential properties in Clarkson Court and Mosquito Way.
- 5.2 Thirty-two e-mails and handwritten objections have been received from members of the de Havilland Residents' Association and other residents. These objections cover a range of issues, most particularly the following:
- Risk of more dwellings going to multiple occupancy.
  - Further increase in student population living on the development.
  - Problems attendant on the above; noise, litter, anti-social behaviour.
  - Inadequate provision for refuse collection.
  - Increase in traffic and reckless driving on the development.
  - Parking problems.
  - Insufficient capacity at local nurseries and schools.
  - Insufficient play areas and youth facilities in area.
  - Too high a density of development.
  - Inappropriate design which does not match development on the other side of Mosquito Way.
  - Too many unresolved issues on earlier phases to permit this development.

Other comments include the following, in the event that approval is granted: Suggestion that all private houses should have planning restrictions in place to prevent living spaces being converted to extra bedrooms; that developer should be given a fixed period of time in which to get the roads adopted by the local authority, thereby improving maintenance in years ahead; that consideration should be given to a 'Residents Only' parking zone being put in place immediately the development is completed.

- 5.3 Included in the thirty-two objections are six representations from residents of the Clarkson Court flats, who object on the following grounds:
- Loss of sunlight and daylight to their flats, due to the positioning of the nearest proposed flat block (B29).
  - Overlooking of their flats from the new flat block.
  - Loss of views.
  - Loss of value to their properties.
  - Noise and disturbance from increased use of the footpath/cycleway between Mosquito Way and Parkhouse Court, and from the proposed social housing.

## **6 Consultations Received**

- 6.1 **Hertfordshire County Council Transportation Planning and Policy** – states that:

- Access to the site is already in place and has been designed for a development of this nature;
- Significant contributions towards sustainable transport for this site have already been made as part of the outline planning permission;
- Highway adoption process has been problematic on the development to date, but the areas proposed for adoption in this application are generally satisfactory;
- Internal layout has been revised to take into account detailed concerns raised by HCC in respect of the original plans;
- The quantity of car parking for this site is subject to supplementary planning guidance. “It is assumed that the Planning Authority will carry out their normal calculations”.

It will be necessary for the applicant to prepare a residential travel plan. Advice on the content can be provided by the County Council’s travel plan advisors.

- 6.2 **Hertfordshire Constabulary Architectural Liaison Officer** - “The developers/architects came to see me prior to submitting the planning application. I have asked that all premises meet the ‘Secured by Design’ standard and that I am kept informed during the construction so that the standards will be met.”
- 6.3 **The Environment Agency** - states that the layout of the site could be affected by a conditional requirement to provide on-site surface water storage for the 100 year climate change rainfall event, even though strategic storage has been provided for the Business Park as a whole. Conditions attached to the outline permission remain valid.
- 6.4 **Thames Water** - has no objection with regard to sewerage infrastructure. With regard to surface water drainage it is the responsibility of a developer to make proper provision for drainage to ground, watercourses or a suitable sewer.
- 6.5 **Hertfordshire County Council County Development** - encourages Districts and Boroughs to have regard to the potential for minimising waste generated by development, in particular Waste Policies 3, 7, 8 and 11 of the Waste Local Plan 1999. A site waste management plan will be required for construction of this development.
- 6.6 **English Heritage** – states that the setting of the Comet Hangar has already been radically transformed by the redevelopment of the Aerodrome. Provided that the scale of the proposed development, and its general position in relation to the Comet Hangar, are comparable to that proposed in the previous scheme, English Heritage would have no objection. If this is the case, English Heritage would not wish to make detailed comment on the scheme design.
- 6.7 **Listed Buildings Consultant (BEAMS)** – states that the scale of the hangar is so huge and dominant and the separation to the nearest buildings on the proposed site layout sufficient for the scheme to have only a minimal impact on the setting and context of the former hangar. As such the relationship is considered acceptable. (Some detailed comments on design of the scheme are made).

