

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL – DEVELOPMENT CONTROL
DELEGATED REPORT

APPLICATION No:	S6/2009/2589/MA
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NOTATION:

The site lies within the Hatfield Aerodrome Site as designated in the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE:

The application site is located to the west of Comet Way and east of Mosquito Way. The site covers an area of approximately 2.5 hectares and is irregular shaped. It falls within the Employment Area 6, Hatfield Business Park.

Grade II* listed in 1998, the site consist of the former Flight Test Hanger and Control Tower for the de Havilland Comet. The main Hangar was built in 1952-3 with the tower completed 1954. The Comet Hanger was the most sophisticated example of aluminium construction at the time and was also the world's largest permanent aluminium structure. The site also has significant historical connections with the aviation industry.

In December 2000 outline permission was granted for the entire aerodrome re-development. Following this, full planning permission and listed building consent were granted in June 2002 for alterations to the hangar to allow its use as a members club to provide a range of sports, leisure and social facilities together with associated car parking and landscaping. The site is currently in use as a David Lloyd (sports, leisure and social facilities and associated offices) and also accommodates the companies head office.

As existing the site has 200 parking spaces for the health club, which is enclosed by a barrier. There is an addition area to the north east of the site has 50 shared parking spaces.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL:

The proposal is for the provision of additional car parking for David Lloyd Leisure Ltd to provide an additional 71 parking spaces on the site of existing tennis courts. The proposed parking area would measure approximately 70m by 104m.

A 2.75m high chin linked fence would be erected around the approved tennis courts to the front of the building. This enclose would measure approximately 6.8m by 16m.

PLANNING HISTORY:

Relevant Planning History:

S6/1999/1064/OP Former Hatfield Aerodrome – Approved

S6/2002/0098/FP – Alteration to Listed Flight Hanger for Use as a Members Club Providing a Range of Sports, Leisure and Social Facilities Together with Associated

Car Parking and Landscaping. (Reserved Matters Pursuant to Outline Planning Consent S6/1999/1064/OP) – Approved

S6/2002/0097/LB – Demolition of Modern Annexe Building to the West of Listed Flight Test Hanger and Works of Alteration and Refurbishment to Retained Building – Approved

S6/2003/1686/FP – Change of use of the third, fourth and fifth floors of control tower to tennis academy lodge accommodation – Approved

S6/2004/0074/AD – Erection of 2 free standing non-illuminated signs – Approved

S6/2004/1091/AD – Installation of internally illuminated sign and mounting of flag on pole – Approved

S6/2004/1379/FP – Installation of a combined heat and power unit in an acoustic attenuated container – Approved

S6/2007/0006/FP – Change of use from hotel room (Class C1) to office (Class B1) – Approved

S6/2007/1264/LB – Single storey glazed staff room extension to east elevation – Approved

S6/2008/1690/MA – Relocation of tennis courts to lawn area and extension of car parking facilities – Withdrawn

S6/2009/0994/AD – Installation of 2 replacement logo signs – Approved

S6/2009/0995/LB – Installation of 2 replacement logo signs – Approved

S6/2009/1019/FP – Relocation and resurfacing of tennis courts to lawn area – Approved.

SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES:

National Policy

PPS1: Delivering sustainable development

PPS5: Planning for the Historic Environment

PPG13: Transport

East of England Plan 2008

SS1: Achieving Sustainable Development

T1: Regional Transport Strategy Objectives and Outcomes

T2: Changing Travel Behaviour

T4: Urban Transport

T13: Public Transport Accessibility

T14: Parking

ENG1: Carbon Dioxide Emissions and Energy Performance

Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review 1991 – 2011:

None.

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005:

SD1: Sustainable Development

GBSP2: Towns and Specified Settlements
R3: Energy Efficiency
EMP1: Employment Areas
EMP2: Acceptable Uses in Employment Areas
HATAER1: Sustainable Development of the Site
D1: Quality of Design
D2: Character and Context
D7: Safety by Design
D8: Landscaping
D9: Access and Design for people with disabilities
D11: Design Statements
M3: Green Transport Plans
M5: Pedestrian Facilities
M6: Cycle Routes and Facilities
M14: Parking Standards for New Development

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

Hatfield Aerodrome SPG 1999

CONSULTATIONS

Hertfordshire County Council Transportation Planning and Policy – No objection subject to conditions.

Highways Agency – No response .

Environment Agency – No response.

Welwyn Hatfield Trees and Landscape – It was verbally stated that landscaping could be improved and if approved a landscaping condition should be used.

Thames Water – No objection, it was recommended that petrol/oil interceptors are fitted to all parking areas.

TOWN/PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS

No comments received.

