

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL
PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE – 28 OCTOBER 2010
REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR (STRATEGY AND DEVELOPMENT)

S6/2010/1710/FP

LAND AT GEORGES FIELD, HATFIELD PARK, CHURCH LANE, HATFIELD, AL9
5NB

FORMATION OF VISITOR PARKING AREA, PATHS, LANDSCAPING AND
ANCILLARY WORKS AT LAND ADJACENT TO GEORGES FIELD. REMOVAL OF
CAR PARK NORTH OF HATFIELD HOUSE AND PROVISION OF SOFT
LANDSCAPING

APPLICANT: Gascoyne Cecil Estate

(Hatfield East)

1 Background

- 1.1 The Planning Control Committee has undertaken a site visit on 24th October for this development in association with the proposals for the Viaduct Car Park (application S6/2010/1711/FP) following deferral of the Viaduct application on 30th September 2010.

2 Site Description

- 2.1 The site proposed for development forms part of the wider Hatfield House (Gascoyne Cecil) Estate. The site is approximately rectangular in shape, but widens out on the southern side towards the edge of George's Field. There is a newly constructed access driveway on the southern extremity, formed as part of the planning application for the coach car park (S6/2008/0690/FP approved by Committee in September 2008) which caters for service vehicles and which defines the southern boundary.
- 2.2 To the west is the newly constructed visitor coach park serving 12 vehicles finished in gravel rolled into bitumen. On the north side is the lime tree lined visitor walkway, serving the coach park. Beyond this is the southern edge of Old Hatfield including the Church Hall car park, the Church Hall and adjacent dwellings on Church Street.
- 2.3 The development site comprises an open grassed area, which is fairly flat, but slopes gently from east to west and down towards the new coach park, and is approximately 0.58 hectares. Trees are located primarily to the western boundary of the site but also a few are located within the site.
- 2.4 The area to the north of Hatfield House, which is a Grade I listed building, currently comprises a parking area for visitors to the House. The car park is surfaced with tarmac and provides approximately 152 spaces. This area also forms part of the historic park and garden.

3 The Proposal

- 3.1 The application seeks full planning permission for a new car park for 148 vehicles adjacent to Georges Field to cater for visitors. (Georges Field is located to the south of the proposed development). The new car park will be served via the new entrance off Church Lane, built in connection with St. Audrey's Car Park, and positioned on land between the new coach park and the registered historic park and garden.
- 3.2 The proposed car park will replace the existing car park immediately adjacent to the north side of Hatfield House, surfaced with tarmac, which would be soft landscaped. The proposed car park would be constructed in bitumen with a rolled gravel finish to match the existing coach park and access roads. Native landscaping would be carried out within and on the edge of the parking areas. Low level lighting bollards would be installed to match those in the coach park.
- 3.3 On the north side is the lime tree lined visitor walkway, serving the coach park and which will also be the route for pedestrians coming from the new visitor car park. Visitor cars exiting onto Church Lane would either turn left on to the A1000 or right onto the slip road onto the roundabout.

4 Planning History

- 4.1 S6/2010/1711/FP Formation of Replacement Car Park for Business Use Including Layout of Additional Parking Area for Residential Occupiers, Paths, Landscaping and Ancillary Works. Removal of Car Park to North of Hatfield House Known as 'Cricket Pitch' Car Park and Provision of Soft Landscaping

Under Consideration
- 4.2 S6/2010/1292/PA Proposed Car Park. Advised of the constraints of the site, need for a landscape management plan for north front car park and to speak to Hertfordshire (Transportation, Planning and Policy) about impact upon the highway.
- 4.3 S6/2008/0690/FP Improved Entrance to Hatfield Park for Coaches and HGV's, Widening the Access from Church Lane, Formation of Coach Parking Area, Circulation Trackway and all Ancillary Works

Approved 25/09/2008

5 Planning Policy

5.1 National Policy

PPS1: Delivering sustainable development
PPG2: Green Belts
PPS5: Planning and the Historic Environment
PPG13: Transport
PPG24: Planning and Noise

5.2 Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review 1991 – 2011:

None

5.3 Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005:

SD1 Sustainable Development
GBSP1 – Definition of Green Belt
R17 -Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
R19 – Noise and Vibration Control
R20 – Light pollution
R28 – Historic Parks and Gardens
R29 – Archaeology
M5 - Pedestrian Facilities
D1 - Quality of design
D2 - Character and context
D5 - Design for movement
D7 - Safety by Design
D8 - Landscaping
D9 - Access and Design for people with disabilities
RA10 - Landscape Regions and Character Areas

5.4 Supplementary Design Guidance, February 2005

5.5 Supplementary Planning Guidance, Parking Standards, January 2004

6 Constraints

6.1 The land adjacent to Georges Field lies within the Green Belt and Landscape Character Area as designated in the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005. It is also adjacent to the Old Hatfield Conservation Area and within close proximity of the setting of listed buildings. The north frontage to Hatfield House is designated as an Area of Archaeological Significance, Green Belt, Landscape Character Area, Historic Park and Garden in addition to the House being Grade 1 listed. Additionally, the wall to the boundaries of the existing car park is Grade 2 listed.