- 6.8 **Housing Strategy & Development Section** – advises that the scheme mix offered is acceptable in terms of unit and tenure mix, design and inclusion of energy efficiency initiatives in the form of ground source heat pumps. Housing Services are prepared to support a bid for grant to maximise the delivery of the general needs rented units which is a priority need for the Council. The de Havilland Housing partnership (DHHP) has worked with the developer to provide additional input into the design and layout of the scheme and the DHHP Community Co-ordinator has been fully consulted on what is being proposed. Housing services and the DHHP are fully supportive of the proposed scheme submitted by the applicant. (The Community Co-ordinator has made some detailed comments on the design, including emphasising the importance of appropriate arrangements for waste recycling and management).
- 6.9 **Landscape** - Original detailed comments on the submitted landscaping scheme have been discussed with the applicant and have resulted in submission of revised drawings. A management plan has also been produced for the existing structural planting along the site boundary with Mosquito Way.
- 6.10 **Environmental Health** – has responded that the developer wishes to rely on closed glazing to achieve satisfactory internal noise levels (in the units closest to Mosquito Way). As such, a greater emphasis needs to be given to the ventilation requirements of those dwellings that may be affected by noise. Therefore, for those bedrooms where windows need to be closed to achieve a satisfactory internal noise environment, a scheme including mechanical ventilation will need to be submitted. A planning condition is suggested. (A condition is also suggested covering contaminated land issues, but a condition dealing with contamination already exists on the outline permission).
- 6.11 **Client Environmental Services** - has provided detailed comments concerning the position and size of bin stores, and the availability of recycling facilities.

## **7 Town Council Representations**

- 7.1 Hatfield Town Council object to the application, considering the proposed number of dwellings excessive. They also state: “In addition with the dwellings being so close to the highway the council consider the design out of keeping with the development on the other side of the highway. The Council would have appreciated consultation a year ago when the developer meet (sic) with WHBC.”

## **8 Discussion**

- 8.1 This application is presented to the Planning Control Committee because of the objection received from Hatfield Town Council.

- 8.2 The key areas are:

1. **Principle of residential development and housing density;**
2. **Housing type and mix;**
3. **Design of dwellings;**
4. **Relationship to Clarkson Court Flats;**
5. **Sustainability;**
6. **Movement and car parking;**

- 7. Landscape and open space;**
- 8. Private lettings and multiple occupancy;**
- 9. Legal agreements and conditions; and**
- 10. Adoption of highway.**

## **1. Principle of residential development and housing density**

- 8.3 The application site is allocated as land for residential development in the Hatfield Aerodrome SPG and masterplan, adopted in November 1999. This status was confirmed by the grant of outline planning permission in December 2000 (ref: S6/1999/1064/OP). The SPG gives an indicative quantum of 130 dwellings on the current application site, but the outline permission does not specify a figure.
- 8.4 The outline permission and its accompanying section 106 agreement did however require the submission of a Framework Plan for the residential area. This plan was to specify, amongst other details, the range of densities proposed for the new housing. The Framework Plan submitted by the housing developers was reported to the Council's Planning Control Board in February 2002 and approved. This plan shows lower density development to be located close to the Green Belt boundary, with higher densities proposed along the main transport corridors and adjacent to the District Centre, including the current application site. The proposed range of higher densities is from 40 to 60 dwellings per hectare, and the current application proposes a density of 58.6 dwellings per hectare, which is within this range.
- 8.5 A number of representations made in respect of the current application refer to the proposed number of dwellings, or the resultant density, being too great. This is not necessarily the case in principle, as set out above. The adopted District Plan policy on densities, Policy H6, states that the Council will expect 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. This is broadly consistent with the approach in the approved Framework Plan.
- 8.6 The factors which are critical in assessing the acceptability of the number of dwellings and density proposed are that the development will not have an adverse impact on the character of the surrounding area and that it can satisfy the design policies of the Plan (and of the Hatfield Aerodrome SPG). I will return to these considerations below.