REPRESENTATIONS

This application has been advertised by site notice and neighbour notification letters and no representations have been received. Period expired 21 April 2010.

DISCUSSION:

The main issues are:

- 1. The principle of the development**
- 2. Impact upon the surrounding highway network and compliance with highways policy**
- 3. The impact upon the character and appearance of the locality and residential amenity of the adjoining occupiers**
- 4. The proposed development's impact upon the adjacent Listed Building**

5. Other material considerations

1. The application site is located within Hatfield Business Park which is designated as an Employment Area. Policy EMP1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 recognises employment areas as being required to meet business needs. One of the District Plan's 4 objectives for employment is to maximise the opportunity for a range of business and employment opportunities on the former aerodrome site in Hatfield, and throughout the district, to meet local job needs.

Over the years the B1 office space within the application site has increased substantially. The office space has increased from the original approved area of 50sq.m to 1415sq.m. Due to the exceptionally large size of the leisure space, the offices are still an ancillary function within the site, which have individual previous consents for the floorspace change of use. The site now accommodates the company's head quarters and has changed from the original layout that was agreed for the site.

Although the proposal does not comprise new floorspace that requires additional parking space, previous alterations have resulted in a greater intensity in the use of the existing floorspace.

Paragraph 11.3 of the Parking Standards of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 states that the car parking standards and zone based restraint outlined in the Parking Standards will not apply to the Hatfield Aerodrome. Therefore, the appropriate parking standards are those contained within the Hatfield Aerodrome SPG. Using the Aerodrome parking standards it can be seen that the level of parking on site is below the maximum level of provision and would be even with the inclusion of the additional 71 spaces.

2. The application has been submitted with a transport assessment. Although the proposed car park would create 71 additional spaces it is not likely to have a significant impact upon the surrounding transport network. The applicant has noted that areas surrounding the application site are currently used for on street parking. At the time of the site visit it was noted that surrounding areas are used for on street parking close to the entrance of the application site.

No comments were received from the Highways Agency and no objection was raised from Hertfordshire County Council (Transportation Planning and Policy) in terms of adverse impact on the surrounding highway network.

The application is an amended scheme from the withdrawn application under reference S6/2008/1690/MA. The need for additional parking has to be considered in policy terms and from the highway perspective this relates to PPG13, which states that the availability of car parking has a major influence on the means of transport people choose for their journeys. It goes on to state that, 'reducing the amount of parking in new development (and in the expansion and change of use in existing development) is essential, as part of a package of planning and transport measures, to promote sustainable travel choices'.

The site has an approved travel plan (approved October 2008), a requirement of the Aerodrome S106 Agreement and this set out a number of targets and actions aimed at reducing dependence on the car. As part of this application a monitoring report has been submitted. The monitoring report contains a summary travel of staff travel and appears to indicate that the number of staff travelling by single occupancy vehicle (SOV) has reduced. However, no details are provided on some of the other items

listed in the action plan of the Travel Plan such as a snapshot member survey, survey on car park use. It is unclear therefore whether these actions have been carried out. It is important that the Travel Plan is seen as a working document and that actions within the plan are carried out. Additional parking on the site only meets the requirements of PPG13 if it is part of a package of measures. The highway authority is concerned that the provision of additional parking without the implementation of the travel plan will encourage car use and is contrary to the site S106 Agreement.

It should be noted that the site has an unusually large floor area which means that the parking provision falls below the maximum requirement of the Aerodrome SPG. Due to the site unusual function of the site with both office space and an a large leisure facility a direct parking provision in accordance with the Aerodrome SPG's standards would be excessive and not encourage parking restraint.

The proposed level of parking is considered to be reasonable if it is used in the right manner. The proposed parking space needs to not be restricted only to the head office staff. Although a gated car park would be reasonable because the adjacent area is shared and unrestricted, there needs to be a method of managing in an appropriately with an emphasis on the site encouraging the Green Travel Plan.

Subject to appropriate conditions to ensure reasonable use, the proposed parking area would be acceptable and in accordance with the requirements of the Aerodrome SPG.

3. The application site currently contains tennis courts with unkempt landscaping surrounding the borders. The proposal would replace the existing landscaping and essentially retain a hardstanding. Although the proposal would have a different use, it would not have a significantly different appearance.

The nearest building to the application site is the adjacent nursing home to the north east. This building currently has a landscaped areas which separates the site. Although additional landscaping would enhance the outlook from this building and soften the appearance of the proposed development, the occupiers of the nursing home would not suffer an adverse impact as a result of the proposed development. To ensure that car park is appropriately lit, any approval would have to agree details of flood lighting to ensure that there is not a significant overspill towards the adjoining occupiers. As the tennis courts currently have lighting, appropriate floodlighting would not result in an significant increase in light pollution.