7 Representations Received

7.1 This application has been advertised by site notice, newspaper notice and neighbour notifications. Three representations have been received from two parties at Hatfield Park and Fore Street objecting to the proposal. In addition, six letters have been received from St Ethelreda's Drive, Beechwood Close, The Noke (Stevenage) and Hatfield Park supporting the proposal. In addition, one letter of support is anonymous and has thus not been taken into account. The comments may be summarised as:

Objections

- No planning notices have been displayed
- 400th anniversary likely to increase parking numbers
- Can time restrictions be applied?
- Approach along A1000 from south is very dark
- Visitor experience not relevant when highway safety a concern
- No signs of revitalisation outside of confines of Hatfield House and Park
- Good to note that tourist traffic will be relocated from Station Lodge

- What overflow parking arrangements have been made?
- All questions in 'Highways' letter need to be addressed
- Insufficient number of parking spaces proposed

Support

- Expansion and investment in these economic times should be supported
- Improvement on existing arrangements
- Enhance area of existing unsightly car park
- Relieve traffic problems at the existing entrance
- Accessing the site will be easier
- Create jobs due to restaurant being upgraded
- Businesses in Old Hatfield will benefit from additional custom

8 Consultations Received

8.1 Hertfordshire County Council Transportation Planning and Policy – response dated 8th September, object to the proposal.

Response dated 14 September – no fundamental objection providing further surveys and assessments can demonstrate that the access arrangements can work adequately.

Response dated 30th September further to Supplementary Transport Report – no objection subject to conditions.

8.2 Hertfordshire County Council Archaeology - no objection subject to conditions.

8.3 Historic Park and Gardens - no response (due 3rd September)

8.4 Hertfordshire Building Preservation Society (Beams) – support the removal of the car park from the North Front. Reinstatement as formal landscaped garden is welcomed.

8.5 Landscaping – no objection subject to conditions

8.6 Hertfordshire Biological Records Centre - no response (due 3rd September)

9 Discussion

9.1 This application is presented to the Planning Control Committee because it has been called in by Councillor Bernard Sarson on the grounds of “building a car park on green belt and the exit onto the A1000 which in my opinion would create further traffic problems”.

9.2 The main issues to be considered are:

- 1. The Impact on the Metropolitan Green Belt**
- 2. The Impact on Highway and Parking Matters**
- 3. The Impact on the Conservation Area, Character of the Area. Setting of the Listed Building and Historic Park and Garden**
- 4. Impact on Archaeology**
- 5. The Impact on the Amenity of Adjoining Occupiers**

6. Other Material Planning Considerations

1. The Impact on the Metropolitan Green Belt

- 9.3 The site is located within the Green Belt wherein Planning Policy Guidance Note 2: Green Belts defines the types of development that are appropriate development within the Green Belt. There is a presumption against inappropriate development within them. Parking areas do not fall within the types of development that are defined as appropriate development and therefore, in accordance with paragraph 3.1, such development should not be approved, except in very special circumstances.
- 9.4 “Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. It is for the applicant to show why permission should be granted. Very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development will not exist unless the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations” (PPG2, 3.2).
- 9.5 The applicant has submitted a case of very special circumstances in support of the application. Their circumstances are detailed below in italics with the discussion around these after each section.
- 9.6 ***“The project will assist in the long term preservation of the Hatfield Park Estate for the benefit of the public – the park being of international importance.***
- Significant weight should be attached to the fact that the proposals relate to the setting of a Grade I listed building (Hatfield House) and its registered historic parkland gardens as a site of international importance.*
- 9.7 *The Estate must continually evolve and sensitively adapt to changing tastes, and competition from other historic attractions if it is to meet the obligations to attract and welcome visitors. The visitor operation is an essential part of generating income to fund the upkeep of the Park and its historic buildings. In addition the operation makes a positive contribution to the local economy. The proposal will enhance the visitor experience by providing a shorter, better planned route into the Park, clearer direction to Stable Yard and vital facilities (a frequent criticism of the North Front is a notable [sic] lack of clarity in this regard). The route to Hatfield House will be shortened from the existing 700 m (from Station Lodge) to 300m (from George’s Gate). It is extremely important that visitors be able to easily find and reach their chosen destination. The new car park is more centrally located for access to The Old Palace, Bloody Hollow, Stable Yard and the West Gardens.*
- 9.8 *The western and south western side of the Estate is gradually becoming the new focus for tourist and activity within the parkland. For example, as well as the new coach park and George’s Gate entrance, new tourist features are planned including the Bloody Hollow play area and a rare breeds area within George’s Field. The new Estate Offices are also planned (approved and under construction) for this area on the western side of the park within the former walled garden. These developments / uses compliment longer standing activities within The Riding School, Old Palace and Stable Yard which would be similarly accessed from the west side. The applicants see this side of the Estate as the new focus for activity which is away from the historic and congested Station Lodge entrance and North Avenue.”*

9.9 The preservation of the park is an important consideration. There have been a number of planning applications within the last 2-3 years, as referred to above, which have focused the 'visitor experience' towards this part of the Estate. It is therefore acknowledged that this area would appear logical for development to be sited within this area. Notwithstanding this, this reason, in itself, is not considered to represent the very special circumstances required to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. However, it is not considered necessary for the applicant to consider other possible locations for a replacement car park.