## **2. Housing type and mix**

- 8.7 The overall housing mix proposed in the application is 59% 1- and 2-bed flats, 25% 3-bed houses and 16% 4- and 5-bed houses. This differs from the mix originally envisaged in the SPG, which was 25-35% 1-2 bed units, 30-40% 3-bed units and 20-40% 4-bed units or larger. In my view, however, the location and shape of this site, and its identification as a higher density area in the approved Framework Plan, make the higher proportion of flats a logical form of development. The SPG also states that the mix for affordable housing may be

different from the general mix in order to meet specific needs. As can be seen from 6.8 above, the Council's Housing Strategy and Development Team is fully supportive of the proposed unit type and tenure mix. The provision of 30% of the total number of units as affordable housing complies with Policy H7 of the District Plan, and these units are distributed through the site in accordance with Policy H8.

- 8.8 There is a concern, expressed in many of the objections and representations received in respect of the current application, that the unit types proposed are inappropriate for this site. Much of this concern arises from experience of the earlier phases of this development, where town houses in particular have been acquired by private landlords who have subsequently converted additional rooms to bedrooms in these units, so that in some units six or seven unrelated individuals are in occupation. This has environmental implications, for example in terms of car parking and amounts of refuse generated. The question of these problems is considered later in the report. In principle, however, it is not considered that a refusal of the present application on the grounds of inappropriate housing type could be substantiated, as the mixture of flats and town houses proposed is appropriate in design and character terms.

### **3. Design of dwellings**

- 8.9 Earlier schemes for this site have been withdrawn or refused permission. Inadequate or inappropriate standard of design has featured as a reason for these decisions. The present application has been prepared with a new architectural and urban design approach, and draws on a series of pre-application discussions and workshops held with the applicants in 2008, where the Council engaged an independent and recognised Urban Designer to advise.
- 8.10 The design solution which has emerged takes into account the awkward shape of the site, as well as its context in terms of the listed hangar, adjoining flats and modern office and University buildings. The scheme attempts to form a positive frontage to Mosquito Way, Central Park, and the strategic east-west footpath/cycleway route. A number of objectors have made reference to the fact that the scheme will appear different to the residential crescent on the opposite side of Mosquito Way, it is felt that this is not a significant drawback. There is insufficient site frontage to Central Park to replicate the crescent, while the width of the Park itself means that the development on the eastern side of the road will not necessarily be read with the crescent. Another objection from the Town Council is that the frontage blocks are too close to Mosquito Way. It is true that at certain points the blocks are as close as 11m to the carriageway of Mosquito Way, but this will still allow the frontage structural planting belt and bund to be retained and would not result in unacceptable visual intrusion. The closest dwellings would however require enhanced glazing and ventilation to ensure an appropriate reduction in road noise intrusion.
- 8.11 The majority of the proposed dwelling blocks are three storeys in height, with some four storey development fronting Mosquito Way and in the two apartment blocks in the eastern half of the site. There are five 'flat over garage' units which provide a small amount of two storey development within the site. Given the context of the site, which includes the Clarkson Court flats (six storeys in height), the listed hangar (equivalent to six storeys in height) and the Bishop Square offices (four office storeys), the proposed heights are appropriate, and are in accordance with the SPG and Framework Plan. The crescent development on



the opposite side of Mosquito Way is a mixture of three and four storeys in height.