The Council's tree officer was consulted and it has been suggested that improvements are made to the soft landscaping surrounding the site and trees are include to help shade the large area of hardstanding. Therefore, any approval would need to be condition to agree and implement appropriate landscaping as part of the development.

4. The proposed enclosure to the tennis courts would create relatively high fencing. Although this would be sited to the front of the main Listed Building. There is currently a chain linked fencing enclosing this area. When viewed from the surrounding area this fencing does not conflict or compete with the character and appearance of the main Listed Building and does not have an adverse impact upon its character and appearance. The proposed fencing would be green and when viewed in context would not be prominent or too noticeable. Therefore, although sited in a sensitive position the proposed fencing would have an acceptable appearance and would not harm the character and appearance of the main building. Appropriate

planting around the outside of the proposed fencing would help soften it's appearance when viewed in close proximity.

The car park would be site away from the principle elevation of the main building. When viewed from a distance the proposed hardstanding would not have a greater impact than the appearance of the existing tennis courts. It has been acknowledged that the appearance of parked cars would be different to the current site, however, as the proposal is to the rear of the building, which does not form an important view it would not have an adverse impact. Furthermore, the proposal would involve the removal of an unauthorised carwash which would result in an improvement in the character and appearance of this area.

5. As the proposed car park would replace an existing hardstanding it would not result is a significant change to the amount of surface water drainage and further landscaping would be added surrounding the site. Thames water have recommended that petrol /oil interceptors are fitted to all parking areas.

The application has been submitted with a sustainability checklist, which makes a very limited effort to achieve the suitable requirements of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005. However, appropriate conditions could encourage sustainable travel and appropriate use of the car park. Conditions could also ensure that appropriate landscaping is used within the development. Through the discharge of a floodlighting condition and energy efficient lighting scheme could also be achieved. Considering the requirements of appropriate conditions, the proposed development would make a reasonable effort to meet the requirements of Policies SD1 and R3 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

It has been noted that the County Archaeologist has suggest conditions. However, baring in mind the proposal would be sited on an existing hardstanding and the tennis courts have extant consent, it in not considered to be reasonable and necessary to apply the suggested conditions.

CONCLUSION:

The proposed development would not have an adverse impact upon the character and appearance of the locality and would not have an adverse impact upon the character, visual amenity of setting of the adjacent Grade II* Listed Building. The application is in compliance with the parking standards of the Hatfield Aerodrome SPG. Subject to conditions, the application is considered on-balance to meet the requirements of the relevant local and national planning policies.

RECOMMENDATION: APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS

CONDITIONS:

1. C.2.1: Standard Time Limit
2. C.13.1: Development in accordance with approved plans/detail Site Location Plan 1:1250 & L(0)001 Rev. D & L(0)003 Rev. A received and dated 5 March 2010.

Pre-Application

3. Construction of the development hereby permitted shall not commence until the actions in the Approved Green Travel Plan have been completed to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority and Highway Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the proposal complies with policy M3 of the WHBC Local Plan, the S106 for the Aerodrome site and the aims of PPG13 to promote sustainable travel.

4. The area set aside for car parking shall be laid out and surfaced, in accordance with a scheme which has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the local planning authority before the buildings hereby permitted are first occupied and shall be retained permanently there after for the staff and customers of the site and with direct association to the company and shall not be used for any other purpose.

REASON: To ensure that spaces are not rented or made available to other user of the locality. To ensure that the site retains a sustainable transport pattern and parking restraint is retained within the locality accordance with PPG13.

5. The development hereby permitted shall not be implemented until details of the petrol interceptors have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved details shall then be implemented and retained thereafter.

REASON: In the interests of the water environment and to prevent pollution of ground water in accordance with policies R2 and R7 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

6. C.4.1 – Landscaping details to be submitted and agreed (points b, f, g and h)
7. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, a lighting survey and full details of any external car park and access lighting to be erected within the site shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for its prior written approval and shall be erected in accordance with those approved plans.

REASON: To avoid any potential for light pollution, in the interests of visual amenity in accordance with policies R20 and D1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

Development

8. C.4.2 – Implementation of landscaping

SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE GRANT OF PERMISSION:

Reason for Grant of Full Planning Consent:

The proposal has been considered against Planning Policy Statement/Guidance PPS1, PPS5, PPG13, East of England Plan 2008 policies SS1, LA3, T1, T2, T4, T13, T14, ENG1 and development plan policies SD1, GBSP2, R3, EMP1, EMP2, HATAER1, D1, D2, D7, D8, D9, D11, M3, M14, M6, M5 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.

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