9.10 "The proposal will help reduce vehicular congestion opposite the Hatfield Station thereby providing a highway benefit.

Hatfield Station concourse has become substantially more congested, as its importance as a rail/bus interchange has grown in recent years. There have been a series of proposals and options for improving the station forecourt traffic circulation as part of an overall plan to improve the situation at the station.

9.11 *The proposal to relieve this access of visitor traffic will help improve conditions of highway and pedestrian safety in this presently congested area. Presently visitor, staff and business traffic is mixed. At busy times, vehicles back up onto The Great North Road to the detriment of highway safety. Queues can form as visitors purchase entry tickets. In the Estates view, this situation can only worsen, especially given the current and likely increase in visitor numbers. 80% of visitors are expected to arrive by car and it is therefore eminently sensible to route visitor traffic through one area (with coach borne visitors) at George's Gate.*

9.12 *Bollards have been installed adjacent to the listed entrance gates in an attempt to control traffic flows, but the amount of traffic using this entrance ultimately results in considerable wear and tear not only on the entrance gates and piers themselves, but also on the viaduct leading into the parkland.*

9.13 *The proposed use of the new George's Gate access and new visitor car park will therefore allow the separation of tourist traffic into one area away from the congested Station Lodge entrance opposite Hatfield Station. The George's Gate entrance has much greater capacity in terms of width and geometry having been designed to accommodate coaches. The Station Lodge entrance was originally conceived as a private driveway entrance for residents and their private visitors to Hatfield House and not for the thousands of visitors who now presently use it.*

9.14 *The designation and use of George's Gate for the main visitor traffic will be of considerable benefit in both planning and highway terms and should be given considerable weight as a very special circumstance in favour of the proposals."*

9.15 Planning application S6/2008/0690/FP for the provision of St Audrey's Car Park also considered a number of the matters advanced above. The gates are Grade II listed and evidence was submitted with the previous application showing damage to the gates. It was understood that this was primarily from the larger vehicles (coaches and HGV's) visiting the site. However it is also acknowledged that continued use of these access gates is likely to result in wear and tear. It would therefore, again subject to all other matters being resolved, be appropriate to utilise this newly formed access.

9.16 Additionally, the impact of traffic in the vicinity of the station was also advanced as part of the previous application. This was not considered to represent a very special circumstance, due to the small number of coaches that would be utilising the new access (12 coaches). However, with all visitor vehicles relocated from Station Lodge, there would likely be a greater impact than with the application for the coach park. This is therefore considered to have some merit. However, this needs to be set against later correspondence (dated 13th September) where the applicant advises that

“Access and egress for major events will be as per the existing situation via Station lodge and exit via the A1000 or A414....”

9.17 Lastly, the Transport Statement provides information regarding the relocation of the current access point to Church Lane. This details that during weekdays, the majority of vehicles using the Station Lodge Entrance are staff, residents and tenants and these vehicles will continue to use this access therefore the reduction in traffic particularly during the weekday peak will be approximately 17%. On Saturdays when visitors account for the majority of turning movements the reduction in movements at this junction will be greater.

9.18 This, therefore is considered to not warrant very special circumstance as it would not secure the long-term removal of cars from the existing access point.

9.19 “The proposals will enable the setting of the Grade I listed building of international importance to be enhanced.

Removal of the existing tarmac car park which is presently immediately to the north side of the Grade I listed building will be a substantial benefit to its appearance and setting. ...[P]aragraph HE10.1 of PPS5 states that when considering the setting of a heritage asset, local planning authorities should treat favourably applications that preserve and better reveal the setting and significance of the asset. Likewise, paragraph HE10.2 which requests local planning authorities to identify opportunities for changes in the setting to enhance or better reveal the significance of a historic asset. Taking such opportunities should be seen as a public benefit and part of the process of place shaping.

9.20 *It is essential that Hatfield House is able to continue to function as a private dwelling without excessive intrusion and impact from the visitor operation. This is currently best characterised by the North Front Car Park – a sea of vehicles immediately beneath the North Front steps. The fact that Hatfield House remains a home sets it aside from many other uninhabited ‘museum homes’ – a point that is recognised and commented upon by many visitors. The removal of the North Front parking area away from the House and to a more defined area adjacent to the new coach park is of considerable benefit in planning terms and should be given significant weight as a very special circumstance in these proposals.*

9.21 *The proposals will allow the trees in North Avenue to be re-planted and future management regimes to be implemented without risk of further damage from parked vehicles. This in itself will maintain and further safeguard the setting of Hatfield House and its surrounding parkland.”*

9.22 This circumstance is fully supported. The existing character and setting of the car park in front of Hatfield House significantly detracts from its setting and is a poor feature. Beams advise that the North Front parking area

“affect[s] the highly sensitive settings & wider context of these three Grade I buildings [Hatfield House, The Palace and Parish Church of St Ethelreda] of outstanding interest & national importance; the other affected listed buildings; the conservation area, & the Registered Park and Garden. The Heritage Statement (July 2010) is detailed & comprehensive in informing the significance of the site & the historic context, which is most helpful in assessing the likely harm (in PPS5 HE9.2 & HE9.4 terms), impact & potential for enhancement of these key heritage assets & in particular the benefits to the immediate setting of Hatfield House & north front & terrace.