- 8.12 The impact of the proposed development on the setting of the grade II\* listed hangar has been carefully considered with the benefit of advice from BEAMS and English Heritage as detailed above. Because of the redevelopment of the Aerodrome site, the setting of the hangar has in any event changed radically from its original state, where the hangar was part of a working airfield and aircraft manufacturing works and where there were other large industrial type buildings in close proximity. The hangar has also itself been converted to a different use as a sports and leisure club. In these circumstances the scale of the proposed residential development (at three storeys fronting onto the hangar) will not adversely affect its new setting, and the separation distance between the hangar and the nearest proposed houses is adequate at 40 to 45m.
- 8.13 In keeping with the context, the architecture of the proposed development is modern, and in contrast to the more traditional volume housing approach adopted in the earlier phases (excepting the crescent). The modern approach is encouraged by the approved Framework Plan and has been promoted for this phase in the pre-application discussions. As noted above, the design of the dwellings picks up themes from original new town housing elsewhere in Hatfield (e.g. flat-topped projecting surrounds to living room windows), and the roof design of one of the terrace blocks (B26) takes the design theme of the listed hangar roof.
- 8.14 The proposed choice of materials includes both red and yellow/buff brick (which are both used extensively in Hatfield) and white render, which serves to lighten the appearance of the development and echoes the appearance of the original de Havilland buildings (see for example the new police station development). Other materials are used selectively to provide variety to the elevations, such as the 'parklex' type boarding and red painted canopies to some ground floor windows and front doors.
- 8.15 As originally submitted some of the elevational treatments were lacking in variety, and the use of monopitch roofs meant that there were substantial areas of plain brickwork above the top floor windows of many of the units. Revised plans were requested in order to address these concerns, and the problem areas have now been alleviated by the use of recessed and contrasting brickwork panels and by extending the use of white render. Greater variety has also been introduced into the blocks fronting Central Park.

#### **4. Relationship to Clarkson Court Flats**

- 8.16 The proposed block at the eastern end of the site (B29) is located on the opposite side of the strategic footpath/cycleway to the southernmost block of the existing Clarkson Court flats. Six objections have been received from residents of the existing flats, concerning potential loss of sunlight and daylight to their flats, increase in noise and disturbance, and other factors as set out at 5.3 above.
- 8.17 One of the two reasons for refusal of the previous application for this site (ref: S6/2007/1368/MA) was that the block then proposed at the eastern end of the site, through its height, massing and location, would have a significantly adverse effect on the residential amenity of the closest flats in Clarkson Court through loss of light and overbearing appearance. The northern elevation of this block

would have been between 10m and 16m from the facing elevation of the existing flats.

- 8.18 In the current application the northern elevation of Block B29 is 30m from the facing elevation of the existing flats, with the exception of a projecting wing at the western end. This wing is 24m from the Clarkson Court building, but faces onto a stairwell element, and thus has a less direct effect on outlook from the existing flats. Block B29 is four storeys high (compared with the six storey Clarkson Court block, which includes ground floor car parking) but has a significantly smaller footprint than the corresponding block in the previous application. The block has also been designed such that the majority of living room and bedroom windows face southwards, away from Clarkson Court, thereby minimising overlooking between the two blocks.
- 8.19 The construction of Block B29 in the position shown would certainly have an effect on the present open outlook from, and direct sunlight available to, some of the Clarkson Court flats. This effect would be most noticeable in the first and second floor existing flats. This is not in itself however a sufficient reason to withhold planning approval. The relationship between the existing and proposed buildings has been carefully assessed on site and, with a separation distance of 24 to 30m between the buildings, it is not considered a refusal on grounds of loss of light or overbearing appearance would be justified. In terms of potential noise and disturbance, it must be borne in mind that the existing flats already face onto the strategic footpath/cycleway, which is open to the public. Short term disturbance through building works aside, additional noise arising from the new flats would be more an issue of occupiers' behaviour than a direct result of development. The orientation of the new block, with living rooms facing southwards should assist in limiting noise nuisance.

