



FAO: Planning Department,
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

Ref: 6/2020/3222/MAJ
Date: 27/05/2021

HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION ADVICE

Dear Sir / Madam,

RE: *Former Volkswagen Van Centre, Comet Way, Hatfield, AL10 9TF*

The application is for the demolition of existing buildings and construction of new building comprising 118 residential apartments, layout of parking areas, landscaping, electricity substation and ancillary development.

The site is located to the south west of the Grade II listed former British Aerospace Gatehouse (list entry no: 1251144). Further north, fronting Comet Way, are the Grade II listed former British Aerospace Offices (list entry no: 1251143) and former British Aerospace Staff Mess (list entry no: 1262931) both now part of Hatfield Police Station. To the west of the site is the Grade II* listed former Flight Test Hangar and Offices (list entry no: 1376561), now the David Lloyd gym.

The site is also located approximately 2 kilometres to the west of Hatfield House (Grade I listed) and its associated parkland (Hatfield Park Registered Park and Garden, registered at Grade I) which also includes the Old Palace (Grade I listed) and, immediately to the west of Hatfield Park, St Etheldreda's Church (Grade I listed). Whilst these assets are at a distance from the site, tall buildings within Hatfield can impact on views west from these assets due to the elevated position of Hatfield House and Park and the long ranging views over the surrounding landscape.

These heritage assets have been identified and assessed within the submitted Heritage Statement.

As per the Heritage Statement, the site contributes little to the setting of the former Hangar, Staff Mess and Offices and its redevelopment will not have a detrimental impact on their settings.

Due to the distance from Hatfield House and Park, it is the height and massing of the proposed buildings which could have a detrimental impact on its wider landscape setting. However, the height of the proposal at seven storeys (stepping down to four storeys) is not considered to be intrusive in views west from Hatfield House as depicted in the wireline view in Appendix 4 of the Heritage Statement. This wireline shows that the proposed development will not break the horizon line and is of a similar scale to the surrounding structures, forming part of the existing built form of Hatfield in



views from the house and appearing no more prominent than other structures. At this height, the proposal is not considered to be detrimental to the setting of Hatfield House or Park.

There is a greater impact on the setting of the Grade II listed former Gatehouse, particularly in views looking south. At pre-application stage (with a proposed scheme of up to nine storeys) it was found that the proposed building would have a low level of less than substantial harm to the Gatehouse. Whilst the building has now been reduced to seven storeys, it is still considered that there would be a low level of less than substantial harm as the reduction in two storeys has not removed the impact of a building of a large mass filling the relatively open backdrop of the view of the Gatehouse looking south. Historically the site has remained undeveloped or later with low level buildings which have not intruded into the backdrop of the Gatehouse so, whilst the site does not contribute to its significance, it is a neutral element of its setting allowing the Gatehouse to be appreciated in views looking south without any buildings intruding into the view. The intrusion of a tall building across the site is considered to visually detract from the Gatehouse. It can still be appreciated in other viewpoints without the intrusion of the proposed building and, therefore, the harm is considered to be at the low end of less than substantial.

Paragraph 196 of the NPPF should be applied under which any public benefits of a scheme should be weighed against the harm caused.

Yours sincerely

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Place Services

Note: This letter is advisory and should only be considered as the opinion formed by specialist staff in relation to this particular matter