The proposed removal of the hard surfaced car park to the north front of the house, which has long blighted the north approach to this outstanding building, must be regarded as being wholly desirable & a distinct enhancement. The proposed reinstatement of this area as a formal landscaped garden is welcomed.”

- 9.23 Subject to appropriate landscaping, this area of the park would be greatly enhanced by the removal of the car park. Additionally, when this car park is fully occupied at busy times, visitors park at the edges of the access road underneath the trees lining the access road. This has resulted in the roots becoming compacted and damage to the trees, such that their health has been affected and the need to replant these. Providing a car park in a different area (adjacent to George’s Field) would remove this conflict and also provide an enhanced driveway.

9.24 “The proposals will enable a reduced amount of land presently used for parking within the Green Belt.

In broad terms, the proposals will amount to a reduction of land used for parking within the Green Belt by approximately 170 sq m. This is due to removal of the “Cricket Pitch” car park (1170 sq m approx) from the Green Belt and its replacement with the new car park near to the viaduct which is outside the Green Belt.

- 9.25 *Likewise, removal of the “Cricket Pitch” car park will improve the setting of the tree lined avenue (North Avenue) on the northern side of the house thereby enhancing the appearance of the Historic Park and Garden*

- 9.26 *The overall net reduction of Green Belt land for parking is a very special circumstance which should be given considerable weight.”*

- 9.27 The overall reduction in the amount of Green Belt land for parking is subject to the approval of, and implementation of, both planning applications. Details have been provided of each of the car parking areas within and proposed within the Green Belt. The proposed car park adjacent to Georges Field would be 5,531m² and the two car parks proposed for removal total 5721 m² (North Front – 4,431m² and Cricket Pitch 1,290m²). There would therefore be an overall reduction in the amount of land within the Green Belt associated with parking.

- 9.28 However, should planning permission not be forthcoming for the Viaduct Car Park or permission not implemented, there would be a gain of 190m² of

parking within the Green Belt. This, would therefore need to be off-set against the very special circumstances case advanced.

9.29 In order to ensure that the existing car park is removed, it is necessary to apply a condition requiring this. It is necessary for the Estate to have the proposed car park in operation prior to the removal of the existing, in order to provide ongoing parking for visitors and therefore a condition to this effect is suggested. Following discussions with the Estate, it is considered that a reasonable timescale for its removal would be 6 months following completion of the new car park.

9.30 “The proposals will help the Estate to contribute to and sustain the local economy, which is a key objective of the Council, alongside its partners in the local community.

The Gascoyne Cecil Estates are a key local employer providing over 100 jobs when the Park is open to the public. Hatfield House, its ancillary buildings and the wider Estate represent a key component within the local economy. In addition to direct employees, the Estate supports a significant number of other local businesses e.g. builders, printers, forestry, food/catering, gardeners and contractors. The budget runs into several million a year which is contributed directly into the local economy.

9.31 *The Estate is a key part of the local community and should be supported by the Council and its partners in the local economy. The “visitor experience” must evolve in response to customer demand. The business must continually adapt to meet the upkeep requirements placed upon it. The Estate hopes to maintain visitor numbers for the future in the face of increasing competition and the constant need to ensure a coherent visitor experience.”*

9.32 Whilst the Estate is a key employer for the locality, this is not considered to represent a very special circumstance with any weight for this proposal. Visitors have been going to Hatfield House for a significant number of years whilst the car park has been situated to the front of the house. This is therefore not considered to represent a very special circumstance.

9.33 “The proposals will not be visible from any public vantage points

This is a key benefit of considerable weight given that the proposed George’s Field car park will not be visible from any public vantage point. The new car park will be constructed in high quality materials; gravel laid into bitumen and will include new landscaping in native species. Discreet, low level lighting will be installed including sympathetic and high quality cast iron bollards. The newly constructed coach park and access drive has shown how new features can be constructed to blend into the landscape with minimal affect on the openness of visual amenity of the Green Belt.

9.34 *The removal of car parking and hard surfacing from the North Front of Hatfield House will result in a significant improvement to the setting of Hatfield House and can be seen as far outweighing the effective swap of Green Belt land adjacent to George’s Field. A sketch of the outline proposals for the North Front is included with the applications for information.”*

9.35 Members will be aware from previous proposals that a development not being visible from public vantage points is not a reason for allowing inappropriate development within the Green Belt. In this instance, however, regard must be

made to the removal of the car park in front of Hatfield House, which would have a significant impact, as previously discussed upon the setting of the listed building.