## **5. Sustainability**

- 8.20 The applicants have completed a sustainability assessment of the proposals as part of their design statement. The provision of the affordable housing to level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes is a requirement of the Homes and Communities Agency as housing grant provider, however in accordance with District Plan policy HATAER1 and the Hatfield Aerodrome SPG the applicants have addressed a range of sustainability principles. In particular, Bovis intend to install ground source heat pumps to provide energy to seven of the affordable units; this innovation is intended to be supported financially by the de Havilland Housing Partnership and the central government Low Carbon Building Programme. In two of the Taylor Wimpey affordable flat blocks photovoltaic cells will be used to provide an element of renewable energy.
- 8.21 The putting in place of adequate arrangements for disposal of domestic waste is a critical area of concern for this application, particularly given the issues which have arisen on earlier phases of refuse overspill, fly-tipping and litter. In so far as these relate to multiple occupation, they are dealt with below. The proposed locations and sizes of the refuse storage areas have however been discussed in detail with the Council's Client Environmental Services section and are appropriate. The applicants have included a designated small paved area, bounded by railings, at the front of each of the houses, where refuse can be placed ready for collection. Specific areas for recyclable materials are also to be provided within the buildings, and their location and size has been discussed with the Council's Waste Services Officer.

- 8.22 With regard to sustainable drainage (SUDS), the application proposals do not in themselves incorporate any particular on-site SUDS measures, but the development will link to the existing surface water drainage infrastructure for the Aerodrome site, which is sustainably designed in that 50% of the whole site runoff is attenuated by the Ellenbrook balancing ponds. The site is in a low-risk flood area. A number of water-saving features will be installed in all dwellings, and water butts will be provided in all private gardens.

## **6. Movement and Car Parking**

- 8.23 With regard to movement issues, the layout of the proposed development incorporates the principles of Manual for Streets, with speed control through sharp bends and links to the strategic footpath/cycleway from within the development. This accords with Policies M1, M5 and M6 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005. The bus station at Parkhouse Court is less than 100m from the eastern end of the site.
- 8.24 The relative accessibility of the site to non-car modes of transport influences the car parking provision, in accordance with the principles of the Hatfield Aerodrome SPG, the Parking Standards SPG, and Policy M14 of the District Plan. The standard which has been applied to this application is 1 space per 1-bed unit, 1.5 spaces per 2-bed unit, 2 spaces for each 3- and 4-bed unit, and 3 spaces for the 5-bed units. (The additional 0.5 spaces for the 2-bed units – 38 spaces in all - are included within the total of 51 visitors' spaces proposed). This is equivalent to a standard between accessibility zones 2 and 3, which is appropriate for the location of this site.
- 8.25 Concern has been expressed in some of the representations that the parking provision proposed will be inadequate, particularly if the situation with private renting and multiple occupancy of the new private dwellings repeats the experiences of the earlier phases. This concern is understandable, but in the light of national and local planning policy on parking restraint it is not correct to increase the parking provision in an attempt to deal with this eventuality. In the first instance, to do so would run contrary to the sustainability principles underpinning the SPG and outline planning permission for this site. Secondly, it would potentially lead to an inefficient use of housing land. Because of the proximity of this development site to the University and to employment uses with controlled car parks, it would be advisable for private parking enforcement to take place pending adoption of the access road, and for parking restrictions on that road to be put in place by the local authority at the time of adoption.

## **7. Landscape and Open Space**

- 8.26 Throughout the pre-application discussions on this scheme, the importance of good structural landscaping has been stressed. This is in part to give effect to the aims of the SPG and in part a recognition that landscape implementation has been a problem in some areas on the earlier phases, due mainly to the fragmentation of land ownership following development.
- 8.27 Detailed discussions have taken place with the Council's Landscape Section, resulting in revisions to the originally submitted landscape proposals in terms of specific tree locations and species. A strong corridor of trees is proposed along the internal site access road, with tree groups also around the two areas of

designated open space. The proposed 'Hangar Square', close to the listed hangar, will also be a landscape focal point.