- 9.36 Visitors to the House would 'see' whichever car park is present on the site, therefore this argument has little grounds when in use. When not in use, the siting of both car parks is very much restricted from outside of the park and therefore this very special circumstance is not considered to have significant weight.

Summary of Impact on the Green Belt

- 9.37 On balance it is considered that the removal of the car park to the North Front and provision of the car park adjacent to George's Field would have significant impact upon the setting of Hatfield House. As a Grade 1 listed building, its setting should be enhanced where possible and where this would not be to the detriment of other considerations. Overall, there would be a decrease in the amount of parking provision when taking into the removal of the Cricket Pitch Car Park, subject to this application being approved. However, should it be refused, the overall improvement to the setting of the listed buildings compared to the increase of 190m² of car parking within the Green Belt, is considered to have merit and represent the very special circumstances required. It is therefore considered that a case has been advanced that outweighs the harm to the Green Belt and subject to compliance with other policies, the proposal should be granted.

2. Highway and Parking Matters

- 9.38 The application was originally objected to by Hertfordshire (Planning Transportation and Policy) due to insufficient information to be able to determine the impact of the development upon the highway network. As a result, the applicant commissioned a traffic survey to be undertaken which has been assessed by Hertfordshire (Planning Transportation and Policy).
- 9.39 The Supplementary Transport Report surveyed traffic on two days, one in the week and one at the weekend at the suggestion of County. The survey was taken from 1100 hours until 1800 hours, being the hours when the Estate is open to visitors. This shows that in the week, a total of 167 vehicles arriving and 234 departing, with the peak hour for arrivals being between 1100 and 1200 and for departures between 1700 and 1800 hours. At the weekend, there were a total of 183 arrivals and 190 departures, with the same arrival peak hour, but peak departure between 1600 and 1700 hours.
- 9.40 The report also considers the impact of moving the main access point from Station Lodge and providing this along Church Lane for the peak week day and week end hour. The figures are detailed in the table below.
- 9.41 The report concludes, there would be an increase in 36 vehicles travelling eastbound on Church lane during the Saturday peak hour along the distance between the A1000 and George's Gate. This equates to approximately 2 vehicle every 2 minutes. Southbound on the A1000 shows an increase of 34 vehicles between French Horn Lane and Church Lane junction. However, there would be a decrease in the number of vehicles travelling north from Station Lodge along the A1000 of 24 vehicles. Minimal changes are elsewhere.

- 9.42 The report, in relation to the link road between Church Lane and The Broadway details that the maximum number of hourly visitors is 47 vehicles between 1600 and 1700 hours. Of these, approximately 53% are to the north. There would therefore be approximately 25 visitor vehicles using the link road, i.e. less than 1 vehicle every 2 minutes.

Location, Weekday PM Peak Hour	Flow With Existing Station Lodge Access	Flow with Proposed Access Via George's Gate	Change in Flow
A1000 (Northbound) North of Station Lodge	594	594	0
A1000 (Southbound) North of Station Lodge	576	576	0
A1000 (Northbound) South of Station Lodge	571	577	6
A1000 (Southbound) South of Station Lodge	609	601	-8
The Broadway (Eastbound) East of the A1000	65	65	0
The Broadway (Westbound) East of the A1000	109	117	8
A1000 (Northbound) North of Church Lane	778	778	0
A1000 (Southbound) North of Church Lane	690	684	-6
A1000 (Northbound) South of Church Lane	778	778	0
A1000 (Southbound) South of Church Lane	687	687	0
French Horn Lane (Eastbound)	388	388	0
French Horn Lane (Westbound)	590	590	0
Church Lane (Eastbound) East of the A1000	13	13	0
Church Lane (Westbound) East of the A1000	10	16	6
Link Road Between Church Lane and The Broadway (Northbound only)	17	25	8

Location, Saturday Peak Hour	Flow With Existing Station Lodge Access	Flow with Proposed Access Via George's Gate	Change in Flow
A1000 (Northbound) North of Station Lodge	457	457	0
A1000 (Southbound) North of Station Lodge	424	424	0
A1000 (Northbound) South of Station Lodge	484	460	-24

A1000 (Southbound) South of Station Lodge	415	423	8
The Broadway (Eastbound) East of the A1000	77	77	0
The Broadway (Westbound) East of the A1000	84	86	2
A1000 (Northbound) North of Church Lane	501	501	0
A1000 (Southbound) North of Church Lane	464	498	34
A1000 (Northbound) South of Church Lane	501	501	0
A1000 (Southbound) South of Church Lane	458	458	0
French Horn Lane (Eastbound)	346	346	0
French Horn Lane (Westbound)	321	321	0
Church Lane (Eastbound) East of the A1000	11	47	36
Church Lane (Westbound) East of the A1000	5	7	2
Link Road Between Church Lane and The Broadway (Northbound only)	16	18	2

9.43 In addition, the report details that appropriate signage should be installed within the Estate as well as on the highway network and that an appropriate condition would be welcomed.

9.44 This transport data has been appraised by Hertfordshire (Planning Transportation and Policy) who advise of the following:

The number of cars using the proposed car park will be similar to the current use of the existing car park. The supplementary Transport Report gives figures for the number of vehicles entering and leaving the Station Lodge entrance. This has been further divided into visitors, staff/residents and business tenants. The traffic counts show that on the Thursday surveyed, the hour with the maximum number of visitor trips was between 1100 - 1200hrs with a two way flow of 38 trips. During the network peak hour 1700 – 1800hrs there were 14 visitor trips. On the Saturday, the maximum number of visitor trips was 64 during the period 1400-1500hrs. During the Saturday network peak 1200 – 1300hrs there were 40 visitor trips.

Using the survey information, these trips have been assigned to the road network. It appears that just over 50% of vehicles departing will head north from the proposed access. The maximum number of departures observed was 47 on the Saturday afternoon between 1600 and 1700. Assuming a 50:50 split this would result in 24 vehicles traveling north.

It should be noted that the visitor figures were obtained in the middle of September and suggest that the car park was not full.

Therefore during holiday times it is reasonable to expect the number of vehicle movements to increase.

Current access arrangements - The current access at Station Lodge from the A1000 is an all movement junction with vehicles able to approach from both the north and south.

Proposed Access Arrangements (vehicles exiting the site) - The proposal is to serve the new car park from the entrance to the new coach car park. This is accessed from Church Lane. Church Lane is a local access road. The entrance to Church Lane is a short distance to the south of the roundabout junction of Great North Road, the A1000 with French Horn Lane, the B197. As a result of the centre island arrangement at the junction of Church Lane drivers wishing to travel north or west on leaving Hatfield House, have to turn left and proceed to the next roundabout at Welham Green a distance of approximately 2km to turn and then travel back.

The transport statement suggests that cars wishing to travel north and west will be directed to use the service road that links between Church Lane and The Broadway to enable them to access the French Horn Lane/Great North Road roundabout. This service road is one-way and single lane width, it has tight radii and is not designed to accommodate large volumes of traffic. The geometry of the junction of this service road with The Broadway makes the left turn onto The Broadway difficult, however the Supplementary Transport Report provides tracking diagrams that indicate that large cars can negotiate this route without over-running.

Using the figures given in the Supplementary Transport Report, the proposal would result in an additional 25 vehicles using this service road during the hour of peak visitor departures on a Saturday afternoon. This will lead to increased queuing of vehicles waiting to exit onto the main part of The Broadway. The survey figures indicate that waiting vehicles should be accommodated within the service road without blocking Church Lane, which would be detrimental to vehicles trying to access Church Lane from the A1000. The Highway Authority understands that this car park will not be used for what are deemed as "medium-sized" events, including the Cancer Research 10k run, the Paws in the Park, the Wedding Fair and the Christmas events. Instead, they will use the same car parking arrangements that are deployed by the Estate for their large scale events, of which there are about four each year. This is important as such events could result in more vehicles leaving the car park at the same time and queues on the service road part of The Broadway reaching back to Church Lane.

Proposed Access Arrangements (vehicles entering the site) - The proposal will result in increased numbers of left turning vehicles into Church Lane from the A1000 and left turning vehicles from Church Lane onto the A1000. This junction is close to the French Horn Lane/Great North Road junction and the increased number of left turning movements will lead to the slowing of vehicles on the

A1000. The situation is worse during the Saturday peak with 36 additional left turning vehicles into Church Lane. However, the peak visitor arrival times do not coincide with the peak times on the network. Providing vehicles can turn quickly and easily into St Georges Gate there should be no detrimental impact on the highway network. Therefore coaches using the coach park must not be delayed while they are signed in/accepted at any point in the route which would delay cars entering the site. A condition relating to this would address the concerns of the highway authority.

Highway Safety - The Supplementary Traffic Report contains road accident traffic data which shows that within the last three years there were two slight injury accidents in the vicinity of the Station Lodge access, neither of which related to traffic using the Station Lodge access. During the same time period there were two accidents at the Great North Road, French Horn Lane roundabout.

- 9.45 Hertfordshire County Council as Highway authority considers that based on the traffic information submitted the proposal will not have a significant impact on highway safety and free flow on the A1000.
- 9.46 Overall, therefore it is considered that the provision of George's Gate as the access point for visitor parking would not lead to detriment to highway safety or congestion. In accordance with the above observations, it is necessary to ensure that there would be appropriate conditions should planning permission be granted. Three conditions have been recommended by Hertfordshire (Planning Transportation and Policy) – closure of Station Lodge to visitors to the park, signage directing visitors to and from the car park and details of construction vehicle movements and associated access. It is not possible to apply a condition to a development outside of the applicant's ownership and therefore it is not possible for a condition to apply to signage to the Park. However, it is possible to secure this through a s278 agreement and it is therefore suggested that an informative is included. It is also suggested that the condition regarding closure of Station Lodge to visitors would not be reasonable, as visitors to large scale events would still be utilising this access point. It is therefore suggested that a condition is applied requiring the closure of the North Front car park. In addition, it is considered necessary to ensure, to prevent queuing on the highway for visitors accessing the site, that a condition is attached requiring the gate (George's) to be open 30 minutes prior to the park opening and for the gate to remain open during opening hours.