- 8.28 Another significant issue is the retention of the existing structural planting along Mosquito Way at the site frontage. This has been closely examined, given that the proposals include frontage blocks which come within 4 to 5m of these trees at certain points. The Council's Landscape Officer has confirmed that this proximity will not prejudice the future of the important semi-mature tree belt along Mosquito Way, subject to appropriate management. A detailed landscape management statement has been submitted by the applicants for this frontage landscape, and will be agreed with the Council before any approval is issued.
- 8.29 With regard to the proposed public open space within the site, this would be divided between a grassed area with boundary hedge and tree planting, and a children's play area of LEAP standard. The details of play equipment are proposed to be reserved for approval under a condition, but the intention, following discussion between the applicants, this Council and Hatfield Town Council (as possible adopting authority, though this is yet to be agreed) is to provide a more modern and imaginative style of equipment, in keeping with the overall design of this housing phase. The proposed amount of open space is acceptable for a relatively high density development of this type, given that the northern boundary of the site abuts the existing Central Park, which is an extensive and well-landscaped area.

## **8. Private lettings and multiple occupancy**

- 8.30 Following experiences on the completed earlier phases of the residential development, much concern has been expressed in the representations received about the likelihood of the private element of the Phase 4 scheme being purchased by private landlords and subsequently let to multiple tenants, particularly students. In some cases on the earlier phases, town houses in particular have been converted from three or four bedroom units to six bedroom units, thereby increasing the amount of refuse generated per house, and the potential car parking demand. The situation has been compounded by poor refuse management by tenants and landlords, poor maintenance of external areas, and the behaviour of a minority of occupiers resulting in noise and disturbance at unsocial hours.
- 8.31 It needs to be said at the outset that the planning system as presently constituted can have only limited influence on some of these issues. As stated above, it would not be reasonable in planning terms to resist the development of, say, town houses, because of the possibility of their purchase by private landlords intending to let them to any particular group of people. Members may recall that the government issued a consultation earlier this year on the planning approach to multiple occupation, recognising the issues caused in certain localised parts of the country by 'studentification' and other concentrations of intensively private-rented properties. At present, however, the conversion of additional rooms in a property to provide additional bedrooms for tenants does not require planning permission, and for planning purposes the issue of change of use to HMO only arises if the property is converted to house people not living as a single household, or where the number of occupants exceeds six.
- 8.32 A realistic approach has to acknowledge, that of the 115 private ownership units proposed in the current application (particularly the 57 town houses), a

substantial proportion could end up in the hands of private landlords. Given the significant environmental problems that have arisen on the earlier phases, the proposed scheme has been checked for the proper provision of refuse storage and recycling facilities, and the applicants have proposed that all front garden areas to houses and communal amenity areas to flats would pass for maintenance purposes to a single management company. This approach could have benefits in terms of a smarter and more consistent appearance to the street scene.

## **9. Legal Agreements and Conditions**

- 8.33 The development of this site is subject to the terms of the section 106 agreement dated 29<sup>th</sup> December 2000, governing the affordable housing provision, the transfer and future maintenance of open space and certain other relevant matters. The proposal for 164 units in the current application means that there is an increase of 34 units over the number originally envisaged in the SPG and section 106 agreement for this site. Although the County Council is not requesting any additional transport contributions in respect of this increase in units (given the substantial amounts already committed, and the modest difference to traffic generation), there is the question of enhanced contributions for education and associated County Council services. The liability for the additional units can be calculated by reference to the relevant parts of the HCC Planning Obligations Toolkit. The applicants have agreed this approach in principle and it is proposed to deal with the contributions by means of a unilateral undertaking under s106. The applicants have submitted a draft undertaking which needs to be finalised before any planning approval is granted. The sum involved is likely to be between £100k and £150k.
- 8.34 The development of this site is already covered by a number of conditions on the original outline planning permission, relating to various matters including site contamination, archaeological investigation, drainage and street furniture. Details to comply with these conditions would need to be agreed before the commencement of development.