3. The Impact on the Conservation Area, Character of the Area. Setting of the Listed Building and Historic Park and Garden

- 9.47 The application site is outside of the conservation area, however the development site is directly south of the conservation area and therefore consideration of the impact of the proposal upon the conservation area needs to be taken into account. In addition, the car park, provision of and removal, would have impact upon the setting of adjoining listed buildings
- 9.48 The impact upon the landscape with this development is therefore an important consideration in the determination of this application due to its close relationship with the designated areas. The impact upon the character and setting of Hatfield House, Palace and Church have previously been discussed.

There is support in relation to the listed buildings for the removal of the north front car park.

- 9.49 Within the wider character of the area, the car park would have impact. However, its relationship to the existing St Audrey's Coach Car Park as well as the car park at St Audrey's Care Home which adjoins the site must be considered. Due to the close proximity of these car parks and the proposed landscaping proposed by the Estate, it is considered that the overall impact would be minimised and would preserve the character of the area and would not prejudice the character of the conservation area. The benefits of removing the car park from the North Front are also considered to outweigh any harm that might be considered to arise from its relocation. For these reasons, the proposal complies with PPS5: Planning and the Historic Environment and policies D2, D8 and R17 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005
- 9.50 The site is located within the Hatfield Park Landscape Character Area (policy RA10) as defined within the 'Hertfordshire Landscape Strategy: Welwyn Hatfield Landscape Character Assessment, April 2005'. This defines a 'safeguard and manage' approach with the strategy for managing this including the replacement of soft woodlands with indigenous native deciduous trees and encourage new planting to maintain age diversity. It is the intention of the Estate to plant new trees, which following discussions during pre-application would be planted 'randomly' rather than in a 'regimented' manner to provide a softer and more natural approach to the landscape. The proposal would, subject to a condition for planting, accord with policy RA10 of the local plan.
- 9.51 These works are also supported by the landscape officer who advises that overall there is no objection to the proposal. More information is required before works commence including an Arboricultural Impact Assessment and full landscape proposals for both current and proposed car parks. These should be detailed plans with a planting schedule including planting densities, size of planting material, species etc. Due to the sensitive nature of the North Front Car Park, it is considered more appropriate to ensure a long-term landscape management plan (over 5 years) and an appropriate condition is suggested.

4. Impact on Archaeology

- 9.52 Hertfordshire County Archaeology advise that the site is recorded as a medieval settlement of Hatfield which is called Hetfelle in Domesday Book. It is also recorded in a 10th century charter of Ely Abbey. Excavations in Hatfield have found evidence of medieval occupation. Hatfield House and gardens were built in the early 17th century on the site of a 15th century palace. The gardens were redeveloped and extended during the 19th and 20th centuries.
- 9.53 The proposed development is therefore likely to have an impact on heritage assets, and a condition has accordingly been suggested. This would require an archaeological evaluation prior to development commencing as well as monitoring and any associated mitigation during construction. This requirement would comply with PPS5, policies HE7 and HE12 as well as local plan policy R29.

- 9.54 County Archaeology also advise that they would be able to provide a design brief detailing the requirements if necessary and an informative has been included for the benefit of the applicants.

5. The Impact on the Amenity of Adjoining Occupiers

- 9.55 The access would be through the newly created access for St Audrey's Car Park from Church Lane. Utilisation of this access would have limited, if any at all, impact on the amenity of the wider residential public within Old Hatfield.
- 9.56 The occupiers of St Audrey's Care Home are the most likely to be impacted upon by this proposal, as was the case with the previous application (S6/2008/0690/FP). The access road runs adjacent to the southern boundary of their curtilage (15 metres away from the closest point to the building) with the car parking almost south-east of the building, over 40 metres away. This proposed car park is sited further away than the coach car park and therefore the impact would not be significant. Confirmation has been sought from Environmental Health, who have confirmed that there has been no complaints regarding the usage of the car park since it has been constructed and utilised.
- 9.57 The lighting is proposed to be low level, in a similar form to that across the wider Hatfield Estate and the same as that within the coach car park. Policy R20 seeks to minimise light pollution and identifies a number of criteria that need to be met. This includes ensuring that glare and light spillage are minimised, residential amenity is not affected, no adverse impact on the character and openness of the Green Belt. It is considered that the proposed lighting, in the form of bollards with the light projecting downwards, would have limited impact upon the residents of St Audrey's Care Home and wider Green Belt and would thus comply with local plan policy and a condition to comply with the information submitted is suggested.

6. Other Material Planning Considerations

- 9.58 Sustainable Development: The applicant has submitted a sustainability checklist in accordance with local plan policy SD1. There is limited, by virtue of being a car park, of measures that can be used to increase the sustainability of the development. However, the applicant has chosen an area which is shown to be low in ecological value, account has been taken of potential light pollution by using low level timber bollards, with down lighters, soft landscaping will be provided as appropriate and surface water will drain naturally.
- 9.59 Wildlife: The existing North Front car park is not considered to have any protected species due to the site comprising hard surfacing. The proposed site adjacent to George's Field is also considered to be of low ecological value and not comprise the types of land on which protected species would live. Accordingly ecological surveys are not required. The proposal therefore does not fall within the provisions of the European Habitats Directive or Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

10 Conclusion

- 10.1 The development constitutes inappropriate development as defined within Planning Policy Guidance Note 2: Green Belts. However, the applicant has demonstrated very special circumstances that outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. Further information regarding the impact on the highway network has

been submitted during the course of the application and demonstrate that the impacts, subject to the provision of conditions will be negligible and acceptable. The enhancements to the North Front would significantly enhance the character and setting of the Grade 1 listed Hatfield House as well as the adjoining listed buildings.

11 Recommendation

11.1 It is recommended that planning permission be approved subject to the following conditions

1. C.2.1 – Time Limit
2. C.13.1 – Development in Accordance with the Approved Plans

843/GC/02 C received and dated 5th August 2010

843-GC-001 Rev A received and dated 1st September 2010

PRE-DEVELOPMENT

3. C.9.3 – Full Archaeological Excavation and Evaluation
4. Construction of the development hereby approved shall not commence until details of construction vehicle movements and construction access arrangements are submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. Subsequently the approved details shall be implemented during the course of the development.

REASON: To ensure the impact of construction vehicles on the local road network is minimized in accordance with PPG13: Transport

5. Prior to the use of the car park hereby permitted, signage shall be erected within the site advising visitors to the site (i) of being close to a residential area and to not cause a disturbance and (ii) directing visitors from the car park. The location of the signage shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval in writing detailing the wording on the signs, its location, the size and height of the signs and materials to be used. Once approved, the signs shall not be removed or altered without the prior written authority of the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: In the interests of the amenity of adjoining residents in accordance with policies D1 and R19 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

6. C.4.2 – Scheme of Landscaping to be Submitted and Agreed (in relation to both areas of land)
(f), (g), (h)

7. C.4.5 – Retention and Protection of Trees and Shrubs for the Duration of the Development

POST-DEVELOPMENT

8. C.4.2 – Implementation of Landscape Planting

9. The lighting bollards shall be sited in accordance with plan 843-GC-002 and finished in Oak or Iroko and shall measure 100mm x 100mm x 700mm (height) in accordance with details submitted within the email from JB Planning Associates received on 7th October 2010 and drawing of the same date and as shown within the Supporting Planning Statement, Appendix 8 dated 07.10.

REASON: In the interests of the amenity of the area and in accordance with policy R20 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

10. Access to the car park shall be provided at all times that Hatfield House and the park is open to visitors. This shall entail the gate, known as George's Gate, to be opened to visitors 30 minutes before Hatfield House and the park opens and remain open during the course of Hatfield House and the park being open.

REASON: In the interests of highway safety and to prevent queuing on Church Lane or the A1000 in accordance with PPG13:Transport.

11. Concurrent with the first use of the approved development, the existing car park known as the North Front car park shall be closed as a car park.

REASON: To comply with PPG13 and ensure that additional parking is not provided.

12. The hard surfacing of the car park hereby permitted shall be finished in gravel rolled into bitumen to match the adjoining St Audrey's Coach Car Park.

REASON: IN the interests of the visual amenity of the area and in accordance with policies D1 and D2 the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005

13. Within 6 months of completion of the Car Park hereby approved, all materials arising from the North Front Car Park shall be removed from the site.

REASON: In the interests of the character of the area and impact upon the Green Belt in accordance with PPG2: Green Belts, PPS5: Planning and the Historic Environment and policies R28 and R29 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

Summary of reasons for grant of permission (if applicable)

The proposal has been considered against Planning Policy Statement/Guidance PPS1: Delivering sustainable development, PPG2: Green Belts, PPS5: Planning and the Historic Environment, PPG13: Transport and PPG24: Planning and Noise, and development plan policies SD1 Sustainable Development, GBSP1 – Definition of Green Belt, GBSP2 – Towns and Specified Settlements, R17 -Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows, R19 – Noise and Vibration Control, R20 – Light Pollution, R28 – Historic Parks and Gardens, R29 – Archaeology, M5 - Pedestrian Facilities, D1 - Quality of Design, D2 - Character and Context, D5 - Design for Movement, D7 - Safety by Design, D8 – Landscaping, D9 - Access and Design for People with Disabilities and RA10 - Landscape Regions and Character Areas 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

1. Prior to opening of the new car park, a signing scheme to direct visitors to and from the car park shall be completed in accordance with details to be submitted to the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Highways Authority. Once approved, the signs shall not be removed or altered without the prior written consent of the Local Planning Authority or Highway Authority.

Lisa Hughes (Strategy and Development)

Date (08 October 2010)

Background papers to be listed (if applicable)

S6/2010/1711/FP