## **10. Adoption of Highway**

- 8.35 Several representations have included the suggestion that a condition be imposed on any approval, requiring the on-site roads and footpaths to be adopted within a given time limit. This has been prompted by the slow pace of progress towards adoption on the earlier phases. Whilst this concern is again understandable, such a condition could not reasonably be imposed because adoption is not covered by planning legislation and is not entirely within the control of the developer. Even if the condition only required offering the roads for adoption within a time limit, this would not take into account the fact that access to this site can only be gained from Mosquito Way, which is currently unadopted and in separate ownership, nor would it allow for any subsequent period for implementing any additional detailed works required by the Highway Authority. It can be said however that the adoption of the southern section of Mosquito Way is now relatively close, and by the time the Phase 4 road is constructed, there should be no abnormal delay to its adoption, as it links directly to that section of Mosquito Way.

## **9 Conclusion**

- 9.1 This application relates to a site which already has the benefit of outline planning permission for residential development. The number of dwellings proposed is an increase over that originally estimated in the 1999 Hatfield Aerodrome SPG, but is consistent with the density range subsequently approved in the residential area Framework Plan in 2002. The design of the scheme is consistent with the SPG and the design policies of the District Plan. It has also been the subject of significant pre-application discussion and specialist urban design input.
- 9.2 The proposed development will provide affordable housing at a proportion of 30% of the total number of units and will complete the residential development at Hatfield Aerodrome in a manner consistent with the site's built context. Whilst it is recognised that the manner of occupation of the residential development as a whole has given rise to environmental issues, particularly around refuse disposal and instances of anti-social behaviour, these are being addressed through appropriate channels. As far as the planning process is concerned the details of the scheme now proposed, together with the imposition of appropriate conditions, will result in an appropriate form of development which makes a positive contribution to the built character and sustainability objectives of the Hatfield Aerodrome redevelopment.

## **10 Recommendation**

- 10.1 It is recommended that approval is granted in respect of application number S6/2009/0891/MA for the reserved matters (as reserved in outline planning permission S6/1999/1064/OP) of siting, design, external appearance, means of access and landscaping, subject to the completion of a unilateral section 106 obligation to secure the payment of appropriate supplementary contributions towards education and associated services as set out in 8.33 above.
- 10.2 This approval is also subject to the following conditions:
1. C.13.1 – Development to be built in accordance with approved plans.
  2. Development shall not begin until a scheme for sound insulating the proposed dwellings has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Subsequently the development shall be implemented in accordance with the approved scheme and shall be retained in accordance with the scheme, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme shall include details of type of glazing and mechanical ventilation.  
  
REASON: To ensure a satisfactory noise climate for occupiers within the proposed dwellings.
  3. No garage shall be converted to living accommodation without the prior written approval of the local planning authority.

REASON: To ensure the retention of adequate car parking provision to serve the development, and to prevent environmental problems caused by over-intensive occupation of the dwellings.

4. The existing trees and shrubs along the site frontage to Mosquito Way shall be retained and managed in accordance with the Landscape Management Statement received on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2009 unless the local planning authority otherwise agrees in writing.

REASON: In the interests of visual amenity and ecological diversity.

5. Prior to the commencement of development details of the design and layout of the play equipment proposed for the play area within the principal public open space shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

REASON: To ensure appropriate provision for children's play within the site.

6. Prior to the commencement of development details and/or samples of all external materials and finishes to be used in construction of the dwellings and garages hereby approved shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

REASON: To ensure a satisfactory appearance to the buildings which is appropriate to the context of the development.

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

The details of the reserved matters proposed are acceptable in terms of the policies set out in the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and the Hatfield Aerodrome Supplementary Planning Guidance 1999.

The proposal has been considered against Planning Policy Statement 1 (Delivering Sustainable Development), Planning Policy Statement 3 (Housing) and Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 (Transport), East of England Plan 2008 Policy H2 and local development plan policies SD1, R3, R4, R19, D1, D2, D3, D4, D5, D6, D7, D8, D9, D11, H6, H7, H8, OS3, HATAER1, M1, M5, M6 and M14 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**

None

Chris Conway, Director (Strategy and Development) (SC)  
Date 15/10/09

Background papers to be listed (if applicable)

